

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventieth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 1 and 2, 2000





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# Report of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 2000. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. These proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*The First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*The Quorum of the Twelve:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight,

Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and Ben B. Banks

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorím, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson,

Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

*The Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

#### **Other authorities present**

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## **SATURDAY MORNING SESSION**

The first session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

#### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this, the first general session of the year 2000, we are assembled in this magnificent new Conference Center.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the over-

flow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand here in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder F. Enzio Busche offered the invocation.

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## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

#### **New Conference Center filled to capacity**

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, what a magnificent sight you are, this vast congregation of Latter-day

Saints gathered together in this new and wonderful hall.

The organ is not completed, and there are various construction details yet to be attended to. But fortunately the

work is far enough along that we are able to use it for this conference. A year or so ago in speaking concerning it, I expressed the opinion that we may not be able to fill it initially. It seats three and a half times the capacity of the Tabernacle. But already we are in trouble. People are filling all of the seats.

During the four general sessions and the priesthood session, we will be able to accommodate about 100,000. We had requests for 370,000 tickets. The Tabernacle and Assembly Hall will serve as overflow. But with all of this, many, very many, will be disappointed. We apologize. We ask for your forgiveness. We are powerless to do anything about it. So many wanted to attend this first conference in the new hall. Unfortunately, that is impossible. I was somewhat shocked to learn that the people from my own ward, who are nearby and whom I love, have received no tickets.

But we are grateful for the enthusiasm of the Latter-day Saints concerning this new meeting place. I hope that enthusiasm will continue and that we shall have a full house at every conference in the future.

This is the newest in a series of meeting places constructed by our people. When first they came to this valley, they built a bowery. It shaded them from the sun but provided no warmth and very little comfort. Then they built the old Tabernacle. That was followed by the new Tabernacle, which has served us so very well for more than 130 years.

Now in this historic season, when we mark the birth of a new century and the beginning of a new millennium, we have built this new and wonderful Conference Center.

Each of the undertakings of the past was a bold venture, and particularly the Tabernacle. It was unique in its design. No one had constructed a building like that before. It is still unique. What a wonderful hall it has been and will con-

tinue to be. It will go on living, for I believe that buildings have lives of their own. It will go on serving long into the unforeseeable future.

### **Construction was a bold undertaking**

The building of this structure has been a bold undertaking. We worried about it. We prayed about it. We listened for the whisperings of the Spirit concerning it. And only when we felt the confirming voice of the Lord did we determine to go forward.

At the general conference of April 1996, I said:

"I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many out on the grounds. This unique and remarkable hall, built by our pioneer forebears and dedicated to the worship of the Lord, comfortably seats about 6,000. Some of you seated on those hard benches for two hours may question the word *comfortably*.

"My heart reaches out to those who wish to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65).

The vision of a new hall was clearly in mind. Various architectural schemes were studied. One was finally selected. It included a massive structure to seat 21,000 with a theater accommodating another thousand. There would be no interior pillars to obstruct the view of the speaker. There would be trees and running water on the roof.

Ground was broken July 24, 1997, the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the

first pioneers in this valley. That was an historic event.

### Prophetic statements and actions

We did not know it at the time, but in 1853 Brigham Young, in speaking of temples, said, "The time will come when . . . we shall build . . . on the top, groves and fish ponds" (*Deseret News Weekly*, 30 Apr. 1853, 46).

In 1924 Elder James E. Talmage of the Council of the Twelve wrote: "I have long seen the possible erection of a great pavilion on the north side of the Tabernacle, seating perhaps twenty thousand people or even double that number, with amplifiers capable of making all hear the addresses given from the Tabernacle stands, and in addition to this a connection with the broadcasting system, with receivers in the several chapels or other meeting houses throughout the intermountain region" (journal of James E. Talmage, 29 Aug. 1924, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah).

In 1940 the First Presidency and the Twelve had their architect draw up a plan of a building that would seat 19,000 and would stand where this building stands. That was 60 years ago. They thought about it, they talked about it, but finally they dropped the idea entirely.

These statements and actions were wonderfully prophetic. We knew nothing about them. All of them have come to our attention since we began this construction.

We have not built a temple with trees and fishponds on the roof. But on this edifice we have many trees and running water. Brigham Young may have foreseen this structure very near the temple. We have what Brother Talmage thought of and much, much more. These services will not only be heard by all who are seated in the Conference Center, they

will be carried by radio, television, and cable, and they will be transmitted by satellite to Europe, to Mexico, to South America. We reach far beyond the intermountain area of which Brother Talmage spoke. We reach beyond the confines of the United States and Canada. We essentially reach across the world.

### A truly magnificent building

This is truly a magnificent building. I know of no other comparable structure built primarily as a hall of worship that is so large and that will seat so many. It is beautiful in its design, in its appointments, and in its wonderful utility. It is built of reinforced concrete to the highest seismic codes required in this area. The concrete is faced with granite taken from the same quarry as was the stone for the temple. Both buildings even carry the blemishes of that granite.

The interior is beautiful and wonderfully impressive. It is huge, and it is constructed in such a way that nothing obstructs the view of the speaker. The carpets, the marble floors, the decorated walls, the handsome hardware, the wonderful wood all bespeak utility, with a touch of elegance.

It will prove to be a great addition to this city. Not only will our general conferences be held here, and some other religious meetings, but it will serve as a cultural center for the very best artistic presentations. We hope that those not of our faith will come here, experience the ambience of this beautiful place, and feel grateful for its presence. We thank all who have worked so hard to bring it to this stage—the architects, with whom we have had many meetings; the general contractors, three of whom have worked together; the subcontractors; the hundreds of craftsmen who have labored here; the construction supervisor; the city building inspectors; and everyone who has had a hand in this project. They

have all joined in a herculean effort so that we might meet together this morning. Many of them are with us, I am happy to say.

### **The black walnut pulpit**

And now, my brothers and sisters, I would like to tell you about another feature of this wonderful building. If I get a little personal and even a little sentimental, I hope you will forgive me.

I love trees. When I was a boy we lived on a farm in the summer, a fruit farm. Every year at this season we planted trees. I think I have never missed a spring since I was married, except for two or three years when we were absent from the city, that I have not planted trees, at least one or two—fruit trees, shade trees, ornamental trees, and spruce, fir, and pine among the conifers. I love trees.

Well, some 36 years ago I planted a black walnut. It was in a crowded area where it grew straight and tall to get the sunlight. A year ago, for some reason it died. But walnut is a precious furniture wood. I called Brother Ben Banks of the Seventy, who, before giving his full time to the Church, was in the business of hardwood lumber. He brought his two sons, one a bishop and the other recently released from a bishopric and who now run the business, to look at the tree. From all they could tell it was solid, good, and beautiful wood. One of them suggested that it would make a pulpit for this hall. The idea excited me. The tree was cut down and then cut into two heavy logs. Then followed the long process of drying, first naturally and then kiln drying. The logs were cut into boards at a sawmill in Salem, Utah. The boards were then taken to Fetzer's woodworking plant, where expert craftsmen designed

and built this magnificent pulpit with that wood.

The end product is beautiful. I wish all of you could examine it closely. It represents superb workmanship, and here I am speaking to you from the tree I grew in my backyard, where my children played and also grew.

It is an emotional thing for me. I have planted another black walnut or two. I will be long gone before they mature. When that day comes and this beautiful pulpit has grown old, perhaps one of them will do to make a replacement. To Elder Banks and his sons, Ben and Bradford, and to the skilled workers who have designed and built this, I offer my profound thanks for making it possible to have a small touch of mine in this great hall where the voices of prophets will go out to all the world in testimony of the Redeemer of mankind.

And so to all who have made this sacred edifice possible, and to all of you who are here assembled on this historic occasion, I express gratitude and appreciation, my love and my thanks for this day and this sacred and beautiful house of worship, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Love Thy House, O God."

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### **President Hinckley**

The choir has just sung "We Love Thy House, O God."

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Focus on the builder, not the building

Do you think it possible for those of us who are called upon to speak to draw attention away from this wonderful building long enough to focus on the purpose for which it was built?

Perhaps it can be done with a parable and a poem.

The parable: A merchant man seeking precious jewels found at last the perfect pearl. He had the finest craftsman carve a superb jewel box and line it with blue velvet. He put his pearl of great price on display so others could share his treasure. He watched as people came to see it. Soon he turned away in sorrow. It was the box they admired, not the pearl.

The poem:

We are all blind, until we see  
That in the [universal] plan  
Nothing is worth the making if  
It does not make the man.

Why build these [buildings] glorious,  
If man unbuilted goes?  
In vain we build the [world], unless  
The builder also grows.<sup>1</sup>

### Jesus is baptized and tempted

In thinking of the builder, we begin half a world away and two millennia ago on the river Jordan with John the Baptist. He preached, "I . . . baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."<sup>2</sup>

"Then [came] Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."<sup>3</sup>

"[When Jesus came] up . . . out of the water . . . , the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God [the Holy Ghost] descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus then went into the wilderness; Lucifer came tempting Him.<sup>5</sup> Jesus deflected each temptation with scripture:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone."<sup>6</sup>

"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."<sup>7</sup>

"It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>8</sup>

Think on it carefully. When facing Perdition himself, the Lord drew upon scriptures for protection.

### The promise to send the Comforter

Jesus chose from among His disciples twelve whom He ordained Apostles: Peter, James, and John; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Simon, James, Jude, and Judas. They were ordinary men described by the Pharisees as "unlearned and ignorant."<sup>9</sup>

The Twelve followed Him. He taught them.

He commanded them to teach all nations, baptizing all who would believe.<sup>10</sup>

Before He left, He promised, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus was crucified. On the third day He rose from the tomb. He gave further instruction to His Apostles; and then, before He ascended, He said, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be [endowed] with power from on high."<sup>12</sup>

That power was not long in coming. On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve were assembled in a house:



"Suddenly there came a sound . . . of a rushing mighty wind. . . .

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."<sup>13</sup>

With that the Twelve were fully empowered.

When they spoke that day, the people marveled, for each heard it in his own language—18 different languages.<sup>14</sup>

### **Conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost**

The Apostles set out to baptize all who would believe on their words. But baptism unto repentance was not enough.<sup>15</sup>

Paul found twelve men who had already been baptized by John the Baptist and asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."<sup>16</sup>

"They were [then] baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,"<sup>17</sup> and "Paul . . . laid his hands upon them, [and] the Holy Ghost came on them."<sup>18</sup>

The pattern was set, as it had been from the beginning.<sup>19</sup> Entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ is through "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."<sup>20</sup> Then, in a separate ordinance, the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances."<sup>21</sup>

### **Authority to confer the gift was lost**

Despite opposition, the Twelve established the Church of Jesus Christ; and despite persecution, it flourished.

But as the centuries passed, the flame flickered and dimmed. Ordinances were changed or abandoned. The line was broken, and the authority to confer the Holy Ghost as a gift was gone. The Dark Ages of apostasy settled over the world.

But always, as it had from the beginning, the Spirit of God inspired worthy souls.<sup>22</sup>

We owe an immense debt to the protesters and the reformers who preserved the scriptures and translated them. They knew something had been lost. They kept the flame alive as best they could. Many of them were martyrs. But protesting was not enough; nor could reformers restore that which was gone.

In time, a great diversity of churches arose.

### **Authority to confer the gift was restored**

When all was prepared, the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph in the Grove, and those words spoken at the river Jordan were heard once again: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>23</sup>

Joseph Smith became the instrument of the Restoration.

John the Baptist restored "the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."<sup>24</sup>

Peter, James, and John restored the office of Apostle with the higher priesthood. With it came authority to confer the supernally precious gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>25</sup>

On April 6, 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The Brethren set about to teach and to baptize. Nine months later came a correction, a revelation:

"Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost;

"But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old."<sup>26</sup>

One month later that commandment was repeated: "On as many as ye shall baptize with water, ye shall lay your hands,

and they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>27</sup>

The gift is to all who repent and are baptized—boys and girls alike, women and men the same.

### **The Holy Ghost will show us what to do**

We live in troubled times—very troubled times. We hope, we pray for better days. But that is not to be. The prophecies tell us that. We will not as a people, as families, or as individuals be exempt from the trials to come. No one will be spared the trials common to home and family, work, disappointment, grief, health, aging, ultimately death.

What then shall we do? That question was asked of the Twelve on the day of Pentecost. Peter answered, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>28</sup>

He told them, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off.”<sup>29</sup>

That same question—“What shall we do?”—was asked of the prophet Nephi. He gave the same answer that Peter had given: “Take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>30</sup>

“Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? . . .

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

“Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

“For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”<sup>31</sup>

We need not live in fear of the future. We have every reason to rejoice and little reason to fear. If we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we will be safe, whatever the future holds. We will be shown what to do.

### **We are too often inattentive to the Spirit**

Christ promised that “the Father [would send] another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”<sup>32</sup>

Too many of us are like those whom the Lord said “[came] with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, . . . [and] at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, *and they knew it not.*”<sup>33</sup>

Imagine that: “And they knew it not.” It is not unusual for one to have received the gift and not really know it.

I fear this supernal gift is being obscured by programs and activities and schedules and so many meetings. There are so many places to go, so many things to do in this noisy world. We can be too busy to pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit.

The voice of the Spirit is a still, small voice—a voice that is *felt* rather than heard. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart.

### **Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost**

All over the world ordinary men, women, and children, not completely aware that they have the gift, bless their families, teach, preach, and minister by the Spirit within them.

In every language, the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost—guides, or can guide, every member of the Church. Everyone is invited to come and repent and be baptized and receive of this sacred gift.

Despite opposition, the Church will flourish; and despite persecution, it will grow.

Joseph Smith was asked, “How does your religion differ from other religions?” He replied, “All other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>34</sup>

It is awakened with prayer and cultivated “by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>35</sup>

It can be smothered through transgression and neglect.

And soon we learn that the tempter—the adversary—uses those same channels of the mind and heart to inspire us to evil, to laziness, to contention, even to acts of darkness. He can take over our thoughts and lead us to mischief.

But each of us has agency; ever and always light presides over darkness.

The priesthood is structured to ensure an unbroken line of authority to baptize and confer the Holy Ghost. Always nearby are leaders and teachers called and set apart to teach and to correct us. We can learn to sort out the promptings from the temptations and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

### **Holy Ghost guides, protects, comforts**

It is a glorious time to live! No matter what trials await us, we can find the answer to that question, “What shall we do?” We, and those we love, will be guided and corrected and protected, and we will be comforted.

The Savior said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>36</sup>

As surely as I know that I am here and you are there, I know that Jesus is

the Christ. He lives! I know the gift of the Holy Ghost, a sacred spiritual power, can be a constant companion to every soul who will receive it. I pray that the witness of the Holy Ghost will confirm this testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Edwin Markham, “Man-Making,” in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison (1948), 419.
2. Matthew 3:11.
3. Matthew 3:13.
4. Matthew 3:16–17.
5. See Matthew 4:1–11.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. Acts 4:13.
10. See Matthew 28:19.
11. John 14:26.
12. Luke 24:49.
13. Acts 2:2–4.
14. See Acts 2:7–11.
15. See Acts 2:38.
16. Acts 19:2; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 263, 336.
17. Acts 19:5.
18. Acts 19:6.
19. See Moses 6:64–66.
20. Articles of Faith 1:4.
21. Articles of Faith 1:5.
22. See 1 Nephi 10:17–19.
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 13.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 35:5–6.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 39:23.
28. Acts 2:38.
29. Acts 2:39.
30. 2 Nephi 31:13.
31. 2 Nephi 32:2–5.
32. John 14:16–17.
33. 3 Nephi 9:20; italics added.
34. *History of the Church*, 4:42.
35. Articles of Faith 1:3.
36. John 14:27.

## Elder Harold G. Hillam

### Lessons for future leaders

During the last general conference, a relatively insignificant thing caught my attention. It was a necktie! As a choir of young boys and girls was singing, one of the TV cameras happened upon a young boy in the choir. He thought he saw himself on the television monitor but perhaps wasn't completely sure. So this is what he did: by wiggling his tie almost unnoticeably, he knew—yes—it was really him!

This modest act triggered a flood of thoughts in my mind. Turning to look at those young boys and girls, I thought, "These children represent millions of similar other boys and girls throughout the world. What will this great Church be like when they reach the ages of the leaders here, and what part will they play in its remarkable future? Which children will hold ward or stake positions? Might a future member of the Twelve be listening to the conference or even be seated here today? Which young boy will someday preside as President of the Church when it has many more millions of members?"

As these thoughts continued in my mind, I realized that you young people will need to learn so many lessons. You will have to prepare for your awesome responsibilities in a time when the adversary seems to go unchecked by the world in his opposition to all that is good and decent. You will need to learn many lessons, but let me share three lessons that I believe are essential.

### Develop a sense of respect

The first essential lesson is to develop a sense of respect for things that are sacred and a respect for other people, especially your elders.

The Lord taught Moses about sacred things and places. When Moses approached the burning bush that was not

consumed by fire, the Lord commanded, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). We too have the opportunity to stand in holy places. Temples, Church buildings, and your home should command your respect because they are sacred.

You will need to recognize and value all that the Lord has revealed as being sacred. One of the most significant is the sacred nature of your own body. The Apostle Paul spoke of our bodies as temples given to us by God (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). What a tragedy if you deprived yourself of life's opportunities by willfully disfiguring your body or numbing your mind with drugs. Don't use your body for immoral acts. Clothe it modestly, and leave the sloppy dress craze behind. When you have the courage to dress modestly and avoid fads in clothing, you will find that self-respect is a companion of obedience and that the Lord will help you.

How we act and dress reflects how we regard where we are and who we are. Let me demonstrate. One of the natural occurrences in missionary work is the change in new converts, especially little boys, young men, and fathers. When they go to Church meetings, they want to look like the missionaries. Now, that tells us a lot about the importance of looking like a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The words of the prophets as found in ancient scripture and in modern-day revelation are sacred also. They are the words of the Lord to us. Treat them with respect by listening carefully and then conforming your lives to them.

I urge you young people to develop the habit of always showing respect, courtesy, and deference to your parents and others, especially those who are

older than you. My father taught me that every person in and out of the Church has a title, such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Brother*, *Sister*, *Bishop*, *Elder*, or *President*, and that they should be addressed with respect. When I was six years old, my father reinforced this principle when I made the horrid mistake of calling our local grocer by his first name. Upon leaving the grocery store, my father taught me with firmness that I had shown a lack of respect by being so casual to an older person. I have never forgotten that experience, nor have I after 60 years forgotten the name of the grocer. I even remember his first name.

### **Learn and obey the commandments**

The second essential lesson is to learn the commandments and obey them because you choose to. Before you can obey the commandments, you must know what they are. You *learn* the commandments by being instructed. That is why family home evening, Sunday classes, and seminary are so important. You *know* the commandments by the Spirit through prayer, your own personal study, and your own personal revelation.

You need to keep your minds clean so you can recognize and respond to the quiet whisperings of the Spirit. Select with care the information you allow to enter your mind. Avoid the cluttered clamor of the world. Television, movies, and especially the Internet can provide an open window through which you can peer into the far reaches of the world. They can bring to you information that is uplifting, good, and inspiring. But if used improperly, these media technologies can fill your mind with such unwholesome thoughts that you will be unable to hear the gentle prompting of the Spirit. Live each day so that you are able to be in tune with the Spirit like the boy prophet Samuel and you are able to respond to the Lord and say, "Speak [Lord]; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10).

### **Come to know and love the Savior**

A third essential lesson is to develop a love for the Savior. *Knowing about* the Savior is a natural part of our religious education. *Knowing* the Savior requires personal obedience, prayer, a closeness to the Spirit, and revelation.

I want to speak to you teachers for a moment—you parents, priesthood leaders, bishops, stake presidents, and teachers in Primary, Young Women, Young Men, and Sunday School. The Lord has reminded everyone that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). We are all responsible to teach and lead these wonderful young men and young women and touch their lives by our example. As the song says, "How will they know unless we teach them?" And maybe we could add, "How will they know unless we show them?" ("How Will They Know?" *Children's Songbook*, 182–85).

Every leader and every teacher in every part of the world has a responsibility to teach the gospel by the Spirit. The boys and girls you teach have the potential to become outstanding fathers and mothers as well as revered Church leaders of the future. May you visualize each one of them in their important future callings. Some teacher somewhere is indeed teaching a young boy who will someday sit in these seats as he serves as the Lord's prophet. What a marvelous opportunity is yours.

### **Prepare to be faithful leaders**

And now to you, my young friend with the tie—yes, it *is* you. You and the millions like you, if you prepare well, will be the faithful mothers and fathers in the Church and the Lord's future leaders. You will be the teachers and leaders who will continue to establish the Church throughout the world. You will probably want to look in the mirror periodically and remind yourselves of the great mission that lies before you, and perhaps

you might even want to wiggle your tie just to remind yourself of your important mission ahead. May you stand straight and noble in your callings.

I pray that you young people will develop a reverence for sacred things, a respect for your elders, and a willingness to keep the commandments. I pray that you will learn to know of the Savior and have an ever-growing understanding of His Atonement. I ask the Lord to help you throughout your life to join your testimony with those of today's living prophets and apostles, who have declared:

"We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for

the matchless gift of His divine Son" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3).

To this I also testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, will then speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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## Sister Coleen K. Menlove

### Obtaining happiness

Children love stories. As a child I was immediately drawn into stories that started with the words "Once upon a time." These stories often ended with "They lived happily ever after." I have a feeling that children are not the only ones who are intrigued by those phrases. We each long to have the "once upon a time" of our lives filled with so much happiness that it becomes the "happily ever after" of our hopes and dreams.

We are living in our "once upon a time." We are experiencing a mortal probation now during our turn on earth. In our premortal existence, "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) as we accepted the great eternal plan of happiness. We happily anticipated coming to earth to have opportunities to grow spiritually. "Men are, that they might have

joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). The opportunity is here and now to obtain happiness that extends beyond our earth life; however, we need to know what it is and where to find it.

### Happiness results from obedience

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi explained to his son Jacob that happiness is a result of obedience. He told Jacob that eternal laws have both punishments and opportunities for happiness attached to them. When we disobey God's laws, we suffer the punishments, but when we obey, we reap the happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:10). Part of what creates happiness is the absence of regret, guilt, and sin.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it;

Elder Richard G. Scott said, "Your joy in life depends upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His holy Son, your conviction that their plan of happiness truly can bring you joy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 24).

Through the Savior we can find our way back to God. We can find peace and happiness in this life and eternal joy in the world to come. That thought, in and of itself, warms my heart and makes me smile.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The book of Job poses the universal question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The question of resurrection from the dead is a central subject of scripture, ancient and modern. The resurrection is a pillar of our faith. It adds meaning to our doctrine, motivation to our behavior, and hope for our future.

### The Resurrection of Jesus

The universal resurrection became a reality with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 27:52-53). On the third day after His death and burial, Jesus came forth out of the tomb. He appeared to several men and women, and then to the assembled Apostles. Three of the Gospels describe this event. Luke is the most complete:

"Jesus . . . saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a

### Radiate a glad heart

As we come to understand the great plan of happiness, we will radiate, for all the world to see, a glad heart and a cheerful countenance. We will show that we know the gospel of Jesus Christ is a simple, ever-present source of true happiness today and ever after in eternity. It is living the gospel of Jesus Christ that is our guarantee of living "happily ever after." Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. . . .

"Then opened he their understanding, . . .

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:36-39, 45-46).

The Savior gave the Apostles a second witness. Thomas, one of the Twelve, had not been with them when Jesus came. He insisted that he would not believe unless he could see and feel for himself. John records:

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:26-29).

Despite these biblical witnesses, many who call themselves Christians reject or confess serious doubts about the reality of the resurrection. As if to anticipate and counter such doubts, the Bible records many appearances of the risen Christ. In some of these He appeared to a single individual, such as to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre. In others He appeared to large or small groups, such as when "he was seen of [about] five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ records the experience of hundreds who saw the risen Lord in person and touched Him, feeling the prints of the nails in His hands and feet and thrusting their hands into His side. The Savior invited a multitude to have this experience "one by one" (3 Nephi 11:15) so that they could know that He was "the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the world" (3 Nephi 11:14).

During the course of His personal ministry among these faithful people, the resurrected Christ healed the sick and also "took their little children, one by one, and blessed them" (3 Nephi 17:21). This tender episode was witnessed by about 2,500 men, women, and children (see 3 Nephi 17:25).

### The resurrection of mortals

The possibility that a *mortal* who has died will be brought forth and live again in a resurrected body has awakened hope and stirred controversy through much of recorded history. Relying on clear scriptural teachings, Latter-day Saints join in affirming that Christ has "broken the bands of death" (Mosiah 16:7) and that "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54; see also Mormon 7:5; Mosiah 15:8; 16:7-8; Alma 22:14). Because we believe the Bible and Book of Mormon descriptions of the literal Res-

urrection of Jesus Christ, we also readily accept the numerous scriptural teachings that a similar resurrection will come to all mortals who have ever lived upon this earth (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Nephi 9:22; Helaman 14:17; Mormon 9:13; D&C 29:26; 76:39, 42-44). As Jesus taught, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

The literal and universal nature of the resurrection is vividly described in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Amulek taught:

"The death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

"The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; . . .

"Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even these shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame" (Alma 11:42-44).

Alma also taught that in the resurrection "all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23).

Many living witnesses can testify to the literal fulfillment of these scriptural assurances of the resurrection. Many, including some in my own extended family, have seen a departed loved one in vision or personal appearance and have witnessed their restoration in "proper and perfect frame" in the prime of life. Whether these were manifestations of persons already resurrected or of righteous spirits awaiting an assured resurrection, the reality and nature of the resurrection of mortals is evident. What a comfort to know that all who have been disadvantaged in life from birth defects, from mortal injuries, from disease, or from the natural deterioration of old age



will be resurrected in "proper and perfect frame."

### The significance of the resurrection

I wonder if we fully appreciate the enormous significance of our belief in a literal, universal resurrection. The assurance of immortality is fundamental to our faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

"The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 121).

Of all things in that glorious ministry, why did the Prophet Joseph Smith use the testimony of the Savior's death, burial, and Resurrection as the fundamental principle of our religion, saying that "all other things . . . are only appendages to it"? The answer is found in the fact that the Savior's Resurrection is central to what the prophets have called "the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death" (2 Nephi 11:5).

In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milepost that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. The Lord described the importance of this vital transition when He declared, "And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe" (D&C 29:43). Similarly, the Book of Mormon teaches, "For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection" (2 Nephi 9:6). We also know, from modern revelation, that without the reuniting of our spirits and our bodies in the resurrection we could

not receive a "fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33, 34).

When we understand the vital position of the resurrection in the "plan of redemption" that governs our eternal journey (Alma 12:25), we see why the Apostle Paul taught, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, . . . then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:13–14). We also see why the Apostle Peter referred to the fact that God the Father, in His abundant mercy, "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

### The resurrection changes our view of mortality

The "lively hope" we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. The assurance of resurrection and immortality affects how we look on the physical challenges of mortality, how we live our mortal lives, and how we relate to those around us.

The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!

The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives. Resurrection is much more than merely reuniting a spirit to a body held captive by the grave. We know from the Book of Mormon that the resurrection is a *restoration* that brings back "carnal for carnal" and "good for that which is

good" (Alma 41:13; see also verses 2–4 and Helaman 14:31). The prophet Amulek taught, "That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:34). As a result, when persons leave this life and go on to the next, "they who are righteous shall be righteous still" (2 Nephi 9:16), and "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life . . . will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18).

The principle of restoration also means that persons who are not righteous in mortal life will not rise up righteous in the resurrection (see 2 Nephi 9:16; 1 Corinthians 15:35–44; D&C 88:27–32). Moreover, unless our mortal sins have been cleansed and blotted out by repentance and forgiveness (see Alma 5:21; 2 Nephi 9:45–46; D&C 58:42), we will be resurrected with a "bright recollection" (Alma 11:43) and a "perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness" (2 Nephi 9:14; see also Alma 5:18). The seriousness of that reality is emphasized by the many scriptures suggesting that the resurrection is followed immediately by the Final Judgment (see 2 Nephi 9:15, 22; Mosiah 26:25; Alma 11:43–44; 42:23; Mormon 7:6; 9:13–14). Truly, "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

The assurance that the resurrection will include an opportunity to be with our family members—husband, wife, parents, brothers and sisters, children, and grandchildren—is a powerful encouragement for us to fulfill our family responsibilities in mortality. It helps us live together in love in this life in anticipation of joyful reunions and associations in the next.

Our sure knowledge of a resurrection to immortality also gives us the courage to face our own death—even a death that we might call premature. Thus, the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon "never did look upon death with any de-

gree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it" (Alma 27:28).

The assurance of immortality also helps us bear the mortal separations involved in the death of our loved ones. Every one of us has wept at a death, grieved through a funeral, or stood in pain at a graveside. I am surely one who has. We should all praise God for the assured resurrection that makes our mortal separations temporary and gives us the hope and strength to carry on.

### The resurrection and temples

We are living in a glorious season of temple building. This is also a consequence of our faith in the resurrection. Just a few months ago I was privileged to accompany President Hinckley to the dedication of a new temple. In that sacred setting I heard him say:

"Temples stand as a witness of our conviction of immortality. Our temples are concerned with life beyond the grave. For example, there is no need for marriage in the temple if we were only concerned with being married for the period of our mortal lives."

This prophetic teaching enlarged my understanding. Our temples are living, working testimonies to our faith in the reality of the resurrection. They provide the sacred settings where living proxies can perform all of the necessary ordinances of mortal life in behalf of those who live in the world of the spirits. None of this would be meaningful if we did not have the assurance of universal immortality and the opportunity for eternal life because of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We believe in the literal, universal resurrection of all mankind because of "the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 9:12). We also testify of "the Living Christ," as was said in the re-

cent apostolic declaration of that same name:

"We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. . . .

"We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

I testify of that reality and of the reality of His Resurrection and ours, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

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### President Hinckley

Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, spoke to us, followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We also acknowledge the broadcast of these proceedings over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

We thank the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

For your information, a video presentation entitled *Special Witnesses of Christ* will be shown over the Church satellite system immediately following this session of conference. This program will also be shown on Sunday over KSL and KBYU.

## President James E. Faust

### The Tabernacle and Conference Center

My beloved brothers and sisters, today is historic. This is the first general conference of this century and millennium, and the first to be held in this great new Conference Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I join with all of you in expressing admiration, respect, and appreciation for the vision of our great prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. His was the faith

and courage to move forward with this great project.

With a tear of sadness, we leave our beloved Tabernacle, the traditional site for general conference. As President Hinckley has said, "We have outgrown it." We pause to pay tribute to the faith, vision, and inspiration of Brigham Young and his associates who in faith built the Tabernacle, the construction of which is truly remarkable. I have been in the ceiling area of the Tabernacle, where the origi-

nal rawhide bindings are still wrapped around the timbers of the roof structure. Although the timbers have since been reinforced with steel, the creative handiwork of the faithful pioneer Saints still stands as a symbol of their great faith.

### **A marvelous but challenging future**

I believe the future will be great and marvelous in many respects. Opportunities for education and learning have increased and will continue to increase dramatically. One person defined it this way: "Education is when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get if you don't."<sup>1</sup>

Now and in the future, vast amounts of information are becoming more accessible worldwide through electronic devices in the home, the workplace, or the local library. However, great will be the challenges and endless the problems because with this wave of knowledge, life actually becomes more complicated. Brigham Young said, "It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise."<sup>2</sup>

### **The shield of faith**

As we move into a new era, we have only one safe course: to press forward in faith. Faith will be our strong shield to protect us from the fiery arrows of Satan. Values should not change with time because faith in Jesus Christ is indispensable to happiness and eternal salvation. The greatest century of advancement in science and technology has just ended. Yet a spirit of darkness prevails in our day as it did many centuries ago when Jesus Christ was about to be crucified. Even so, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"Great blessings await us at this time, and will soon be poured out upon us, if we are faithful in all things, for we are even entitled to greater spiritual blessings than they were, because they had Christ in person with them, to instruct them in the great plan of salvation. His personal presence we have not, therefore we have need of greater faith."<sup>3</sup>

Faith is the first principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth by the Prophet Joseph: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup> This faith will be the sanctuary for our souls.

### **Cautions about scientific progress**

Never before in the history of the world has the need for faith in God been greater. Although science and technology open up boundless opportunities, they also present great perils because Satan employs these marvelous discoveries to his great advantage. The communication highway that spans the globe is overloaded with information for which no one bears responsibility for its truth or its source. Crime has become much more sophisticated and life more perilous. In war, killing has become far more efficient. Great challenges lie ahead unless the power of faith, judgment, honesty, decency, self-control, and character increases proportionately to compensate for this expansion of secular knowledge. Without moral progress, stimulated by faith in God, immorality in all its forms will proliferate and strangle goodness and human decency. Mankind will not be able to fully express the potential nobility of the human soul unless faith in God is strengthened.

In our time the belief that science and technology can solve all of mankind's problems has become a theocracy. I would despair if I thought our eternal salvation depended on scientific, techni-

cal, or secular knowledge separate from righteousness and the word of God. The word of God as spoken by His prophets through the centuries justifies no other conclusion.

Many believe that the transcendent answers to life's questions lie in the test tube, in the laboratories, in the equations, and in the telescopes. This theocracy of science leaves out the ultimate answer to the overarching question, "Why?" Knowing cause and effect is fascinating but does not explain why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going. As Albert Einstein said, "I shall never believe that God plays dice with the world."<sup>5</sup>

President Harold B. Lee once said: "No matter what his progress in science, man must always be subject to the will and direction of Divine Providence. Man has never discovered anything that God has not already known."<sup>6</sup>

### **The First Vision unlocked the heavens**

I do not believe that this great outpouring of knowledge happened by chance. All of this secular knowledge did not come solely from the creative minds of men and women. Mankind has been on the earth a long time. Over the centuries, knowledge came at a snail's pace.

I believe that the appearance of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in 1820 to Joseph Smith unlocked the heavens not only to the great spiritual knowledge revealed in this dispensation but also to secular knowledge. "Anthropologists inform us that for thousands of years the average human being could expect to live about 25 to 30 years."<sup>7</sup> But since the late 19th century, life expectancy worldwide has risen to 64 years.<sup>8</sup> New ideas, including scientific inventions and discoveries of better ways of doing things, were being produced annually at 39 a year from 4,000 B.C. to A.D. 1, contrasted to 3,840 new ideas a year in the 19th century, while today they are created at the rate of 110,000 a year.<sup>9</sup>

### **Develop faith to resist secularism**

Now comes the challenge to prevent the scientific, technical, and intellectual from stifling the spiritual enlightenment in our lives. As someone once said, "The greatest of undeveloped resources [in our country] is faith; the greatest of unused power is prayer."<sup>10</sup> Technology may help us communicate with each other and the world, but not with God.

I wish to sound a voice of warning to this people. I solemnly declare that this spiritual kingdom of faith will move forward with or without each of us individually. No unhallowed hand can stay the growth of the Church or prevent fulfillment of its mission. Any of us can be left behind, drawn away by the seductive voices of secularism and materialism.

To sustain faith, each of us must be humble and compassionate, kind and generous to the poor and the needy. Faith is further sustained by daily doses of spirituality that come to us as we kneel in prayer. It begins with us as individuals and extends to our families, who need to be solidified in righteousness. Honesty, decency, integrity, and morality are all necessary ingredients of our faith and will provide sanctuary for our souls.

### **Faith enhances our gifts and abilities**

Simple faith in God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost is like a supercharger operating in our lives. As Elder Charles W. Penrose said:

"Some people will not believe anything they cannot grasp with their human reason or cannot see with their natural eyes. But blessed is the man of faith, blessed is the woman of faith! For by faith they can see into things that cannot be discerned by the natural eyes. They can reach out to the regions of immortality, grasp eternal realities and lay hold upon the things of God!"<sup>11</sup> This is so because through faith, our natural gifts and

powers of achievement are increasingly enhanced.

Faith intensifies and magnifies our gifts and abilities. There is no greater source of knowledge than the inspiration that comes from the Godhead, who have all understanding and knowledge of that which has been, is now, and will be in the future.

### **Faith of Amanda Smith**

At Haun's Mill, a heroic pioneer woman, Amanda Smith, learned by faith how to do something beyond her abilities and the scientific knowledge of her time. On that terrible day in 1838, as the firing ceased and the mobsters left, she returned to the mill and saw her eldest son, Willard, carrying his seven-year-old brother, Alma. She cried, "Oh! my Alma is dead!"

"No, mother," he said, "I think Alma is not dead. But father and brother Sardius are [dead!]" But there was no time for tears now. Alma's entire hipbone was shot away. Amanda later recalled:

"Flesh, hip bone, joint and all had been ploughed out. . . . We laid little Alma on a bed in our tent and I examined the wound. It was a ghastly sight. I knew not what to do. . . . Yet was I there, all that long, dreadful night, with my dead and my wounded, and none but God as our physician and help. 'Oh my Heavenly Father,' I cried, 'what shall I do? Thou seest my poor wounded boy and knowest my inexperience. Oh, Heavenly Father, direct me what to do!' And then I was directed as by a voice speaking to me.

" . . . Our fire was still smouldering. . . . I was directed to take . . . ashes and make a lye and put a cloth saturated with it right into the wound. . . . Again and again I saturated the cloth and put it into the hole . . . , and each time mashed flesh and splinters of bone came away with the cloth; and the wound became as white as chicken's flesh.

"Having done as directed I again prayed to the Lord and was again instructed as distinctly as though a physician had been standing by speaking to me. Near by was a slippery-elm tree. From this I was told to make a . . . poultice and fill the wound with it. . . . The poultice was made, and the wound, which took fully a quarter of a yard of linen to cover, . . . was properly dressed. . . .

"I removed the wounded boy to a house . . . and dressed his hip; the Lord directing me as before. I was reminded that in my husband's trunk there was a bottle of balsam. This I poured into the wound, greatly soothing Alma's pain.

" 'Alma my child,' I said, 'you believe that the Lord made your hip?'

" 'Yes, mother.'

" 'Well, the Lord can make something there in the place of your hip, don't you believe he can, Alma?'

" 'Do you think that the Lord can, mother?' inquired the child, in his simplicity.

" 'Yes, my son,' I replied, 'he has showed it all to me in a vision.'

"Then I laid him comfortably on his face, and said: 'Now you lay like that, and don't move, and the Lord will make you another hip.'

"So Alma laid on his face for five weeks, until he was entirely recovered—a flexible gristle having grown in place of the missing joint and socket, which remains to this day a marvel to physicians. . . .

"It is now nearly forty years ago, but Alma has never been the least crippled during his life, and he has traveled quite a long period of the time as a missionary of the gospel and [is] a living miracle of the power of God."<sup>12</sup>

### **Strengthen faith by exercising it**

The treatment was unusual for that day and time, and unheard of now, but when we reach an extremity, like Sister Smith, we have to exercise our simple

faith and listen to the Spirit as she did. Exercising our faith will make it stronger. As Alma taught:

"If ye will . . . exercise a particle of faith, . . . let this desire work in you even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

"Now . . . it must needs be . . . that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge [your] soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten [your] understanding. . . .

"Now behold, would not this increase your faith?"<sup>13</sup>

Righteousness is a companion to faith. Strong faith is earned by keeping the commandments. This helps us, as Paul said, to "put on the whole armour of God."<sup>14</sup>

### **Eternal truths are the foundation of faith**

There are for this people some absolutes upon which our faith must rest. They are basic, eternal truths. They are that:

1. Jesus, the Son of the Father, is the Christ and the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

2. Joseph Smith was the instrument through which the gospel was restored in its fulness and completeness in our time.

3. The Book of Mormon is the word of God and, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, is the keystone of our religion and is another testament of Jesus as the Christ and the Redeemer of all mankind.

4. Gordon B. Hinckley holds, as all of the preceding Presidents of the Church did, all of the keys and authority restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

This is the work of God. I believe and testify that, as Paul said, if we can "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,"<sup>15</sup> we can go forward with great hope and confidence into the future. We will be given

strength to overcome all adversity. We will rejoice in our blessings and find peace in our souls. That we may do so I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Pete Seeger.
2. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 72.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 90.
4. Articles of Faith 1:1.
5. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 950.
6. *Be Ye Not Deceived*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (4 May 1965), 6.
7. Stephen Moore, "Great American Century Is Just Beginning," *Arizona Republic*, 9 Jan. 2000.
8. *New York Times 2000 Almanac* (1999), 484.
9. See Charles I. Jones, "Was an Industrial Revolution Inevitable? Economic Growth over the Very Long Run," working paper 7375, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Mass., Oct. 1999, 32.
10. Roger W. Babson, *Religion and Business* (1921), 80.
11. *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 14 Sept. 1880, 1.
12. "Amanda Smith," in Andrew Jenson, comp., *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (1882–90), 5:84–86; paragraphing and punctuation altered.
13. Alma 32:27–29.
14. Ephesians 6:11.
15. Ephesians 4:13.

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The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ernan A. Call of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Ernan A. Call offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Behold the Wounds in Jesus' Hands." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the Report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1999.

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The choir sang "Behold the Wounds in Jesus' Hands."

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## Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas S. Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James E. Faust as Second Coun-



selor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may also manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Those who can now join with us in extending a vote of appreciation to Elders Douglas L. Callister, Donald L. Hallstrom, Cleto P. de Oliveria, and Octaviano Tenorio for their service as Area Authority Seventies, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Lance B. Wickman, Lynn G. Robbins, Donald L. Hallstrom, and Ronald A. Rasband as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Douglas L. Callister, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, H. Aldridge Gillespie, and

Robert C. Oaks. Those in favor, please signify. Opposed, if any, may also signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: Jorge O. Abad, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, José C. Aleson, Gutenberg G. Amorim, José E. Boza, Edison M. Cabrito, Tad R. Callister, Marco A. Cardenas, Yatyr M. César, Flávio A. Cooper, Robert M. Cowan, Reynaldo L. Cuyong, Fred C. Dimaya, Rowland E. Elvidge, Jaime Ferreira, Roberto García, D. Rex Gerratt, José L. Gonzalez, James J. Hamula, Ralph W. Hardy Jr., Joseph T. Hicken, Merrill F. Higham, Michael L. Jensen, Glen O. Jensen, Spencer V. Jones, Ronald L. Loveland, Hans H. Mattsson, James B. McDonald, Ross H. McEachran, A. Roger Merrill, Haruyoshi Nakamura, Alfonso L. Ramos, Dale G. Renlund, Carlos C. Revillo Sr., Lindon J. Robison, J. Mitchel Scott, Jean A. Tefan, Guillermo Torres, and Roland N. Walker. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy to take their places on the stand as directed by the ushers. Thank you.

## Church Audit Committee Report for 1999

**Ted E. Davis**

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are indepen-

dent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-affiliated organizations. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to Church

records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. This department performs internal audits of worldwide Church operations and audits the various financial statements of the Church in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also monitors contributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems for the year ended December 31, 1999.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1999 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. This Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other controls and our review of Church audit reports for 1999 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1999, have been managed in accordance with revelation and established Church policies and procedures.

Church-affiliated organizations, including Deseret Trust Company and Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, are operated separately from the Church. The financial activities of these affiliated organizations were not reviewed by the Church Audit Committee in 1999. However, we have verified that these organizations, as well as Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education, are being audited annually by independent public accounting firms.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee  
Ted E. Davis, Chairman  
Donald D. Salmon  
Frank M. McCord

## Church Statistical Report for 1999

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, at the direction of the First Presidency, the following statistical report represents the membership growth and status of the Church for the year ending December 31, 1999. This information is based on reports that were received prior to general conference.

### Church units

Stakes . . . . .	2,542
Districts . . . . .	636
Missions . . . . .	333
Wards and branches . . . . .	25,793

### Church membership

Total membership . . . . .	10,752,986
Increase in children of record during 1999 . . . . .	84,118
Converts baptized during 1999 . . . . .	306,171

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries . . . . .	58,593
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### Temples

Temples dedicated during 1999 . . . . .	15
Temples in operation . . . . .	68

Ground was broken and construction began on 30 new temples during 1999; 17 additional temples were announced and are awaiting construction.

#### **Prominent members who have passed away since last April**

*Elder Carlos E. Asay, an emeritus General Authority; Sister Virginia Pickett*

*Backman, wife of Elder Robert L. Backman, an emeritus General Authority*

#### **President Faust**

Our first speaker in this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder L. Tom Perry**

To Brother Ted E. Davis, Donald D. Salmon, Frank M. McCord: as a member of the Church I'd just like to personally thank you for the untold hours, days, and years you have spent in assuring me that everything in the Church, accounting-wise, is in proper order. It's deeply appreciated, I'm sure, by nearly 11 million other members of the Church. Thank you so much.

#### **Use of technology to spread the gospel**

Over the last couple of years, we have watched with great anticipation the construction of this beautiful Conference Center. Now we find ourselves enjoying this historic general conference with many more thousands present to hear the words of the prophets. This is surely the beginning of a new era in Church history—an era of broader, more profound reach and influence, an era of greater growth and impact.

Before the final meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve last year, President Hinckley, sensing the forthcoming changes about to occur, proposed that we come to the temple fasting and conclude our year, the century, and a millennium with a fast and testimony meeting. So not to detract from the spirit of testimony, he requested that we dispense with any business items at this special meeting and save them for the new year.

The meeting was a spiritual feast, filled with the witness and testimony of our Lord and Savior. After partaking of the sacrament, each member of the Twelve stood and bore his witness to the mission of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world. The concluding three testimonies were given by members of the First Presidency, the final witness being given by President Hinckley. It was a sobering yet joyous occasion as we strengthened each other with strong testimonies.

President Hinckley added to his powerful, emotional witness a list of concerns for the future. One of his concerns particularly stuck in my mind. His worry was that with the great growth of the Church throughout the world, it would become increasingly difficult for the Apostles to reach all the members of the Church and personally admonish them to live the gospel. Thus, the future would bring greater reliance on technology to carry the gospel message to the worldwide Church.

As we review the sacred history contained in the holy scriptures, we find similar events when a prophet of God sees significant changes in the horizons ahead. It is interesting that when such critical events occur, great and inspired attention and detail are given both to the prophetic message *and* the way it is delivered—that

is, the technology that's used to carry the gospel message.

### **King Benjamin instructs his sons**

I am reminded of the great sermon King Benjamin delivered to his people, which is found in the first chapters of the book of Mosiah. This righteous king had served his people long and faithfully. It was time to turn the leadership over to his son. But before doing so, he wanted to leave his witness and testimony of his Lord and Savior to his people. He wanted first to instruct his sons "that . . . they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

" . . . He also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God" (Mosiah 1:2-3).

Keeping the doctrine pure was foremost in King Benjamin's mind, so he wanted all of his people to receive his witness and his word. He instructed that Mosiah, his son and successor, be brought before him, and to him he gave specific instructions concerning the gathering of his people for this, his final conference. He said:

"My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us.

"And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (Mosiah 1:10-11).

### **King Benjamin teaches his people**

Then Mosiah went forth and proclaimed to the people that they should gather themselves and go up to the temple, where they might hear the words of his father. And the people gathered together, and "they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another" (Mosiah 2:5). They pitched their tents with their doors toward the temple so that they might hear the words of King Benjamin as he instructed them in the doctrine of eternal life. Because of the numbers of people that were there gathered within and without the walls of the temple, the king had a tower erected so they could hear his words. But he realized that even with the tower not all would be able to hear, so he caused that his words should be written and sent forth among the families who were not within the sound of his voice, that all might receive his words. (See Mosiah 2:6-8.)

From this tower he told his people to open their ears and listen to his testimony of the Savior. After prophesying and bearing testimony, he counseled them about how to return to their Heavenly Father:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and

spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it" (Mosiah 2:41).

Finally, to ensure that the people understood his words and kept their covenants with God to keep His commandments, King Benjamin "appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made" (Mosiah 6:3). In many ways, King Benjamin used all the technologies available to him in his day to gather his people, spread the good word of God, and reinforce the word.

#### **President Grant's use of new technology**

In another era we find another prophet using new media to have his message reach the hearts of the people. There was a special conference held at the time the Church reached its 100th birthday. We find this record from the 100th annual conference, held in the Tabernacle on Sunday, April 6, 1930:

"In accordance with instructions previously issued by the First Presidency of the Church, the following program was carried out in all the wards and branches of the Church, commencing at 10:00 A.M., Sunday, April 6th, except . . . where arrangements had been made for the people to assemble in their local chapels and listen, by means of radio equipment, to the services as they were broadcast from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. . . .

" . . . The [Tabernacle] was crowded to capacity, every seat being taken, and the aisles and doorways and every other available space occupied" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 2).

President Heber J. Grant, presiding at this broadcast session of the general conference, began:

"My heart is full of gratitude beyond my power to express as I look upon this wonderful audience of the priesthood of the living God, together with officers of our organizations, assembled here in conference in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"I am about to read to you an address by the First Presidency of the Church, copies of which have been sent to all wards, stakes and missions in all countries where we have organizations of the Church. At this hour all over the world this message will be read to our people" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 3).

Like King Benjamin, President Grant began by bearing his testimony of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he went on to emphasize some of the great scientific knowledge, inventions, and industrial developments that have harnessed the forces of the universe and been adapted for the comfort and convenience of men. He stated:

"Undoubtedly the greatest miracle of the century is the accomplishment by which the human voice, with the personality of the speaker, may be indefinitely preserved and reproduced with every detail of originality. . . .

"Contemplating these accomplishments of the past century, to which but brief reference has been made, we are led to exclaim:

"Great and marvelous are thy ways, O Lord.

"From eternity to eternity Thou art the same!

"Thy purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay Thy hand!" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 5).

#### **Use of modern technology today**

Now, on this day, April 1, in the year 2000, we are gathered in this beautiful new Conference Center, which has been built so many more thousands can see the

prophet and hear his voice. But even with this building and the increased ability to travel among the Saints to meet them in so many other lands, smaller numbers will be able to enjoy that personal contact with the prophets and apostles because of the growth of the Church. Technology has blessed us with many innovations to spread the message of the gospel through satellite systems; our own network web site, television, and radio; as well as the written text in our magazines and newspaper. All of these add to our delivery systems, which greatly increase our ability to receive the messages that are delivered.

### **Internalize messages of the gospel**

But the bricks and mortar and the continued expansion of technology will only bring the messages to us. One challenge remains the same from the time of King Benjamin to the time of President Grant to today—that is, the challenge of each individual and family, through personal and collective study, to internalize the messages of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Salvation is not in facilities or technology, but in the word. Only in the power of the word will it impact our lives and help us to live closer to our Father in Heaven.

Remember the words of the Lord when He first instructed the Saints in His

newly restored Church on April 6, 1830. He declared:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1, 4–5).

It is wonderful to be in this beautiful new facility and to have new technology which carries conference sessions throughout the world. But it is the message we receive which, if we study and practice, will bring us the light of the gospel as further preparation in our great quest for eternal life.

This is my humble testimony to you, and I do it in the name of our Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Glenn L. Pace and Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

## **Elder Glenn L. Pace**

### **Life enriched by the temple**

Several years ago I attended a BYU football game with some of our young children. We lost the game. I really hate it when that happens. We listened to the coaches' show on the ride back to our home in Bountiful. When it was over, my children had no alternative but to listen

to my own postgame show. Just as I had completed my final analysis of what went wrong in the game, my seven-year-old daughter asked, “Dad, when you see the temple, do you get a good feeling inside?” I wondered, “Where in the world did that come from?” As I was trying to figure out what that comment had to do with the football game, I glanced over at

her and could see she was looking out the window at the Salt Lake Temple. For some reason the game no longer mattered.

My whole life has been enriched by experiences of the temple. Our parents would take us to Temple Square in Salt Lake City on a regular basis. They would point to the temple and tell us that they were married there and because of that we would always be together as a family. What comfort that brought to a little boy whose biggest fear was that his parents might die. Now what comfort it brings to a grown man whose parents have passed on to the other side.

When I was 10 years old, in the shadows of the Salt Lake Temple I first read the Joseph Smith story and received a powerful testimony of the truthfulness of the Restoration.

I remember with thanksgiving going to the temple with my parents and receiving my endowment prior to departing for my mission.

My wife and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple about three years later. In subsequent years I have had the honor of performing the temple marriages of each of our six children.

### **Temple building is a modern miracle**

We know many members of the Church have not had the luxury I have had of growing up around temples. Because of this knowledge we were all thrilled with the announcement made by President Hinckley in October of 1997 when he said, "We are determined . . . to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 50).

Since that time we have rejoiced and marveled as we have heard announcements of numerous temples and subsequently read of their open houses and dedications. We are witnessing a modern-

day miracle and fulfillment of prophecy. What a wonderful time to be alive!

### **The adversary's opposition to temples**

Our excitement over the building of temples is not shared by all. The adversary in particular is having a major temper tantrum as he sees his power threatened.

Over the last two years I have witnessed his wrath firsthand in West Africa. He has been very active, trying to prevent the building of a temple in that part of the world. Two years ago President Hinckley announced that there would be a temple in West Africa located in Accra, Ghana. Since then the adversary has been relentless in trying to prevent that from happening. Why is Lucifer so concerned?

We have 85,000 members in West Africa, and the Church is growing very rapidly. Sacrament meeting attendance is over 50 percent, but currently only 400 members have been endowed because of the prohibitive expense of traveling thousands of miles to Johannesburg or London. We have over 700 full-time African missionaries serving in the mission field, and very few of them have been endowed.

The African people have waited for centuries to receive the fulness of the gospel and have been through much pain and suffering. Now, at last, they can receive every blessing available to God's children. Worthy members can receive the temple endowment and be able to have their families sealed together for time and for all eternity.

Faithfulness to temple covenants brings an acceleration of spiritual progress. Elder John A. Widtsoe explained, "They will attain more readily to their place in the presence of the Lord; they will increase more rapidly in every divine power; they will approach more nearly to the likeness of God; they will more completely realize their divine destiny" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 [1960], 300).

That is why Lucifer is so concerned. In addition, he is aware of the large number of Africans who have accepted the gospel on the other side of the veil and are anxiously awaiting their proxy baptism and temple endowment, as well as being sealed to their families. When a temple is dedicated, the dam in the spirit world will break and there will be a flood of humanity who have lived on the African continent flow into the temple of the Lord as their descendants do their work for them. We should not be surprised that Lucifer is using every means at his disposal to keep a temple from these people.

### **A temple in West Africa**

Through centuries of suffering, the people in general have not become bitter. They are humble, teachable, and God-fearing. They know the scriptures, and they recognize the Shepherd's voice.

I have faith in their faith. I know the Savior loves the African people. Therefore, to paraphrase verse 33 of the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the [Congo] river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from [building a temple for the African Latter-day Saints]."

As the Savior has said, "I will not suffer that [the enemy] shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43).

It has been inspiring to see the Lord's hand in bringing the forces together

which will lead to an inevitable victory. There will be a temple in West Africa.

### **Don't take temple blessings for granted**

Last week we were driving from Provo to Bountiful again. As we left Provo, we could see the temple up on the hill. Before it was out of sight, the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple came into view, and then the Jordan River Utah Temple appeared, followed by the Salt Lake Temple. And immediately thereafter we could see the Bountiful Utah Temple standing like a jewel above that city.

I thought back to my daughter's question, "Dad, when you see the temple, do you get a good feeling inside?" I realized the overwhelming answer is, "Yes, when I see a temple I have a wonderful feeling inside." However, my heart aches for our African brothers and sisters who have never seen a temple in their whole life.

It is my hope and prayer that we will never take temple blessings for granted. I also have a prayer in my heart for West Africa and any other place in the world where outside influences are preventing the Saints from enjoying the blessings of a temple.

I testify to the divinity of this work. Jesus is the Christ. He stands at the head of this Church, and He is orchestrating the building of His kingdom here on earth. We are witnessing miracles, and therefore I can testify that they have not ceased. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Jay E. Jensen**

Words cannot describe the feelings of inadequacy associated with this holy calling, especially the responsibility to be

an especial witness of Jesus Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:25). I seek an interest in your faith and prayers.



### Keep an eternal perspective

A truth about which I want to speak comes from Alma: "Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:32).

The sequence in the teaching process from this verse is that our Heavenly Father first taught Adam and Eve the plan of redemption; then He gave them commandments. All commandments have their eternal importance in the context of the great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8; 34:9).

I know that this truth is a key to conversion, retention, and activation. If we can help people first understand the plan, they will find a deeper and more permanent motivation to keep the commandments.

Another way of saying what Alma taught came from an experience one of the General Authorities shared. He related how he spoke with a sister he knows who years earlier went through a divorce. She approached him to thank him for the counsel he gave her during her darkest hours. She reminded him what he had told her: "Now sister, don't lose your eternal perspective. Always keep an eternal perspective." She said that truth became her pillar of strength.

When we understand the great plan of happiness, we are gaining an eternal perspective, and the commandments, ordinances, and covenants, and the experiences, trials, and tribulations can be seen in their true and eternal light.

### Efforts to dim our eternal perspective

Remember, however, that Satan will dim the brightness of hope and eternal perspective by the dark, compelling urgency of now. Such is the case with those mentioned in the Book of Mormon who "turned out of the way" (Helaman 6:31) and "became for themselves" (3 Nephi 1:29).

Laman and Lemuel turned out of the way and complained of their sufferings because they did not have their possessions, with which they said they "might have been happy" (1 Nephi 17:21). It was so with the prodigal son. With the urgency to receive his mortal inheritance, he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," which he took and "wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:12-13).

Still others are described by Nephi, who said that the devil will "stir them up to anger against that which is good . . . and lull them away into carnal security" (2 Nephi 28:20-21).

### Overcoming a mortal perspective

Those without an eternal perspective, or those who lose sight of it, make their own standards to benefit themselves and their own selfish interests. Their mortal perspective becomes their standard and for some their god.

Ammon taught King Lamoni, who had always lived by the light of his mortality, about God, a divine power higher than the king. The king "supposed that whatsoever [he] did was right" (Alma 18:5). But Ammon's example and message touched his heart, and he "began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong" (Alma 18:5). Ammon then "expounded unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 18:39).

After the prodigal son had lost all, "he came to himself, [and] he said, . . . I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" (Luke 15:17-18). It is significant that he acknowledged his sin against heaven, for there really is a heaven and a merciful and a just God who reigns there. He revealed a divine plan that includes the Final Judgment by His Son, who "employeth no servant there," and where we will all stand someday (2 Nephi 9:41).

## How to gain an eternal perspective

I am eternally thankful for wonderful parents and home-centered gospel learning where I first obtained an eternal perspective. That perspective was reinforced through my youth by leaders and teachers as I attended Church and seminary.

The most significant decision I made in my life to gain an eternal perspective and a firm understanding of the great plan of happiness was a full-time mission. By daily study of the Book of Mormon and as I taught the missionary discussions, I experienced the truth the Apostle Paul taught: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Romans 2:21). I learned the plan of happiness by teaching it again and again.

## Importance of hymns in conversion

While prayer, scripture study, and service in the Church helped me to learn the Father's plan and gain and develop an eternal perspective, I have an increased appreciation for the contribution that sacred hymns bring to conversion.

During my childhood and youth and especially in Primary, the hymns of the Restoration, written by true servants of God, played a profound role in my conversion to the gospel and an understanding of His plan. President Packer has said, "If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22).

In the First Presidency preface of the current hymnal, we are reminded that "inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. . . . Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build tes-

timony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, ix).

Many hymns reveal the doctrines of the great plan of redemption. Some hymns came as a result of great sacrifice, the ultimate being death, and they communicate a spirit of holiness and consecration to lead us to conversion to the Father and His plan.

With the teacher improvement emphasis this year, parents, teachers, and missionaries will improve gospel teaching by ensuring they understand the plan themselves and sing the hymns that carry the same spirit. Sing them—hopefully not in a perfunctory way, rather with purpose—to begin and end meetings and as part of lessons or to introduce or summarize ideas in the lessons.

I conclude with the words from this beautiful hymn:

I know my Father lives  
And loves me too.  
The Spirit whispers this to me . . .  
And tells me it is true.

He sent me here to earth,  
By faith to live his plan.  
The Spirit whispers this to me . . .  
And tells me that I can.  
["I Know My Father Lives," *Hymns*, no. 302]

I testify that the great plan of the Eternal God is true. God lives. Jesus is His Divine Son. Joseph Smith is a true prophet, and this work is directed by the Lord through 15 prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Faust

Elders Glenn L. Pace and Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Following

the singing, Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy will address us. He will then be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 "Now Let Us Rejoice."

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## Elder Gary J. Coleman

### Gratitude for Heavenly Father's plan

Now let us rejoice that we are here in a worship setting with living prophets, who now walk the earth and see beyond the seen, hear heaven-inspired words above the din of the day, and know our God.

There is a divine plan. It is called the plan of our Heavenly Father.<sup>1</sup>

We believe in God. We know that He lives and we can have faith in Him. The scriptures testify that we are the children of God, His literal spirit offspring.<sup>2</sup> We lived with Him before we came to this earth. We are created in His image, and He is our Heavenly Father. Therefore, we are all brothers and sisters.

Because our Heavenly Father loves us, He has prepared a plan for us as we live here in mortality. Before joining this Church, I remember my first experiences associated with this wonderful plan as I began to learn of the restored gospel. I became acquainted with latter-day scripture that teaches the importance of our premortal training in the spirit world and indicates that we received many lessons there to prepare us for our time here on earth.<sup>3</sup> I have learned from the scriptures and the living prophets that this life is the time to prepare ourselves to meet God and one day enjoy eternal life with Him.<sup>4</sup> The prophet Jacob exclaimed while referring to this eternal plan, "O how great the plan of our God!"<sup>5</sup> I know that God lives and wants to help us return to live with Him.

The great plan of God provided a Savior for us. All accountable persons sin and must pass through the experience of

death at the end of our mortality. Therefore, God sent Jesus Christ to fulfill the plan by helping us overcome sin and death. Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. Through His atoning sacrifice for each of us, He helps us overcome sin through repentance and baptism. Through His Resurrection, He makes it possible for everyone to overcome death and the grave. We have faith to follow Jesus and become more like Him. Oh, how we love our Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only "name . . . under heaven . . . whereby [we] can be saved."<sup>6</sup> I know that Jesus saves us from the effects of sin and death.

We thank God for revealing His plan and the mission of Jesus through His chosen witnesses, the prophets and apostles. God gives these witnesses authority to act for Him. Their testimonies of the truths of the gospel are written in sacred books called scriptures. When people hear and read these teachings of the prophets, they can know they are true by the power of the Holy Ghost.

### "Are you still here?"

Nearly 28 years ago I desired to attend a general conference of the Church and drove 14 hours to be in Salt Lake City for the conference. I entered Temple Square at 8:00 A.M., where the line outside door number 10 was all the way across Temple Square and halfway down the south side of the Assembly Hall. I was nearly 300 feet from my goal. The usher called out that the Tabernacle was full. People dropped out of line, and I inched forward.

At five minutes before 10:00 I was the only person standing in front of my chosen door. The door opened, and the usher asked, "Are you still here?" He closed the door, and my heart sank. As the choir began to sing the opening hymn at 10:00 sharp, the door opened one more time, and the usher beckoned me inside. He placed me on half a seat and behind a post, but a welcome seat it was! I was able to sustain the Lord's chosen leaders and hear their counsel that special day, just as we have done here this afternoon.

### God's pattern for revealing truth

In our day, or the latter days, God has continued His pattern for revealing truth. He chose a young man named Joseph Smith to learn about the eternal plan of salvation. Joseph was confused about the different religions in his community, but the scriptures led him to ask God what he should do.<sup>7</sup> In answer to his prayer, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him.<sup>8</sup> Through this and other experiences, Joseph Smith was called as a prophet, like unto Moses and other biblical prophets.<sup>9</sup> Because Joseph saw and talked with the Savior, his work was to restore the truth about the great plan of God and the divine mission of our Lord. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

The Prophet Joseph received authority to teach the gospel and bring forth additional scripture. He was commanded to translate writings of ancient prophets from the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon prophets also knew about the plan of salvation and the sacred mission of Jesus Christ. The appearance of the resurrected Christ to the ancient people of the Americas is recorded in this sacred book.<sup>10</sup> He taught them His gospel and established His Church among them. I know that the Book of Mormon is another testament of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

God has promised that the Holy Ghost will testify to each of us that sacred truths have been restored and that Joseph Smith was called by God to be a special witness of Christ and His gospel. We may come to know the truth of all things God has revealed, through the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>11</sup>

### Conversion experiences

Millions of converts to this Church initially accepted the truths proclaimed by our missionaries in the first discussion. They then opened their hearts to all the discussions taught by the missionaries. They were invited to be baptized, confirmed, become "fellowcitizens with the saints,"<sup>12</sup> and continue on the gospel path to additional sacred covenants made in the temple.

A young couple with four children who were neighbors to a Latter-day Saint family accepted invitations to share activities and gospel-centered experiences. After the first missionary discussion, the father asked his LDS friend next door, "Would it be possible for you to baptize us on New Year's Eve? We would like to start the new year off right."

A young adult was seen near an institute of religion building, and he was asked if he had LDS friends. He responded, "Yes, and they are all on missions for the Mormon Church!" He was invited to be taught the gospel. He joined the Church. And one year later he was serving his own mission for the Lord.

A wonderful mother and wife in a beautiful nonmember family was asked if her spouse and children would be together for the eternities. Her answer was, "Yes, we will, won't we?" A few weeks later the mother, her husband, and the two oldest children were baptized because the answers to life's questions are found in this, the true Church of Jesus Christ.

A nonmember father whose son was serving a mission was asked, "Will you

be baptized on Father's Day?" He was baptized, with four former bishops of his family in attendance.

It is the power of the Spirit that convinces the investigator to pray about our message, to attend church, read the Book of Mormon, schedule further discussions, be baptized into the Lord's Church, and continue to be "nourished by the good word of God."<sup>13</sup> We invite all people to come unto Christ through the door of faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is the door to eternal life. The Holy Ghost will help all of us stay on the path to God's presence.

### **The Lord opens doors to teach the gospel**

Promptings from the Holy Ghost will also guide us to others who seek the true gospel. The Lord has said, "I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word."<sup>14</sup>

A few years ago I drove to Temple Square in Salt Lake City to meet an acquaintance of the missionaries. Their guest did not keep the appointment. My response to the missionaries was, "The Lord will provide someone for us to teach." In less than two to three minutes, two adult men walked through the front door of the North Visitors' Center and directly up to us. They spoke Spanish, and we did not! We assured them the best we could that someone would be able to help them. In moments, the only Spanish-speaking sister missionaries in the entire mission arrived at the visitors' center because they felt impressed to come there that morning!

Over a period of several weeks the missionary discussions were taught to those men, and they asked to be baptized. The Lord was true to His word. "An effectual door" was opened in the very moment it was needed for this beautiful experience.

We invite all who have been baptized and perhaps drifted away from the Lord to come back and renew your covenants with Him. With Jesus we say to all Israel, "Come home."<sup>15</sup> Come home to the truths and ordinances of eternal life.

### **Testimony**

Before becoming a member of this Church, I asked God, the Eternal Father, in fervent prayer about the truths of the Restoration. I know today, even as I knew that day, that hour, that moment 37 years ago, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the principles and doctrines of the restoration of the gospel are true. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the restoration of the true gospel. The Book of Mormon is a record of holy prophets and another testament of the living Christ, who stands at the head of this Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet for our day. He and 14 other Apostles are special witnesses of Christ in the only true Church on the earth. I pray that all of us will be able to answer the question "Are you still here?" and enter through the proper door to all the blessings of the gospel, now and forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *The Plan of Our Heavenly Father*, discussion 1 of *Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel* (1986).
2. See Acts 17:28-29.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:56.
4. See Alma 12:24.
5. 2 Nephi 9:13.
6. 2 Nephi 25:20.
7. See Joseph Smith—History 1:5-16.
8. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 28:2.
10. See 3 Nephi 11.
11. See Moroni 10:5.
12. Ephesians 2:19; see also verse 20.
13. Moroni 6:4.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 112:19.
15. "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### How is it with us?

It is wonderful, my brothers and sisters, to meet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this remarkable new Conference Center at the dawn of a new millennium.

One hundred years ago, President Lorenzo Snow stood in the Tabernacle to open the 70th annual conference of the Church. It was the first conference of the 1900s, and it came at the end of a period of great trial and tribulation for the Church. Total Church membership then was approaching 300,000, with the majority of those members living in Utah.

On Friday, April 6, 1900, President Snow said: "The Lord has prospered us amazingly, and we are doing large things at the present time. . . . Now that we are approaching our seventy-first year, the Lord expects that we will do something—something that will cause the nations to marvel, as what we have done has caused them already to wonder."

And then President Snow asked this compelling question: "Now, Latter-day Saints," he said, "how is it with us? We have received the Gospel. We have received the kingdom of God, established on the earth. We have had trouble; we have been persecuted. We were driven from Ohio; we were driven from Missouri; we were driven from Nauvoo; and once we were driven for a time from this beautiful city. Many have lost thousands of dollars; lost their homes and all they had, and some of the brethren have seen their wives and children lay down their lives because of the hardships they had to experience. . . . The people have looked with astonishment at the willingness of the Latter-day Saints to suffer these things. Why do we do this? . . . What is it that enables us to endure these persecutions and still rejoice?"

President Snow gave this answer: "It is because we have had revelations from the Almighty; because He has spoken to us in our souls and has given to us the Holy Ghost. . . . This Church will stand, because it is upon a firm basis. It is not from man; it is not from the study of the New Testament or the Old Testament; it is not the result of the learning that we received in colleges nor seminaries, but it has come directly from the Lord. The Lord has shown it to us by the revealing principle of the Holy Spirit of light and every man can receive this same spirit" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 2–3).

### Examine our commitment to Christ

It would be well for us, my brothers and sisters, to give careful consideration to that same question today: "How is it with us?" A century has passed; we are now in our 171st year as a church. Church membership is now approaching 11 million worldwide. Our members are respected leaders in almost every field of endeavor in nearly every country. The Church is growing. Temples are being built at an unprecedented pace. Missionary work continues to move forward. Church meetings are held on a regular basis in nearly every nation. Yet, as our prophets have indicated, "the Lord expects that we will do something."

But what? What is it that needs our personal attention? As I read and ponder the scriptures and carefully consider the Lord's counsel to His followers in every dispensation of time, it appears to me that the most important thing *every* one of us can do is to examine our own commitment and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must carefully guard against spiritual apathy and work to maintain the full measure of our loving loyalty to the Lord.

**True discipleship precludes complacency**

While it is true that extraordinary strides are being made throughout the Church, the enormity of the task before us is overwhelming. Simply stated, we have a ministry to all of our Heavenly Father's children on both sides of the veil. In that context, we have barely scratched the surface of our calling. True discipleship, therefore, precludes any complacency. The Lord expects us to continue moving the Church forward and even to accelerate our pace toward the literal fulfillment of Daniel's prophetic vision of "a stone . . . cut out without hands . . . that . . . became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35).

To do this more effectively, each one of us needs to follow Nephi's counsel to "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. [For] if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). The power of the Holy Ghost will fill our hearts and minds as we look to the Savior for answers to the many challenges of life.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, it is important that we each know for ourselves that Jesus is the Christ and that He has restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith the fulness of His everlasting gospel. As we press forward in His service, spiritual experiences will increase our faith, and we will find great joy. Our understanding of the essential doctrines and eternal truths that have been restored will become a firm foundation of our faith. And as we come to know and understand these true doctrines for ourselves, we will discover that there is also a great need for us to share our knowledge and beliefs with others while always maintaining their friendship and goodwill.

**Share gospel truths with others**

While we should be pleased to testify to the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will hear our message, there are times when all that we can hope to accomplish is to help those who are not members of the Church better understand our basic beliefs. There are many people who know a little about us, who are curious and who wonder about us but who are not ready to change their lifestyle or make eternal commitments. We need to be prepared to teach them in ways that they can understand and appreciate, even if they are not yet prepared to respond to spiritual promptings and to accept the gospel in their lives.

For example, it has been my experience that when members and our missionaries are guided by the Spirit, our conversations with non-Latter-day Saint friends and associates flow easily and naturally to the subject of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. All of us, regardless of race, color, or creed, belong to the family of our Heavenly Father. Most people share this belief. Our understanding and knowledge of this basic truth should compel us to love all of God's children as our brothers and sisters and to explain to them that we all lived premortally as spirit children of our Heavenly Father. There we learned about and accepted His plan for us to come to earth to gain a mortal body and be tested. Our deep-rooted respect for all mankind is enhanced by our understanding of our relationship one to another in our premortal life.

This understanding then makes it possible to explain in a nonthreatening way our belief in our eternal relationship to Jesus Christ and our deep commitment to Him. Our hope and faith are rooted in the profound understanding that He lives today and that He continues to lead and guide His Church and

His people. We rejoice in the knowledge of the living Christ, and we reverently acknowledge the miracles He continues to work today in the lives of those who have faith in Him. He is the head of the Church, which bears His name. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. Through Him we worship and pray to our Heavenly Father. We are grateful beyond measure for the essential and awesome power His Atonement has in each of our lives.

Because we love the Lord, we should be spiritually sensitive to moments when we can share the powerful and important truths of the gospel with others. Perhaps more importantly, however, we should seek at all times to purify ourselves and to lead such worthy lives that the Light of Christ emanates from us in all that we say and do. Our day-to-day lives should stand as immutable witness of our faith in Christ. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

### Teaching about the Restoration

Once these important principles are understood, we can then explain and expand the understanding of our Father's children by sharing with them how Jesus Himself established and organized His Church in the meridian of time by giving "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

From there we can help our friends and neighbors understand the Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord, which was prophesied by those who helped to establish the Church in the first place. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians who were eagerly anticipating the Second Coming of the Savior that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away

first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also warned Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but . . . they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). And Peter presupposed a falling away when he spoke of "the times of refreshing" that would come before God would again "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Do you see how naturally and easily one principle of the Restoration leads to the next? Peter's prophecy almost begs for a discussion of the restoration of the gospel in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This in turn demands a dialogue about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the holy priesthood through the gift and power of God. From there it is so natural to share the principle of continuing revelation and the organization of the Church and its doctrines and programs.

### Sharing testimonies is the greatest service

Brothers and sisters, the Lord expects us to do something. I believe we are expected to increase our own faith, shake off any possible feelings of apathy, and by the power of the Holy Ghost reaffirm our commitment and intensify our service to the Lord. Then, when we seek to clarify someone's understanding of the Church, our lives—well and faithfully lived—can serve as a magnifying glass through which others can examine the impact of gospel living. Under the light of our good example, the Spirit can enlarge understanding of the Church and its mission to all with whom we have contact.

We need not apologize for our beliefs nor back down from that which we know to be true. But we can share it in a spirit of loving understanding—boldly



and confidently, with an eye single to the glory of God—without pressuring our listeners or feeling that we have failed in our duty if they do not immediately accept what we believe.

When we have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, we can then do simple things to help bring better understanding of the gospel into the lives of the less-active members of the Church, as well as those who are not of our faith. There is no need for any new program to do this. We don't need a handbook or a calling or a training meeting. The only need is for good members of the Church to learn to rely upon the power of the Holy Ghost and, with this power, reach out and touch the lives of our Father's children. There is no greater service we can render than sharing our personal testimonies with those who lack an understanding of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Resolve to do more to bless others**

So, brothers and sisters, "how is it with us?" Are we ready to do something? Can each one of us resolve today to increase our personal spiritual preparation by seeking the guidance of the Holy Ghost and then, with His power as our companion, bless more of our Father's children with understanding and knowledge that the Church is true?

I testify that the Savior lives and He will bless each one of us if we will do all that we can to move this great work of His Church forward. May each one of us resolve to do something more as we be-

gin this new millennium is my prayer, which I offer humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Athos M. Amorim of the Seventy.

## **Elder David B. Haight**

### **A joy to be here**

A little over two years ago at a meeting when President Gordon B. Hinckley announced this building would be built

in the year 2000, he then turned to me and said, "David, I expect you to be there."

President, I'm here. And I hope that if he says that we need another year or

so or whatever and that he expects me to be there, I hope that he says so, because I will follow his instructions.

It's a joy to be here with you and to witness this great historic meeting facility. I enjoyed President Hinckley's comments regarding the walnut from which this pulpit is made. The Tabernacle pulpit had both a red light and an amber light to assist the speaker with his time. As we get older, our eyesight usually isn't as sharp as it used to be. The amber light would come on, and if you didn't pay attention to that, the red light would start to blink. Brother LeGrand Richards, when the light was first installed, said, "Someone's put a silly light up here." He said, "I'll just put my hand over it." There isn't a light here today, so I don't know when I will end.

### **The Church's humble beginnings**

What a joy it is to be here with all of you! As I look at this vast audience and reflect upon our beginnings—our humble, humble beginnings—just imagine the Peter Whitmer log cabin in Fayette, New York. The dimensions as I recall were about 20 feet by 30 feet. There were two little bedrooms upstairs. The Peter Whitmer family lived there. There were no plumbing facilities in the house. There was a well outside and only a fireplace for cooking and heating, but in that humble building 170 years ago the Church was organized. Just imagine.

The Prophet Joseph had received a revelation with instructions regarding the organization of the Church. And in that humble little cabin, not only was the Church organized but the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed within one of those upstairs bedrooms made available to the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery. And in that little farmhouse the first elders of this Church were ordained, when the Prophet Joseph ordained Oliver Cowdery and then Oliver ordained the Prophet Joseph Smith. And

in that little farmhouse the first sacrament meeting was held after the Church was organized. Just imagine. The sisters brought bread and some grape juice for that first sacrament. Those were the humble beginnings of what we witness here today.

As we sit here and look at this vast audience, it's thrilling to contemplate our future and reflect upon the humble pioneer beginnings. In 1820 at the Sacred Grove, in answer to the Prophet Joseph's humble prayer, God the Father and His Son appeared to that 14-year-old young man, ushering in this work, the restoration of the gospel.

Think of 1830—the meeting in that little log cabin, which for a while was the headquarters of the Church. Imagine such a historical but heavenly meeting in that 20-by-30-foot frontier cabin. Part of the account tells of Peter Whitmer's wife, Mary. Mary Whitmer got up earlier that Sunday morning and walked out into the living room, where people were sleeping on the floor covered with homemade quilts. They had come by wagon or buggy or horse—friends and people who had heard about what would be happening on April 6th. There were probably 50 people assembled for the meeting.

With that humble, humble beginning, we assemble here today. We just want to say, "Hallelujah! Thank the Lord for all that's taken place." Words come into my mind, as I stand here, of faith, devotion, and gratitude—the faith of the people and the faith that we demonstrate by being here today; the devotion of those early members and the devotion that we have; and our hearts are full of gratitude for what has happened and what lies ahead.

### **Tradition of sustaining leaders**

I'm so grateful for my being able to be here, for my ancestry, for my wife, Ruby, for our children and all of our grandchildren. Our family has started a

tradition that on this day, wherever we might be living, we stand in front of the television set if we are at home or attend in our meetinghouse or Conference Center and we raise our right hand to sustain the officers of the Church, especially our living prophet. And so in my mind's eye, I have imagined today our own posterity in Brussels, Belgium; in London; Virginia; North Carolina; Texas; and California—raising their hands to the square on this day, learning how to do it, learning that it's important in the Church that they sustain the leaders.

### **Gratitude for the Restoration**

My heart is full of gratitude on this day for the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith and for all that he did to set in motion the Restoration, the revelations necessary for the onrolling of this work, line upon line and precept upon precept. Ponder the ruggedness of our beginning—the humble, humble beginning—and then look at us today.

He received the revelation, now the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which the Lord promised that Joseph Smith and others would receive the power and the authority to bring the Church “out of obscurity and out of darkness” (D&C 1:30). Think about what has happened under the inspired leadership of President Hinckley. The Joseph Smith Building we have today—in the preserving of that wonderful old building that was the Hotel Utah and is now the fine edifice that it is—we saw that come from the inspiration given to President Hinckley. And think of this building, as he explained to us, the direction that had come to him. And so to all of us as we assemble here today, I hope that we have grateful hearts for the knowledge that we have and the testimonies we have and for the feelings we have, that this is only the beginning. This is only a chapter in the onrolling of this work.

In that humble setting in Fayette, New York, when we think of what has taken place since then and what has happened in our lives and with our ancestors, I hope all of us have that gratitude and would have a desire to pass that on to our posterity and the knowledge that we have and the testimonies that we have that this work is true. I hope that we feel grateful for the eternal blessings we can receive as we watch and are part of the unfolding of the temple expansion throughout the world and of that blessing coming to the people.

### **Challenges in Ghana will be resolved**

As Brother Pace was speaking here a few moments ago about the challenges that we have in Ghana, I know that that will be taken care of. I stood under a tree on the campus of the university there and dedicated Ghana for the preaching of the gospel. Brother Banyan Dadson, who was vice president of the university and a member of the Church, stood there on that day and explained to the people how the natives in Ghana had settled that part of West Africa, and what a blessing it had been for those tribes of people. I know that that problem will be resolved; that will only be a chapter in the onrolling of this work.

### **Be a strong link in our family chains**

President Hinckley, in a comment a short time ago, talked about the links of his family, his family chain, and hoping that he would be a strong link in that chain and that *his* link would remain strong. He told the account of attempting to pull the stump of a tree out of the ground on their property and how the chain had broken. He went to the store to try to get another link to fix the chain so they could pull the tree stump out, which they were finally able to do. He said he thought of his own responsibility

ity to his posterity, to remain a strong link in that chain (see "Keep the Chain Unbroken," *Brigham Young Magazine*, spring 2000, 6).

I would hope and pray that in our own families, all of us, that we would have a desire to be a strong link in our own family chain, in our posterity, so that the eternal blessings that are part of the gospel, the blessings of the temple and the eternities, will be taught to our families in such a way that they will go on and on forever to affect many, many people. Be sure that those links are strong in your chain and that you pass the testimony that you have, the devotion that you have, to future generations. This vast audience here today is only a chapter in what will take place in the spreading of this work throughout the world.

### Share testimonies; be a good example

The Savior, following His Resurrection, appeared on the seashore when Peter and the others had gone back to fishing. He called out, asking if they had caught any fish, and they hadn't. He asked them to cast their nets on the other side. You remember the story so well.

They brought in the nets full of fish, and as they sat on the seashore, the Savior asked Peter, "Lovest thou me more

than these?" pointing to the valuable fish jumping in the nets. "Lovest thou me more than these?"

And Peter says, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

Then He said, "Feed my lambs." Then He asked Peter the second time and the third time, then directed, "Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep." (See John 21:15-17.)

May we have that testimony, that desire in our hearts, to teach others, to explain what we believe, and to live lives of righteousness, to live the good life, to be an example to mankind, and to be able to spread this work not only by what we say but by the way we act, the way we live, the way we represent the Church, and the type of example we are to mankind.

I know that God lives, that He is our Father—He loves us all—and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of a *living* God, and that they're real and they live today. I so bear witness, leaving you my love and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Athos M. Amorim offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 170th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission

to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be given by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood meeting with the choir singing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

The choir will now sing "Praise to the Man." Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

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## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **The sanctity of womanhood**

There is one title that the First Presidency and the Twelve seldom use, considering it too sacred—that of Apostle. It is in that role that I come to you, my beloved priesthood brethren.

I would speak of the sanctity of womanhood. President Hinckley has eloquently captured what the Lord has repeatedly inspired His servants to say of His precious daughters:

"Woman is God's supreme creation. Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been created, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good.

"Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her

understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth."<sup>1</sup>

Then President Hinckley warns us, "God will hold us accountable if we neglect His daughters."<sup>2</sup>

### **Satan's campaign against womanhood**

So many of our sisters are disheartened, even discouraged and disillusioned. Others are in serious trouble because of the choices they make. Satan has unleashed a seductive campaign to undermine the sanctity of womanhood, to deceive the daughters of God and divert them from their divine destiny. He well knows women are the compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving power that binds together the human family. He would focus their interests solely on their physical attributes and rob them of their exalting roles as wives and mothers. He has convinced many of the lie that they are third-class citizens in the kingdom of God. That falsehood has led some to trade their divinely given femininity for male coarseness.

The growing success of Lucifer's efforts was emblazoned on my mind

when in Salt Lake City I turned my car in front of a pickup truck loaded with attractive young women. Their vehicle then swerved in front of me, cutting dangerously close. The girls vented their displeasure with multiple vulgar comments and obscene gestures. They were dressed predominantly in male attire, yet some had immodest clothing that left little to the imagination. My heart sank. These are daughters of God. I resolved that if I ever had the chance, I would enlist the righteous priesthood of God to help such misguided young women.

### **Help young women overcome worldly trends**

Brethren, we can and must help them. I fear that much of their plight comes from our own neglect or misdeeds. As a priesthood husband, father, son, or brother, each of us absolutely must help each daughter of God we can to realize what sacred characteristics Father in Heaven has given her. Many are being cheated of the rich, full life and the blessings God would have them receive. Will you help them understand what they are sacrificing as they are led as innocent, blind sheep by those who, for personal gain and self-justification, would rob them of their priceless womanhood? Because it is their nature to give and please others, many women do not realize their intrinsic worth. That loss makes them vulnerable to those who would convince them that their major role is to be physically appealing.

So many of our own young women sacrifice their God-given endowment of femininity, deep spirituality, and a caring interest in others on the altar of popular worldly opinion. Young men, let such young women know that you will not seek an eternal companion from those that are overcome by worldly trends. Many dress and act immodestly because they are told that is what you want. In sensitive ways, communicate how distasteful revealing

attire is to you, a worthy young man, and how it stimulates unwanted emotions from what you see against your will.

Those young women who do embrace conservative dress standards and exhibit the attributes of a devoted Latter-day Saint are often criticized for not being "with it." Encourage them by expressing gratitude for their worthy example. Thank them for doing what is pleasing to the Lord and in time will bless their own husband and children. Many young women have returned to righteousness because of the example and understanding support of a worthy priesthood bearer. Perhaps a group of you could frankly discuss your concerns in an appropriate setting, such as a Sunday School or seminary class. Will you begin a private crusade to help young women understand how precious they are to God and attractive to you as they magnify their feminine traits and divinely given attributes of womanhood? You might even help mold the character and devotion of your own future eternal companion.

### **Influence of brothers, fathers, bishops**

As a brother, you can have a powerful, positive influence in your sister's life. Compliment her when she looks especially nice. She may listen to you more than to your parents when you suggest that she wear modest clothing. Simple courtesies like opening the door for her and building her self-esteem will encourage her to find her real worth.

Be a wise father who showers attention on each daughter. It will bring joy to you and fulfillment to her. When a daughter feels the warmth and approval of her father, she will not likely seek attention in inappropriate ways. As a father, acknowledge her good behavior. Listen to her. Praise her for her strengths. You will greatly enrich her life. She will model the behavior she observes. Let her see you treat your wife and other women with admiration and honest respect.

Bishops, encourage each young woman to ponder last Saturday's inspiring Young Women meeting. It will give her a vision of who she is and help her in her quest to fulfill her divine destiny. It will help her see how essential it is to stand valiantly against the destructive tide of the world and to bear her testimony of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, as we honor womanhood, each daughter of God will be encouraged to do likewise.

### **Sacred expressions of love**

Now I would speak of something that is most sacred. When we were created, Father in Heaven put in our body the capacity to stir powerful emotions. Within the covenant of marriage, when properly used in ways acceptable to both spouses and to the Lord, those emotions open the doors for children to come to earth. Such sacred expressions of love are an essential part of the covenant of marriage. Within marriage, however, the stimulation of those emotions can either be used as an end unto itself or to allow a couple to draw closer in oneness through the beautiful, appropriate expression of these feelings between husband and wife. There are times, brethren, when you need to restrain those feelings. There are times when you need to allow their full expression. Let the Lord guide you in ways that will enrich your marriage.

There are men, and unfortunately some women, who experiment with stimulating those emotions by influences outside of the covenant of marriage. There is a great difference between love and lust. Pure love yields happiness and engenders trust. It is the foundation of eternal joy. Lust will destroy that which is enriching and beautiful. A husband must have no private, hidden agenda that is kept secret from his wife. Sharing everything about each other's personal life is powerful spiritual insurance. When you

travel, take along a picture of your wife. Set it before you. Remember how you are loved and trusted. You will not be tempted to contaminate your mind or violate your covenants.

### **Destructiveness of pornography**

One of the most damning influences on earth—one that has caused uncountable grief, suffering, heartache, and destroyed marriages—is the onslaught of pornography in all of its vicious, corroding, destructive forms. Whether it be through the printed page, movies, television, obscene lyrics, the telephone, or the flickering personal computer screen, pornography is overpoweringly addictive and severely damaging. This potent tool of Lucifer degrades the mind, heart, and soul of any who use it. All who are caught in its seductive, tantalizing web and remain so will become addicted to its immoral, destructive influence. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help. The tragic pattern is so familiar. It begins with a curiosity that is fueled by its stimulation and is justified by the false premise that when done privately, it does no harm to anyone else. Lulled by this lie, the experimentation goes deeper, with more powerful stimulations, until the web closes and a terribly immoral, addictive habit is formed.

How can a man, particularly a priesthood bearer, not think of the damage emotionally and spiritually caused to women, especially to a wife, from such abhorrent activity? The participation in pornography in any of its lurid forms is a manifestation of unbridled selfishness.

Well did inspired Nephi declare, "And [the devil] will . . . pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, . . . and thus [he] cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell."<sup>3</sup>

Stake presidents and bishops, warn of this evil. Invite any captured by it to come to you for help.

**“Be ye clean”**

To each of you as an Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood bearer, I solemnly declare as a servant of Jesus Christ that despite what is taught in the world, the violation of the law of chastity is a very grievous sin. For your own well-being and for the blessing of His daughters, be ye clean. If there is even the slightest tendency to participate in immorality, eliminate it from your life. Where there has been any violation, talk to a bishop or stake president and clean up your life. Make it pure and righteous. You bear the priesthood of God. I testify that the Redeemer will help you. If you seek it, He will lead you to that help so that through full repentance, the Lord can forgive you.

**Express love for wives, mothers**

I know what it is to love a daughter of God who with grace and devotion served with the full feminine splendor of her righteous womanhood. As a husband, consistently tell your wife how much you love her. It will bring her great happiness. As a son, tell your mother how you love her. It will give her great joy. Let us be grateful to our Father in Heaven for His precious daughters. Let us help them as

much as we can. Then let us encourage every woman who questions her value to turn to her Heavenly Father and His glorified Son for a supernal confirmation of her immense individual worth. I testify that as each woman seeks it in faith and obedience, the Savior will continually prompt her through the Holy Ghost. That guidance will lead her to fulfillment, peace, and a consuming joy through magnifying her divinely appointed, sacred womanhood. I know the Savior will do that. I testify that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**NOTES**

This printed text includes segments that were not delivered due to time constraints.

1. “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
3. 2 Nephi 28:21.

**President Hinckley**

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

**Bishop H. David Burton**

Good evening, brethren. For months we have worried about this building's readiness for general conference. A miracle has been accomplished—a miracle made possible because professionals, as well as common, garden-variety men and women, have displayed uncommon devotion, sacrifice, and inspiration far beyond normal industry standards. I express deep appreciation to my counselors and to all individuals who have shared their talents on this project.

I've been in this building many times during its construction, but as I see it filled with priesthood holders tonight, I marvel at its size and beauty. For you who follow international soccer (football), the distance from where I stand to the very last row of the balcony is about three-fourths the length of one field. The distance is the equivalent of three basketball courts placed end to end or nearly four tennis courts fashioned in the same manner. A golfer would probably select



a nine iron to hit the ball over the last balcony row, and a world-class sprinter could run the distance in about nine seconds. To use a word I often hear, it is awesome!

### **Time-out to discuss priesthood issues**

On occasion I enjoy participating in or viewing sporting events. My wife suggests the time between occasions is too short. In many sports, if a participant or coach places the outstretched fingers of one hand in a perpendicular position to the palm of his other hand, it is a signal for time-out. The contest is temporarily halted while coaches and players discuss strategy. The term *time-out* is also used by some parents to describe to their children a state in which they will be placed if they continue on a course contrary to their parents' wishes. Time-out offers a person a chance to think about his or her behavior.

My Aaronic Priesthood colleagues, let's place ourselves in time-out this evening to discuss a few priesthood issues.

### **Honor the priesthood seven days a week**

Several weeks ago I was talking with my 16-year-old granddaughter. I asked her what she would tell the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood if she could speak to them. She said, "Grandpa, I would ask them to show respect for the priesthood and to be priesthood holders seven days a week rather than just one day, Sunday. Some guys do not show respect for the priesthood because they use profanity; some are involved in pornography; and a few are into drugs." I'm certain, my young brethren, that you'll agree that profanity, pornography, and drugs should not be a part of the life of a priesthood holder.

The priesthood isn't something we take off during the week and put on for Sunday. It is a 24-7 privilege and bless-

ing—that is, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Eliminate profane and crude speech**

Profanity and crudeness have become commonplace and are accepted by many as a normal part of their speech. Our sense of right and wrong has been dimmed by a constant bombardment of profanity and crudeness. It is rampant in music, schools, sports, shopping malls, and in our workplaces. Much everyday conversation is laced with crude terms and sprinkled with outright profane expressions, sometimes under the guise of humor.

Recently I was in a department store trying on shoes. Four young men were looking at what they labeled missionary shoes. It was evident at least two of the young men had received mission calls and were there to find shoes suitable for missionary service. I was surprised by a barrage of crude terms with a few profanities which seemed to routinely roll off their tongues. When they noticed there was someone else nearby, I heard one say, "Hey, guys, we better clean up our language," as he motioned with his head in my direction.

President Hinckley has said: "Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 494). Profanity and priesthood are not compatible. Neither is profanity compatible with missionary service. Profane and crude terms, if part of our conversation, need to be eliminated from our vocabularies. Conversation is one of the windows to our souls.

### **Avoid all forms of pornography**

During time-out let's talk about pornography. In recent years pornography

has spread like wildfire. We are exposed to it daily. Pornography is as addictive as many substances we would not even consider taking into our bodies. The consequences of pornography are catastrophic. Keep in mind that Satan does not want us to be happy or successful in our Aaronic Priesthood ministry. Make no mistake, he wants us to be miserable. His goal is to capture our hearts by enticing us to participate in terrible things such as pornography. Stay away from it. We must discipline ourselves to avoid books, magazines, music, pictures, videos, DVDs, movies, Internet sites, television programming—anything that contains pornography or sensual material. Pornography and priesthood are not compatible. Respect the priesthood; call a permanent time-out to any pornographic influence.

### **Refrain from using illicit drugs**

President Hinckley has reminded us that the “modern drug scourge has become as a plague on the world. . . . In most cases, the death it brings is not swift, but rather, it follows a long period spent in misery and pain and regret. Unlike the plagues of old, from which there was no known defense, the defense is clear and relatively easy in the case of illicit drugs. It lies in simply refraining from touching them” (“The Scourge of Illicit Drugs,” in *Speaking Out on Moral Issues* [1992], 127). We would not place our lives in jeopardy by playing with a venomous snake. Drugs are just as dangerous as the reptile’s deadly venom.

### **Leading the family is highest priority**

Our son returned to his home recently to find his son was sitting at the kitchen table with elbows on the table and his chin in his hands. Another son exhibited a sad countenance as he sat in the living room staring out the window. Their mom was not visible. Our son asked the boys where she might be. They

pointed to the bathroom. He quietly knocked on the door and asked, “Honey, are you in there?” She replied, “I’ve put myself in time-out.” Adults need an occasional time-out.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders, please join us in time-out. In the battle of daily living, it is easy to lose focus on our ministries as fathers and priesthood holders. If we are not careful, our vocations, hobbies, recreation, and even perhaps our Church service can adversely impact our responsibility as fathers and husbands.

President Howard W. Hunter had only one opportunity to address a general conference priesthood meeting while he was President of the Church. On that occasion, October 1994, President Hunter entitled his talk “Being a Righteous Husband and Father.” In that masterful address, he outlined a number of standards and expectations for all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. I commend the entire address for your review. Tonight I mention just two. President Hunter said:

“A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Harold B. Lee said, “The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 255). We need to honestly search and plumb the depths of our souls. Are we doing all we should do to give our families gospel instruction and governance, or are we leaving this responsibility to others? Leadership in the family often requires us to reorder our priorities in order to find the necessary time. Quality and quantity time are essential.

President Hunter also reminded us, "A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

For us to accomplish this we must make certain our personal lives are in order. Hypocrisy has never worked, and it will not work today. We are required to lead out in righteousness and encourage our families to follow our examples. Lead out in family home evening. Lead out in scripture study. Provide priesthood blessings. Lead out in personal and family prayer. President Monson said, "Remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 509).

### **We are on the Lord's errand**

A time-out usually concludes with a little pep talk. Brethren, we can prevail

and ultimately win the contest. We can honor and respect the priesthood on a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day basis. We can banish profanity, pornography, and drugs from our lives, as well as any other unwholesome or unclean activity. We can provide our families with the priesthood leadership and the spiritual direction they require. We can do all this and much more if we will draw near to the Savior, honor the sacred priesthood we hold, and be faithful to the covenants we have made.

I testify we are on the Lord's errand. He is our Savior. He is our Redeemer. He has atoned for our sins. He is our Advocate with the Father. He lives. He loves us unconditionally. We are bearers of His priesthood. I love President Hinckley, his counselors, the Twelve, and my fellow General Authorities, and I testify of their goodness, their greatness, and their authority. I love you, my fellow holders of the priesthood, and pray for our success. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Angel Abrea**

### **Your personal testimony**

I would like to have an imaginary conversation about personal testimony with the priesthood holders. I believe that this colloquial way will help me to convey my message. For the purpose of our discussion, I will use the names of my grandsons; please imagine that these names are yours and that I am speaking directly to each one of you young men.

My dear James, when you were a young boy you bore your testimony and said, "I know the gospel is true. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet."

You knew those things because others told you. Because of your trust in

your parents, your bishop, and others, you never questioned that knowledge. But now, as you grow more independent in understanding, comprehension, and perception of all the different variables that this intense and beautiful life presents to you, frequently you realize that not all men have the same testimony or the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Maybe, Jonathan, you have already realized that some adults are cynical and will not talk to you about the beautiful concepts of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and eternal life. Instead, they will tell you to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). Others you will see groping and grasping, looking for answers which they do

not find. And yet they will still try to demonstrate to you a knowledge of that which they do not have. Even others will say, "Well, maybe these things are true, but maybe they aren't. The best thing we can do is live our own lives the way we see fit, and then if there is a life after this one, we will see what happens."

Now, Andrew, I can understand the thoughts and feelings you may have in your mind and heart. I can understand that when you listen to these different messages, you may ask yourself what is right and what is not.

I'm sure that many questions have come to your mind. The truth is that you will not be condemned for wondering or questioning if you make a sincere effort to find the answer. Our mental powers have been given to us to use. Faith based on personal prayer, study, and obedience is more lasting than blind faith; it is more rewarding, and for sure it is better grounded.

### Be humble and continue learning

And you, Paul, do you remember when the Savior said:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4).

We are benefited by retaining the humility and teachableness of a child, but we must be sure to continue growing and not be content with the limited knowledge or comprehension of the gospel which a child has. Remember, Paul, what the Apostle of your same name said to the Corinthians: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

### Testimony is our greatest possession

Well now, my dear Russell, you will ask yourself, "In that case, do I have to go and look for the answer myself? Can anybody have this kind of testimony? Is it a gift only for a few? Do those who say they *know* really only *think* they know, or have they convinced themselves through a psychological trick?"

In answer to your questions, and to give more light to these things, let me tell you that Elder John A. Widtsoe said that those who truly have a testimony of the gospel have "the highest type of knowledge. It comes as a revelation when truth is known and obeyed. . . . It is really *man's chief possession*" ("What Does It Mean to Have a Testimony?" *Improvement Era*, May 1945, 273; italics added). Do you realize that a testimony is defined as "the highest type of knowledge" and "man's chief possession" and that in the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior mentions it as a knowledge "which shall dwell in your heart"? (D&C 8:2).

Maybe it will be difficult to understand this at your age, but our testimony is something that we will take with us to the next life. We will leave all our earthly possessions behind, but that knowledge, that inner conviction will remain with us. Think of Joseph Smith: those who took his life could not take his chief possession—his testimony. The Prophet Joseph took that priceless possession with him through death's veil into eternity, where the Lord had promised him "a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father" (D&C 132:49). But at the same time, that testimony, together with "a fame and name that cannot be slain" (D&C 135:3), remains here with us. We hear the resounding witness of God's prophet testifying "that [Christ] lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

## How to obtain a testimony

My dear Matthew, now that you have been able to see the eternal dimension of a testimony, we can continue with our conversation, showing that you can have your own testimony if you do what is necessary to obtain one.

In one of those difficult times that the faithful and dedicated young Nephi had with his rebellious brothers, he reminded them of the following guide to obtaining a testimony. The Lord declared, "If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11). Now we can review the steps Nephi described.

First, *don't harden your heart*. Seek to know. In other words, have an intense, consuming desire to know. Give place for a seed to be planted in your heart. And if you do this, do you know what the promise is? Alma tells us, "He that will not harden his heart, to him is given . . . to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 12:10).

Second, *ask in faith*. In your study of the scriptures, have you noted how many times the phrase "believing that ye shall receive" accompanies the commandment of praying and asking? In the process of asking for knowledge, we have to exercise faith—believing before receiving. To illustrate this part of our conversation, Alma gives us a good example when he explained how he obtained his testimony:

"Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:46).

Third, *keep the commandments*. I think that the words of the Book of Mormon point out the blessings that we can

obtain if we abound in good works. King Benjamin declared to his people, "If you believe all these things see that ye do them" (Mosiah 4:10). And the great missionary Ammon said, "Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 26:22).

## Seek companionship of the Holy Ghost

Now, Cole, we have analyzed the different steps we should follow in our search for a testimony. But there is yet the most important help available that can give us confirmation and absolute assurance, and it is your right when you live worthy to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Remember the promise in Moroni: "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Pay attention that I said to *receive* the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost has the power to bring light and understanding to our lives, but we must pay the price to seek and win His companionship.

Elder Marion G. Romney wrote: "It is the mission of the Holy Ghost to reveal the truth of heaven to those who qualify to receive it. Every one of us, if we will, may so qualify. We must ever keep in mind, however, that he will not dwell in an unholy environment. He is used to the society of God, for he is an associate of the Father and the Son. When we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are commanded to receive him; he is not commanded to come to us. But if, with all our hearts, we truly seek him, he will come to us and guide us in the making of decisions at every crisis of our lives" ("Revelation in Our Personal Affairs," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1955, 647).

The Holy Ghost is given to us to witness of the Father and the Son; that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer; that there is

a prophet upon the earth who presides over the true Church that carries the Savior's name, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that all the works and promises of God will be fulfilled in His time and in His own way.

### **What a testimony represents in our lives**

And now, my youngest grandson, Tate, we can end this conversation, mentioning what a testimony is. Maybe the best way to define it would be by looking at what a testimony represents in our lives.

It is to say, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know" (1 Nephi 3:7), and then to act in consequence.

It is to have the peace that comes with knowing that all possible has been done, that all talents have been exercised to the maximum.

It is to follow the commandment of the Lord to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

And it is to "be patient in afflictions" (D&C 31:9).

It is to never give up, but to stand up as an example to others.

It is to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

It is to declare His generation: "Jesus Christ [is] the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8).

Yes, these and many other characteristics and actions model a testimony. And this is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. When he concludes, the choir and congregation will sing "Ye Elders of Israel."

## **President James E. Faust**

Brethren, this evening we are part of history in the making. We are convened in the largest of all priesthood meetings ever held in any dispensation. We rejoice in the attendance of all of those beyond the great Conference Center, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Meeting for the first time in this new, grand edifice is a great moment in the history of humanity. We are indebted to the Lord, who inspired President Gordon B. Hinckley with the prophetic vision that brought about its construction and made it all possible. We thank Bishop H. David Burton, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Bishop Keith B. McMullen,

and all who have had anything to do with its construction. Now that we have it, we must use it to strengthen the faith of our people.

### **The power of self-mastery**

Tonight, brethren, I should like to speak about the power of self-mastery in its larger sense. Self-mastery is essential to invoke the power of the priesthood of God. This is because this great, divine agency can be exercised only in righteousness. Self-mastery requires self-determination and strength of character. It enhances our own gifts and talents in

a remarkable way. It is the power of noble manhood.

Every human soul, especially priesthood holders, has the challenge of controlling his or her thoughts, appetites, speech, temper, and desires. One of these may be a bad temper. When I was a boy, I had red hair. At times my mother accused me of having a temper to go with it. They used to call me "Red." Those were fighting words. I think I have learned to control it. Those with red hair are not the only ones who must learn to control an unruly temper. Willpower is necessary so that irritations do not take over our emotions.

A local newspaper recently reported on a phenomenon accompanying the increased traffic on our roads: "It is the normal scenario of rush-hour traffic: honking, tailgating, obscene gestures. Even outright violence is on the increase in our driving." Sometimes tempers get out of control, and we call it "road rage." I have often wondered why some men's personalities change when they get behind the steering wheel of their car, secured by glass and metal. In some way this seems to excuse their rude behavior. Road rage is not caused by traffic congestion but by attitude. As some drivers become impatient and overaggressive, they may lose control and cause serious injury, even death, to others on the highway.

Self-mastery is a challenge for every individual. Only we can control our appetites and passions. Self-mastery cannot be bought by money or fame. It is the ultimate test of our character. It requires climbing out of the deep valleys of our lives and scaling our own Mount Everests.

### **Learning self-mastery as missionaries**

As full-time missionaries we learn great lessons in self-mastery. We learn to get up when we should get up, to work

when we should work, and to go to bed when we should go to bed. Full-time missionaries are generally admired and even respected, though their message may not be as well received as we would like. The First Presidency and others of the General Authorities meet with many heads of state, ambassadors, and ministers from all over the world. Frequently, when the subject comes up, these men of great power and influence speak with admiration and respect for the missionaries they have seen in their homelands.

Our young elders are models of young manhood. When they come home, some are criticized as being self-righteous for maintaining a decent appearance and keeping their hair trimmed neatly. I cannot understand why a returned missionary is considered self-righteous if he tries to live the standards and principles he has taught as a representative of the Lord to the people where he has served. Of course returned missionaries are not expected to wear white shirts and ties all of the time. But wearing sloppy clothes and weird hairstyles to supposedly look trendy is not proper for one who holds the divine commission of the priesthood. Returned missionaries are an example to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, who will be the future missionaries. Often that which is *seen* by the Aaronic Priesthood is more powerful and persuasive than what is *said*.

### **Act out of strength, not weakness**

Men and women often attempt to gain notice and approval of the group from whom they seek acceptance. Such peer pressure may cause them to do things they would not otherwise do. This is acting out of weakness, not strength. The Lord promises us through Moroni:

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all

men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”<sup>1</sup>

In its simplest terms, self-mastery is doing those things we should do and not doing those things we should not do. It requires strength, willpower, and honesty. As the traffic on the communications highway becomes a parking lot, we must depend more and more on our own personal moral filters to separate the good from the bad. Marvelous as it is in many ways, there is something hypnotic about using the Internet. I refer specifically to spending endless time in chat rooms or visiting the pornography sites.

### Mastering our thoughts

I now turn to mastery of our own private thoughts. In this realm, conscience is the only referee that can blow the whistle when we get out of control. If not bridled, our thoughts can run wild. Our minds are a part of us that really require discipline and control. I believe reading the scriptures is the best washing machine for unclean or uncontrolled thoughts. For those who are eligible and worthy, the sanctity of the holy temple can lift our thoughts above the earthy.

When I was participating in athletics and served in the military, I heard expressions that made me ashamed to hear them. If, as Samuel Johnson suggested, “language is the dress of thought,”<sup>2</sup> then the language we are hearing on television, in the movies, and even in our schools is a poor commentary on our current thinking. I worry about young people becoming desensitized as they continually hear or use this bad language. I believe that the young man of character is not coarse in his speech. Holders of the holy priesthood of God should never use foul language or obscene gestures.

### Mastering our physical appetites

I now speak of the absolute necessity of controlling all physical appetites. These might in one sense be called the “thorn in the flesh.”<sup>3</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick provides an important context for self-control: “Self-denial . . . is not the negative, forbidding thing that often we shake our heads about. In one sense there is no such thing as self-denial, for what we call such is the necessary price we pay for things on which our hearts are set.”<sup>4</sup>

One of the great foundations of personal power is purity. Alfred Lord Tennyson captured this when he penned, “My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure.”<sup>5</sup> With all my heart I urge you wonderful young people not to take a secret shame with you to your marriage. You may never be able to forget it. You will want to go through life with the strength that comes from a clear conscience, which will permit you one day to stand before your Maker and say, “My soul is pure.” Self-denial is not restrictive. It is liberating. It is the pathway to freedom. It is strength. It is an essential element of purity. Shakespeare expressed it well through his character Hamlet:

Refrain to-night;  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence: the next more  
easy;  
For use almost can change the stamp  
of nature,  
And either master the devil, or throw  
him out  
With wondrous potency.<sup>6</sup>

### President Grant’s example of self-mastery

Heber J. Grant was the first President of the Church I had the privilege of meeting. He was truly a great man. We admired him because part of his strength



was his great determination for self-mastery. His father died when he was only nine days old, and his widowed mother struggled to raise him. He was conscientious in helping her and trying to take care of her.

"When he was older and wanted to join a baseball team, . . . the other [boys laughed] at him and [called] him a 'sissy' because he could not throw the ball between the bases. His teammates teased him so much that . . . he . . . made up his mind that he was going to play with the nine who would win the championship of the Territory of Utah. He purchased a baseball and practiced hour after hour, throwing at a neighbor's old barn. Often his arm would ache so much he could hardly go to sleep at night. He kept on practicing and . . . improving and advancing from one team to another until he finally [succeeded] in playing [on the team that] won the [territorial] championship!"<sup>7</sup>

Another example of his self-mastery was his determination to become a good penman. His penmanship was so bad that when two of his friends looked at it, one said, "That writing looks like hen tracks." "No," said the other, "it looks as if lightning has struck an ink bottle." This, of course, touched young Heber Grant's pride. While he was still in his teens as a policy clerk in the office of H. R. Mann and Co., "he was offered three times his salary to go to San Francisco as a penman. He later became a teacher of penmanship and bookkeeping at the University of [Utah]. In fact, with a specimen he had written before he turned seventeen, he took first prize in a territorial fair against four professional penmen."<sup>8</sup>

Singing was another challenge for President Grant. As a small child, he could not carry a tune. When he was 10, a music instructor tried to teach him the simplest song and finally gave up in despair. At age 26, when he became an

Apostle, he asked Professor Sims if he could teach him how to sing. After listening to him, Professor Sims replied, "Yes, you can learn to sing, but I would like to be forty miles away while you are doing it." This only challenged him to try harder.<sup>9</sup>

President Grant one time said, "I have practiced on the 'Doxology'<sup>10</sup> between three and four hundred times, and there are only four lines, and I cannot sing it yet."<sup>11</sup> It is reported that on a trip to Arizona with Elder Rudger Clawson and Elder J. Golden Kimball, President Grant "asked them if he could sing one hundred songs on the way. They thought he was joking and said, 'Fine, go right ahead.' After the first forty, they assured him if he sang the other sixty they would both have a nervous breakdown. He sang the other sixty."<sup>12</sup>

By practicing all of his life, he made some improvement in singing but perhaps not as much as in baseball and penmanship, which he mastered. President Grant had a favorite quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson which he lived by: "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased."

### **Self-mastery is a spiritual quest**

As priesthood holders, we should not look for excuses when we lose our self-control. Even though our circumstances may be challenging, we can all strive for self-mastery. Great blessings of personal satisfaction come from doing so. Self-mastery is related to spirituality, which is the central quest of mortality. As President David O. McKay once said:

"Spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding and truth expanding the soul is one of life's sublimest experiences."<sup>13</sup>

As a hopeless cripple, William Ernest Henley courageously looked beyond his outward physical condition to triumph in his heart and mind when he wrote "Invictus":

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,  
I have not winced nor cried aloud:  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed. . . .

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the  
scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.<sup>14</sup>

Brethren, I testify with all my heart and soul that through the power of self-mastery we will inherit the blessings our Heavenly Father has for his faithful sons. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ether 12:27.
2. In Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 368.

3. 2 Corinthians 12:7.
4. *The Meaning of Service* (1920), 83.
5. "Sir Galahad," lines 3-4.
6. *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 4, lines 166-71.
7. Roderick L. Cameron, *Tenacity*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (1 Dec. 1964), 3.
8. David C. Call, *Success—Spiritual and Temporal*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (30 Nov. 1965), 5-6.
9. Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2.
10. "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow," *Hymns*, no. 242.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 61.
12. See Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2-3.
13. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 390.
14. "Invictus. In Mem. R.T.H.B.," as quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 332.

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The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

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#### President Hinckley

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

### President Thomas S. Monson

#### Priesthood holders can make a difference

One of my most vivid memories was attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood."<sup>1</sup> Tonight, to the capacity audience assembled in this magnificent Conference Center and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the

priesthood, let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ our Lord."

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we are united as one in our priesthood callings.

As bearers of the priesthood, we have been placed on earth in troubled times. We live in a complex world, with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Po-

litical machinations ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of our society seem forever down-trodden, deprived of opportunity, and left with a feeling of failure.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys. We can mend men. We can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

### **We must be worthy to receive God's help**

Though the task seems large, we are strengthened by this truth: "The greatest force in this world today is the power of God as it works through man." If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. That divine help, however, is predicated upon our worthiness. To sail safely the seas of mortality, to perform a human rescue mission, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah. We reach out, we reach up to obtain heavenly help.

Are our reaching hands clean? Are our yearning hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, a lesson on worthiness is gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. "Darius, . . . through the proper rites had been recognized as legitimate King of Egypt; his rival Alexander [the Great] had been declared . . . legitimate Son of Amon—he too was Pharaoh. . . . Alexander[, finding] the defeated Darius on the point of death . . . , laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, . . . concluding . . . : 'I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods that I do these things truly and without faking. . . .' [Darius] replied with a gentle rebuke: 'Alexander my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?'"<sup>2</sup>

### **Removing the barnacles of sin**

An inspiring lesson is learned from a "Viewpoint" article which appeared some time ago in the *Church News*. May I quote:

"To some it may seem strange to see ships of many nations loading and unloading cargo along the docks at Portland, Ore. That city is 100 miles from the ocean. Getting there involves a difficult, often turbulent passage over the bar guarding the Columbia River and a long trip up the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

"But ship captains like to tie up at Portland. They know that as their ships travel the seas, a curious saltwater shellfish called a barnacle fastens itself to the hull and stays there for the rest of its life, surrounding itself with a rocklike shell. As more and more [of these] barnacles attach themselves, they increase the ship's drag, slow its progress, decrease its efficiency.

"Periodically, the ship must go into dry dock, where with great effort the barnacles are chiseled or scraped off. It's a difficult, expensive process that ties up the ship for days.

"But not if the captain can get his ship to Portland. Barnacles can't live in fresh water. There, in the sweet, fresh waters of the Willamette or Columbia, the barnacles [die and some] fall away, [while those that remain are easily removed. Thus,] the ship returns to its task lightened and renewed.

"Sins are like those barnacles. Hardly anyone goes through life without picking up some. They increase the drag, slow our progress, decrease our efficiency. Unrepented, building up one on another, they can eventually sink us.

"In His infinite love and mercy, our Lord has provided a harbor where, through repentance, our barnacles fall

away and are forgotten. With our souls lightened and renewed, we can go efficiently about our work and His.”<sup>3</sup>

### We are on the Lord's errand

The priesthood represents a mighty army of righteousness—even a royal army. We are led by a prophet of God, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. In supreme command is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our marching orders are clear. They are concise. Matthew describes our challenge in these words from the Master:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them.”<sup>5</sup>

The call to serve has ever characterized the work of the Lord. It rarely comes at a convenient time. It prompts humility; it invites prayer; it inspires commitment. The call came—to Kirtland. Revelations followed. The call came—to Missouri. Persecution prevailed. The call came—to Nauvoo. Prophets died. The call came—to the basin of the Great Salt Lake. Hardship beckoned.

That long journey, made under such difficult circumstances, was a trial of faith. But faith forged in the furnace of trials and tears is marked by trust and testimony. Only God can count the sacrifice; only He can measure the sorrow; only He can know the hearts of those who serve Him—then and now.

Lessons from the past can quicken our memories, touch our lives, and direct our actions. We are prompted to pause and remember that divinely given promise: “Wherefore, . . . ye are on the

Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.”<sup>6</sup>

### Befriending Mrs. Shinas

Many in this vast audience of priesthood bearers are holders of the Aaronic Priesthood—even deacons, teachers, and priests. Young men, some lessons in life are learned from your parents, while others you learn in school or in church. There are, however, certain moments when you know our Heavenly Father is doing the teaching and you are His student. The thoughts we think, the feelings we feel—even the deeds we do in boyhood—can affect our lives forever.

When I was a deacon, I loved baseball. In fact, I still do. I had a fielder's glove inscribed with the name *Mel Ott*. He was the premier player of my day. My friends and I would play ball in a small alleyway behind the houses where we lived. Our playing field was cramped, but all right, provided you hit straightaway to center field. However, if you hit the ball to the right of center, disaster was at the door. Here lived Mrs. Shinas, who, from her kitchen window, would watch us play; and as soon as the ball rolled to her porch, her large dog would retrieve the ball and present it to her as she opened the door. Into her house Mrs. Shinas would return and add the ball to the many she had previously confiscated. She was our nemesis, the destroyer of our fun—even the bane of our existence.

None of us had a good word for Mrs. Shinas, but we had plenty of bad words for her. None of us would speak to her, and she never spoke to us. She was hampered by a stiff leg which impaired her walking and must have caused her great pain. She and her husband had no children, lived secluded lives, and rarely came out of their house.

This private war continued for some time—perhaps two years—and then an

inspired thaw melted the ice of winter and brought a springtime of good feelings to the stalemate.

One evening as I performed my daily task of watering our front lawn, holding the nozzle of the hose in the hand as was the style at that time, I noticed that Mrs. Shinas's lawn was dry and beginning to turn brown. I honestly don't know, brethren, what came over me, but I took a few more minutes and, with our hose, watered her lawn. I continued to do this throughout the summer, and then when autumn came I hosed her lawn free of leaves as I did ours and stacked the leaves in piles at the street's edge to be gathered. During the entire summer I had not seen Mrs. Shinas. We boys had long since given up playing ball in the alleyway. We had run out of baseballs and had no money to buy more.

Early one evening, Mrs. Shinas's front door opened, and she beckoned for me to jump the small fence and come to her front porch. This I did. As I approached her, she invited me into her living room, where I was asked to sit in a comfortable chair. She treated me to cookies and milk. Then she went to the kitchen and returned with a large box filled with baseballs and softballs, representing several seasons of her confiscation efforts. The filled box was presented to me. The treasure, however, was not to be found in the gift but rather in her words. I saw for the first time a smile come across the face of Mrs. Shinas, and she said, "Tommy, I want you to have these baseballs, and I want to thank you for being kind to me." I expressed my own gratitude to her and walked from her home a better boy than when I entered. No longer were we enemies. Now we were friends. The Golden Rule had again succeeded.

### **Prepare this generation of missionaries**

Fathers, bishops, quorum advisers—yours is the responsibility to prepare this

generation of missionaries, to quicken in the hearts of these deacons, teachers, and priests not only an awareness of their obligation to serve but also a vision of the opportunities and blessings which await them through a mission call. The work is demanding, the impact everlasting. This is no time for "summer soldiers" in the army of the Lord.

Each missionary who goes forth in response to a sacred call becomes a servant of the Lord, whose work this truly is. Do not fear, young men, for He will be with you. He never fails. He has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>7</sup>

Brethren, we have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown. Altogether too frequently the recipient of kindness shown fails to express his feelings, and we are deprived of a glimpse of greatness and a touch of tenderness that motivates us to go and do likewise.

### **The Lord's grace will help us succeed**

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth sat by a well in Samaria and talked there to a woman:

"Jesus . . . said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."<sup>8</sup>

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the

words of the Lord: "My grace," said He, "is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."<sup>9</sup>

Through humble prayer, diligent preparation, and faithful service, we can succeed in our sacred callings.

### Be pure vessels in the Lord's service

Remember how the captains of oceangoing vessels burdened by the weight of barnacles set a course to the fresh waters of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers to rid themselves of these impediments of progress? Let us, in our own lives and in our service in the Lord's work, shed the barnacles of doubt, laziness, fear, and sin by plying the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know their names: faith, prayer, charity, obedience, and love—to identify but a few. The lighthouse of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the way. His beacon light will guide our course to celestial glory.

May we be wise mariners as we go forth on such a voyage. Let us be pure vessels before the Lord. Let us recognize and respond to the needs of the widow; the cry of the child; the plight of the unemployed; the burden of the sick, the confined, the aged, the poor, the hungry, the lame, and the forgotten. They are remembered by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. May you and I follow Their divine examples. Heavenly peace will then be our blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "Come, All Ye Sons of God," *Hymns*, no. 322.

2. Quoted in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (1981), 192.
3. "Harbor of Forgiveness," *Church News*, 30 Jan. 1988, 16.
4. Matthew 28:19–20.
5. Mark 16:20.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
8. John 4:13–14.
9. Ether 12:27.

### President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening. But don't go to bed and then get up at 2:00 to move the clock.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries, for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, we will conclude this session with the choir singing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will then be offered by Elder E. Ray Bateman of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

It now becomes my pleasure to share with you a few remarks. First, thank you for being here. I've never seen anything like this. I should have brought my binoculars to see how you in the upper balcony look. I've counted five empty seats in this entire hall. What a pleasure it is to be here.

### The wonder of the priesthood

My brethren, what a wonderful thing is the priesthood of God. There is nothing to compare with it. It is received only by the laying on of hands by those in authority to bestow it. In this dispensation, that bestowal goes back to John the Baptist and the Lord's Apostles Peter, James, and John. They came to earth and physically laid their hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and with audible voices spoke words of bestowal of this wondrous power. Since then every man who has received it has done so through the laying on of hands by one who received it in turn in the same manner, traced back to its original bestowal.

It is classless. Every worthy man, regardless of nationality, ethnic background, or any other factor, is eligible to receive the priesthood. His obedience to the commandments of God becomes the determining factor. Its bestowal is based only on worthiness before the Lord.

With it comes the right and the authority to govern in the Church of Christ. I recall the experiences I had long ago when I was a member of the Council of the Twelve. I attended a stake conference where the president was a man of wealth and affluence. He was very successful by the standards of the world. He lived in a magnificent home. He met me at the airport in a beautiful car. We had lunch at a first-class restaurant. And yet he was humble in his office, anxious to learn, and ever willing to do the right

thing in administering the affairs of his stake.

I subsequently went to another conference. The president met me in a car that had seen many seasons. We stopped at a fast-food place for a bite to eat. His home was extremely modest—neat and clean and quiet but not richly furnished. He was a carpenter by trade. He had none of the fancy things of the world. He, too, was a wonderful stake president doing his duty in a remarkable way. He was excellent in every respect.

Such is the wonder of this priesthood. Wealth is not a factor. Education is not a factor. The honors of men are not a factor. The controlling factor is acceptability unto the Lord.

### Revelation in calling stake presidents

All of the Authorities who are here tonight could testify that in the reorganization of stakes they have had remarkable and inspiring experiences. I recall being assigned to reorganize a stake about 40 years ago. The president had suddenly died. The Brethren asked me to go down and speak at the funeral and reorganize the stake. I had never done this before. I was new as a General Authority. I was to be all alone.

When I arrived I was taken to another town, where I participated in the funeral service. I asked all of the stake officers and the bishops to remain after the service and announced that a reorganization of the stake would take place the next evening.

I asked the mission president to sit with me as I interviewed the brethren, none of whom I knew. We interviewed late into the evening. I soon discovered there were problems in the stake. There were divisive feelings. When we were all through, I said to the mission president, "I am not satisfied. Are there not others?" He said, "I know of only one

man whom we have not interviewed. He moved here rather recently on a transfer in his company. He is the second counselor in a bishopric. I do not know him well. He resides in another city."

I said, "Let's go see him." We drove and went to the hotel where I would be staying for the night. Here I was, having interviewed all of these brethren and having not found one that I considered worthy to preside and having scheduled the reorganization for the next evening.

We arrived late at the hotel. I called the man; a sleepy voice answered the phone. I said that I wished to see him that evening. I apologized for calling him so late. He said, "I've just gone to bed, but I'll put on my clothes and come."

He came to the hotel. The conversation that followed was most interesting. He was a graduate of BYU in petroleum geology. He worked for a big oil company. He had served elsewhere in positions of responsibility in the Church. He knew the program of the Church. He had served a mission. He knew the gospel. He was mature in the Church. And the territory for which he was responsible as an employee of the oil company was exactly the same as the territory of the stake. I told him we would telephone him in the morning and excused him.

The mission president went on his way, and I went to bed.

At about three o'clock the next morning I awoke. Doubts began to flood my mind. This man was almost a total stranger to the people of the stake. I got out of bed and got on my knees and pleaded with the Lord for direction. I did not hear a voice, but I had a very distinct impression that said, "I told you who should be stake president. Why do you continue to ask?"

Ashamed of myself for troubling the Lord again, I went to bed and fell asleep. I phoned the man early the next morning and issued to him a call to serve as president of the stake. I asked him to select counselors.

That evening when people gathered for the meeting, there was much speculation as to who would be the stake president, but no one even thought of this man. When I announced his name, people looked at one another for a clue to discovering who he was. I had him come to the stand. I announced his counselors and had them come to the stand.

Even though they did not know him, the people sustained him. Things began to happen in that stake. The people had known for a long time that they needed a stake center, but they had been uncertain and argumentative as to where it should go. He went to work and within 18 months had a beautiful new stake center ready for dedication. He unified the stake. He traveled up and down, meeting the people and extending his love to them. That stake, which had grown tired, came to life and literally bubbled with new enthusiasm. It stands as a shining star in the large constellation of stakes in this Church.

Brethren, I can testify to you that revelation from the Lord is made manifest in the naming of a stake president. I once spoke in this meeting on bishops, and tonight I wish to say a few words about stake presidents.

### **The office of stake president**

The office came into the Church in 1832. Joseph Smith, the President of the Church, was also stake president. When a new stake was organized in Missouri in 1834, this pattern was changed, with officers drawn from the ranks of the priesthood.

This is an office that came of revelation. The organization of a stake represents the creation of a family of wards and branches. The program of the Church has become increasingly complex, and the demands upon stake presidencies have grown. Smaller stakes have been created. We now have 2,550 stakes in the Church, with more approved for organization.



The president of the stake is the officer called under revelation to stand between the bishops of wards and the General Authorities of the Church. It is a most important responsibility. He is trained by the General Authorities, and in turn he trains the bishops.

It is most interesting to me that we have 17,789 wards in the Church with a bishop in each. They are scattered over the earth. Their members speak various languages. And yet they are all alike. You may attend Sunday meetings in Singapore or Stockholm, and the service will be the same. Think of the confusion we would have if every bishop followed his own inclinations. The Church would literally fall apart in a very short time.

The stake president serves as an adviser to the bishops. Every bishop knows that when he has to deal with a difficult problem, there is one readily available to whom he may go to share his burden and receive counsel.

### **A secondary measure of worthiness**

He provides a secondary measure of safety in determining those worthy to go to the house of the Lord. Bishops are very close to their people. They live with them as neighbors. Sometimes they do not have the heart to refuse to grant a recommend even though the patron's worthiness may be somewhat in question. But the stake president also interviews. Until Wilford Woodruff's time, the President of the Church signed all temple recommends. But the burden became too heavy, and stake presidents were given the responsibility. They have done a tremendous work in this regard.

The president likewise becomes a second screen in determining the worthiness of those who go out to represent the Church in the mission field. He too interviews the candidate, and only when he is satisfied of his or her worthiness does he

endorse the recommendation. He likewise has been given authority to set apart those called on missions and to extend releases when they have completed their service.

### **Responsibility for Church discipline**

Most importantly, he is the principal disciplinary officer of the stake. The duties of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood might be applied to the president of the stake. He "is to watch over the [entire stake], and be with and strengthen [the members];

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty" (D&C 20:53-55).

He carries the very heavy responsibility of seeing that the doctrine taught in the stake is kept pure and unsullied. It is his duty to see that there is no false doctrine that is taught nor false practice that occurs. If there be any Melchizedek Priesthood holder out of line, or any other person for that matter, under some circumstances, he is to counsel with them, and if the individual persists in his or her practice, then the president is obliged to take action. He will summon the offender to appear before a disciplinary council, where action may be taken to assign a probationary period or to disfellowship or excommunicate him or her from the Church.

This is a most onerous and unwelcome task, but the president must face up to it without fear or favor. All of this is done in harmony with the direction of the Spirit and as set forth in section 102 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Then subsequently he must do all he can to labor with and bring back in due time the one who was disciplined.

### Confidence in stake presidents

All of this and much more comprise his responsibilities. It follows, therefore, that his own life must be exemplary before his people.

What a wonderful body of men comprise the stake presidents of this Church. Chosen by inspiration, they are most diligent in the pursuit of their duties. They are men of ability. They are men well schooled in the doctrines and practices of the Church. They are men of great faith. They are men who are called of the Lord to preside in the areas of their jurisdiction.

I think I know a little about the office of stake president. My grandfather was one when there were only 25 stakes in the Church. My father presided for years over the largest stake in the Church. I served as a stake president before being called as a General Authority. And one of my sons has just been released after nine years of service as a stake president. This represents four generations serving in this capacity.

I have total confidence in the men who fill this office. Their duties are numerous, their responsibilities great. They recognize their own inadequacy, and I know that they pray for guidance and help. I know they study the scriptures to find answers. I know they place this work first in their lives. Because we have such confidence in them, we urge local members that they not seek out General Authorities to counsel with and bless them. Their stake presidents have been called under the same inspiration under which the General Authorities were called.

### Prayer for stake presidents

I pray for these, my beloved brethren, that the Spirit of the Lord will rest

upon them. I pray that they may be inspired in their words, in their thoughts, in their actions. I hope their homes will be places of peace and love and harmony where they will draw inspiration for their work. I pray they will magnify and bless their wives and children, being the kind of husbands and fathers who will stand as examples for all of the people of their stakes. I hope that whatever their vocations, they may pursue them with honor and integrity, that they may be workmen worthy of their hire. I hope they will so live that they will merit the respect of those not only of our faith but of others with whom they may be associated. And when they have served well over a period of years and led their people in honor and love, the time will come that they are to be released. Their only reward will be the love of the people and the confidence of their Brethren.

There is no other office in the Church quite like this office. The president of the stake is close enough to the people to know them and love them. And yet, with his counselors, he stands aloof enough to deal objectively according to the will and pattern of the Lord.

I pray that the rich and wondrous blessings of the Lord may be poured out upon these devoted brethren that they may be men of faith, men of inspired judgment, men of patience, men who love the Lord and who love His people. May they be happy, and may they find their reward in the satisfaction of having served well is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder E. Ray Bateman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome each of you to this, the fourth general session of the 170th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice" and will now favor us with "Press Forward, Saints." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

One day during the personal ministry of our Savior, He took Peter, James, and John "up into an high mountain . . .

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here."<sup>1</sup>

Today, on this historic occasion, we assemble in this magnificent Conference Center and in the overflow facilities on Temple Square and throughout the world.

Tears moisten our eyes and gratitude fills our hearts as we echo the title of a beautiful hymn, "Thanks Be to God!"<sup>2</sup>

The erection of this edifice has long been in the planning stage. We have needed a much larger building to accommodate those who attend conference and other activities throughout the year. Workmen with finely honed skills have labored with their hearts and hands to provide a structure worthy of His divine approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."<sup>3</sup>

### The Savior's references to home building

When Jesus ministered among men at a time long ago and a place far away, He often spoke in parables, in language the people best understood. Oftentimes

He referred to home building in relationship to the lives of those who listened. Wasn't He frequently known as "the carpenter's son"? He declared, "Every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand."<sup>4</sup> Later He cautioned, "Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion."<sup>5</sup>

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, on December 27, 1832, the Master counseled, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."<sup>6</sup>

Where could any of us locate a more suitable blueprint whereby he or she could wisely and properly build a house to personally occupy throughout eternity?

### Building our eternal homes

In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade, not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"<sup>7</sup>

When we remember that each of us is literally a spirit son or daughter of God, we will not find it difficult to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer. He appreciates the value of this raw material which we call life. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."<sup>8</sup> His pronouncement finds lodgment in our souls and inspires purpose in our lives.

There is a Teacher who will guide our efforts if we will but place our faith in Him—even the Lord Jesus Christ. He invites us:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>9</sup>

It was said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>10</sup> Do we have the determination to do likewise? One line of holy writ contains a tribute to our Lord and Savior, of whom it was said, "[He] went about doing good."<sup>11</sup>

Paul, in his epistle to his beloved Timothy, outlined a way whereby we could become our better selves and, at the same time, provide assistance to others who silently ponder and then audibly ask the question, "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?"<sup>12</sup>

The answer, given by Paul to Timothy, provides an inspired charge to each of us. Let us take heed of his wise counsel: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>13</sup>

Let us examine this solemn instruction which, in a very real sense, is given to us.

### Be an example in word

First, be an example in *word*. "Let your words tend to edifying one another,"<sup>14</sup> said the Lord.

Do we remember the counsel of a favorite Sunday School hymn?

Oh, the kind words we give shall in memory live  
And sunshine forever impart.  
Let us oft speak kind words to each other;  
Kind words are sweet tones of the heart.<sup>15</sup>

Consider the observation of Mary Boyson Wall, who celebrated her 105th

birthday a few years ago. She married Don Harvey Wall in the Salt Lake Temple in 1913. They celebrated their 81st wedding anniversary shortly before Don died at age 103. In a *Church News* article "she attributed longevity in life and in their marriage to speaking kind words. She said, 'I think that helped us through because we tried to help each other and not say unkind words to each other.'"<sup>16</sup>

### **Be an example in conversation**

Second, be an example in *conversation*. In a general conference in October 1987, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: "Foul talk defiles the man who speaks it. If you have the habit, how do you break it? You begin by making a decision to change. The next time you are prone to use words you know to be wrong, simply stop. Keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way."<sup>17</sup>

François de la Rochefoucauld observed, "One of the reasons why so few people are to be found who seem sensible and pleasant in conversation is that almost everybody is thinking about what he wants to say himself, rather than about answering clearly what is said to him."

### **Be an example in charity**

Third, be an example in *charity*.

From Corinthians comes the beautiful truth "Charity never faileth."<sup>18</sup>

Satisfying to the soul is the ready response the Church has made to disasters of nature, such as in Mozambique, Madagascar, Venezuela, and many other locations. Frequently we have arrived first on the scene following such disasters, and with the most help. There are other organizations which likewise respond in a generous fashion.

What is charity? Moroni, in writing a few of the words of his father, Mormon, recorded, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever."<sup>19</sup>

One who exemplified charity in his life was President George Albert Smith. Immediately following World War II, the Church had a drive to amass warm clothing to ship to suffering Saints in Europe. Elder Harold B. Lee and Elder Marion G. Romney took President George Albert Smith to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City to view the results. They were impressed by the generous response of the membership of the Church. They watched President Smith observing the workers as they packaged this great volume of donated clothing and shoes. They saw tears running down his face. After a few moments, President George Albert Smith removed his own new overcoat and said, "Please ship this also."

The Brethren said to him, "No, President, no; don't send that; it's cold and you need your coat."

But President Smith would not take it back; and so his coat, with all the others, was sent to Europe, where the nights were long and dark and food and clothing were scarce. Then the shipments arrived. Joy and thanksgiving were expressed aloud, as well as in secret prayer.

### **Be an example in spirit**

Fourth, be an example in *spirit*. The Psalmist wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."<sup>20</sup>

As a 17-year-old I enlisted in the United States Navy and attended boot camp in San Diego, California. For the first three weeks, one felt as though the navy were trying to kill rather than train him on how to stay alive.

I shall ever remember the first Sunday at San Diego. The chief petty officer said to us, "Today everybody goes to church." We then lined up in formation on the drill ground. The petty officer shouted, "All of you who are Catholics—you meet in Camp Decatur. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!"

A large number marched out. He then said, "All of you who are of the Jewish faith—you meet in Camp Henry. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!" A smaller contingent moved out. Then he said, "The rest of you Protestants meet in the theaters in Camp Faragut. Forward, march! And don't come back until three o'clock!"

There flashed through my mind the thought, "Monson, you're not Catholic. You're not Jewish. You're not a Protestant." I elected to stand fast. It seemed as though hundreds of men marched by me. Then I heard the sweetest words which the petty officer ever uttered in my presence. He said, "And what do you men call yourselves?" He used the plural—*men*. This was the first time I knew that anyone else was standing behind me on that drill ground. In unison we said, "We're Mormons." He scratched his head, an expression of puzzlement on his face, and said, "Well, go and find somewhere to meet—and don't come back until three o'clock." We marched away. One could almost count cadence to the rhyme learned in Primary:

Dare to be a Mormon;  
Dare to stand alone.  
Dare to have a purpose firm,  
And dare to make it known.

### Be an example in faith

Fifth, be an example in *faith*.

President Stephen L. Richards, speaking of faith, declared: "The recognition of power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go un-

required—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."<sup>21</sup> Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it.

Minnie Louise Haskins set forth this principle in a lovely poem: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'"<sup>22</sup>

### Be an example in purity

Finally, be an example in *purity*.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."<sup>23</sup>

As President David O. McKay observed: "The safety of our nation depends upon the purity and strength of the home; and I thank God for the teachings of the . . . Church in relation to home building, and the impression that kind parents have made, that the home must be the most sacred place in the world. Our people are home-builders, and they are taught everywhere, from childhood to old age, that the home should be kept pure and safe from the evils of the world."<sup>24</sup>

### Example of President Francis Winters

Many years ago I attended a stake conference in Star Valley, Wyoming, where the stake presidency was reorganized. The stake president who was being released, E. Francis Winters, had served faithfully for the lengthy term of 23 years. Though modest by nature and circumstance, he had been a perpetual pillar of strength to everyone in the val-

ley. On the day of the stake conference, the building was filled to overflowing. Each heart seemed to be saying a silent *thank-you* to this noble leader who had given so unselfishly of his life for the benefit of others.

As I stood to speak, I was prompted to do something I had not done before, nor have I done so since. I stated how long Francis Winters had presided in the stake; then I asked all whom he had blessed or confirmed as children to stand and remain standing. Then I asked all those persons whom President Winters had ordained, set apart, personally counseled, or blessed to please stand. The outcome was electrifying. Every person in the audience rose to his or her feet. Tears flowed freely—tears which communicated better than could words the gratitude of tender hearts. I turned to President and Sister Winters and said, “We are witnesses today of the prompting of the Spirit. This vast throng reflects not only individual feelings but also the gratitude of God for a life well lived.” No person who was in the congregation that day will forget how he or she felt when we witnessed the language of the Spirit of the Lord.

Here, in Francis Winters, was “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>25</sup>

True to the faith that our parents have cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,  
To God’s command,  
Soul, heart, and hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.<sup>26</sup>

That each of us may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 17:1–4.

2. Felix Mendelssohn, “Thanks Be to God!” *Elijah*.
3. Matthew 25:21.
4. Matthew 12:25.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 132:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
9. Matthew 11:28–30.
10. Luke 2:52.
11. Acts 10:38.
12. Acts 8:31.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 136:24.
15. “Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words,” *Hymns*, no. 232.
16. Quoted in “Lives of Service,” *Church News*, 21 Sept. 1996, 10.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 57–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 47.
18. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
19. Moroni 7:47.
20. Psalm 51:10.
21. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
22. “God Knows,” in Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 328.
23. Psalm 24:3–5.
24. In Conference Report, Apr. 1909, 66.
25. 1 Timothy 4:12.
26. “True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254.

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The choir sang “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

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#### President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I feel privileged to be with you on this historic occasion. For me, this magnificent Conference Center, with walls of enduring granite, is a symbol of a great latter-day work—the stone that Daniel saw, “cut out of the mountain without hands”<sup>1</sup> to stand forever as the kingdom of God. Whether you are here in person or participating in other locations, I commend you for your choice to be part of this historic general conference and pray that the Lord will bless you for your faithfulness.

### Finding a safe harbor

More than 60 years ago I served as a missionary in Austria and Switzerland. It was a challenging but wonderful time. I grew to love the people of that area of the world and felt reluctant to leave them. But my term of service ended in late August of 1939, and I made preparations to sail home.

After a long journey across the Atlantic Ocean, which was hazardous at that time because of the war, I rejoiced when I saw that wonderful beacon of freedom and democracy, the Statue of Liberty. I cannot express to you my relief when we finally reached that safe harbor.

I imagine I felt something of what the disciples of Jesus Christ felt on that day when they were with the Savior. They set sail upon the Sea of Galilee. The scriptures tell us that Jesus was weary, and He went to the back of the ship and fell asleep on a pillow.<sup>2</sup> Soon the skies darkened, and “there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves.”<sup>3</sup> The storm raged. The disciples panicked. It seemed as though the boat would capsize, yet the Savior still slept. At last they could wait no longer, and they awakened Jesus. You can almost hear the anguish and despair

in their voices as they pleaded with their Master, “Carest thou not that we perish?”<sup>4</sup>

### Finding peace amid threatening storms

Many today feel troubled and distressed; many feel that at any moment the ships of their lives could capsize or sink. It is to you who are looking for a safe harbor that I wish to speak today, you whose hearts are breaking, you who are worried or afraid, you who bear grief or the burdens of sin, you who feel no one is listening to your cries, you whose hearts are pleading, “Master, carest thou not that I perish?” To you I offer a few words of comfort and of counsel.

Be assured that there is a safe harbor. You can find peace amidst the storms that threaten you. Your Heavenly Father, who knows when even a sparrow falls, knows of your heartache and suffering. He loves you and wants the best for you. Never doubt this. While He allows all of us to make choices that may not always be for our own or even others’ well-being, and while He does not always intervene in the course of events, He has promised the faithful peace even in their trials and tribulations.

The prophet Alma tells us, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus comforts us when He said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>6</sup>

Draw close to the Lord Jesus Christ. He bears a special love for those who suffer. He is the Son of God, an eternal king. In His mortal ministry He loved them and blessed them.



To the meek and discouraged, His every word was one of compassion and encouragement. To the sick, He brought a healing balm. Those who yearned for hope, who yearned for a caring touch, received it from the hand of this King of Kings, this Creator of ocean, earth, and sky.

Today Jesus the Christ stands at the right hand of our Heavenly Father. Do you suppose that today He is any less inclined to aid those who suffer, who are sick, or who appeal to the Father in prayer for succor?

### **See struggles as a temporary chrysalis**

Be of good cheer. The Man of Galilee, the Creator, the Son of the Living God will not forget nor forsake those whose hearts are drawn to Him. I testify that the Man who suffered for mankind, who committed His life to healing the sick and comforting the disconsolate, is mindful of your sufferings, doubts, and heartaches.

"Then," the world would ask, "why does He sleep when the tempest rages all around me? Why does He not still this storm, or why would He let me suffer?"

Your answer may be found in considering a butterfly. Wrapped tightly in its cocoon, the developing chrysalis must struggle with all its might to break its confinement. The butterfly might think, "Why must I suffer so? Why cannot I simply, in the twinkling of an eye, become a butterfly?"

Such thoughts would be contrary to the Creator's design. The struggle to break out of the cocoon develops the butterfly so it can fly. Without that adversity, the butterfly would never have the strength to achieve its destiny. It would never develop the strength to become something extraordinary.

President James E. Faust explained that "into every life there come the pain-

ful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful."<sup>7</sup> And then the suggestion that the adversity we experience allows our souls to become like clay in the hands of the Master. "Trials and adversity," President Faust taught, "can be preparatory to becoming born anew."<sup>8</sup>

Adversity can strengthen and refine us. As with the butterfly, adversity is necessary to build character in people. Even when we are called to sail through troubled waters, we need to know the place of adversity in shaping our divine potential.

If only we would look beyond our present suffering and see our struggles as a temporary chrysalis. If only we would have the faith and trust in our Heavenly Father to see how, after a little season, we can emerge from our trials more refined and glorious.

### **Mortality is like learning to walk**

What parent would say to a child, "Learning to walk is such a painful and difficult experience. You will stumble; you will most likely hurt yourself; you will cry many times when you fall. I will protect you from the struggle." I have watched our youngest grandson, Seth, as he was learning to walk. Through this process of gaining experience, he now walks with confidence. Could I have said to him, "Out of my love for you, I will save you from this"? If I had, because I could not bear to see him take a tumble at times, he may have never learned to walk. That is unthinkable for a loving parent or grandparent.

The child, if he or she is ever to walk, must pass through the stumbling and often painful process of learning. We encouraged Seth to learn through his experience. Yes, even knowing that the

process would be difficult, we knew that the freedom and joy of walking would outweigh any temporary pain or adversity.

My brothers and sisters, what is mortality if not a long process like learning to walk? We must learn to walk in the ways of the Lord.

You are stronger than you think. Your Heavenly Father, the Lord and Master of the universe, is your Creator. When I think of it, it makes my heart leap for joy. Our spirits are eternal, and eternal spirits have immeasurable capacity!

Our Father in Heaven does not wish us to cower. He does not want us to wallow in our misery. He expects us to square our shoulders, roll up our sleeves, and overcome our challenges.

That kind of spirit—that blend of faith and hard work—is the spirit we should emulate as we seek to reach a safe harbor in our own lives.

### **Others will help you**

Brothers and sisters, you are not alone. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today, millions of people stand beside you. Those who follow the teachings and example of the Savior are “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>9</sup>

The question Cain asked of the Lord, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>10</sup> has been answered by prophets in these latter days. “Yes, we are our brothers’ keepers,” President Thomas S. Monson has said. When we work together to benefit those in need, “we eliminate the weakness of one person standing alone and substitute the strength of many serving together. While we may not be able to do everything, we can and must do something.”<sup>11</sup>

Bishops, home teachers, visiting teachers, and members of priesthood quorums and Relief Societies and other auxiliary organizations all stand ready to help. The Savior’s teachings and the Church constitute our best safe harbor—yes, our most secure “refuge from the storm.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, your brothers and sisters in the Church are not to solve your problems for you. It has been my experience that when we do for others what they can and ought to do for themselves, we often weaken rather than strengthen them. But your brothers and sisters will be at your side to strengthen you, encourage you, and help you.

As you overcome adversity in your life, you will become stronger. Then you will be better able to help others—those who are working, in their turn, to find a safe harbor from the storms that rage about them.

### **With faith, all things work for our good**

When you feel tossed by the storms of life and when the waves rise and the winds howl, on those occasions it would be natural for you to cry in your heart, “Master, carest thou not that I perish?” When these times come, think back upon that day when the Savior awakened in the stern of the ship, rose up, and rebuked the storm. “Peace, be still.”<sup>13</sup> He said.

At times we may be tempted to think that the Savior is oblivious to our trials. In fact, the reverse is true; it is we who need to be awakened in our hearts to His teachings.

Use your ingenuity, your strength, your might to resolve your challenges. Do all you can do and then leave the rest to the Lord. President Howard W. Hunter said: “If our lives and our faith are centered on Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and His teach-

ings, no other success can ever be permanently right.”<sup>14</sup>

Living the gospel does not mean the storms of life will pass us by, but we will be better prepared to face them with serenity and peace. “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing,” the Lord admonished, “and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk up-rightly.”<sup>15</sup>

### The Savior is our solace and sanctuary

Draw close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Be of good cheer. Keep the faith. Doubt not. The storms will one day be stilled. Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said: “We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. . . . [And] He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments.”<sup>16</sup>

In our own storms in life, the Savior is our solace and our sanctuary. If we seek peace, we must come unto Him. He Himself spoke this eternal truth when He said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>17</sup> When our souls are anchored in the safe harbor of the Savior, we can proclaim as did Paul: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”<sup>18</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith, who knew much about the storms of life, during one of his darkest moments cried in anguish: “[My] God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”<sup>19</sup> Even as he lifted up his voice, the serene comfort of the Lord came to him:

“Peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”<sup>20</sup>

### Steer toward the light of the gospel

The gospel gives us that harbor of enduring safety and security. The living prophet and the apostles today are as lighthouses in the storm. Steer toward the light of the restored gospel and the inspired teachings of those who represent the Lord on earth.

I bear solemn testimony that Jesus is the living Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He leads and directs His Church through our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. If we live by the Savior’s teachings, we will with surety find a safe harbor in this life and in the eternities to come. I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Daniel 2:45.
2. See Mark 4:38.
3. Matthew 8:24.
4. Mark 4:38.
5. Alma 7:11.
6. John 14:27.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 53.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 54.
9. Mosiah 18:8–9.
10. Moses 5:34.
11. “Our Brothers’ Keepers,” *Ensign*, June 1998, 33, 38.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
13. Mark 4:39.
14. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 40.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
17. Matthew 11:30.
18. 2 Corinthians 4:8–9.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.

## Elder Earl C. Tingey

### The widows of Zion

I have entitled my talk "The Widows of Zion." The dictionary defines a widow as "a woman who has lost her husband by death and . . . has not remarried."<sup>1</sup>

Some widows are young. Their husbands often have met an untimely death. If young children adorn their home, the young widow bears the sole responsibility for rearing them. She has an unanswered question: "Why has this happened to me?" Extreme loneliness is not unusual.

Other widows are older. Their husbands, following a lifetime of cherished companionship, have died of old age or ill health. Decades of loving memories, shared joy in rearing a noble family, and mutual service to Church and community are replaced by loneliness and feelings of being unneeded or unwanted. The question "How long must I wait before I can join my eternal companion?" remains unanswered. Their temple work may increase. Life often becomes more difficult. Living with family or in assisted-care facilities may replace a family home filled with a lifetime of memories.

Being alone is foreign to our sisters when they become widows. They want to be helpful and to contribute to the well-being of others. Many have limitations because of poor health. They want to remain faithful so they may one day join their eternal companions. They can teach us much about faith.

### Caring and providing for widows

The doctrine of the Church is very clear regarding widows.

In the early Church, the leaders were chastised for neglecting their widows. "Seven men of honest report" were called to assist.<sup>2</sup>

Paul instructed the Saints to honor widows.<sup>3</sup> He taught that anyone who provided "not for his own, and specially

for those of his own house, . . . hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."<sup>4</sup>

As Brigham Young organized the first pioneer trek to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847, he counseled the Saints as follows:

"Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army, that the cries of the widow and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people."<sup>5</sup>

I believe this effort of helping the widows cross the plains is one of the greatest modern examples of how we should care for widows.

Modern revelation reveals the order of the Church:

"Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken. . . . Children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance. . . .

"And after that, they have claim upon the church."<sup>6</sup>

The Doctrine and Covenants states further, "And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor."<sup>7</sup>

The book of James contains one of the most beautiful descriptions of the doctrine of the Church regarding our responsibility as family and friends of widows: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."<sup>8</sup>

The term *widows* is used 34 times in the scriptures. In 23 of these passages, the term refers to widows and the fatherless. I believe the Lord has a tender feeling toward widows and the fatherless, or

orphans. He knows that they may have to rely more completely on Him than on others. Their prayers will be more personal and lasting, service to fellowmen more genuine, and faith greater.

### **The faith of widows in the scriptures**

The faith of widows is legendary in scripture.

The widow of Zarephath showed her faith when she provided the prophet Elijah with a morsel of bread rather than using the last of her meal and oil to feed her son and herself and then die. The scriptures record:

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps symbolic of the trust widows have in the Lord is the phrase "and she went and did according to the saying of Elijah."

Anna, a widow of about 84 years who served continually in the temple, recognized the infant Jesus at His presentation in the temple.<sup>10</sup>

Perceiving the great faith of the widow of Nain, Jesus Christ raised her dead son, her only son, as he was being taken outside the gate of the city to be buried.<sup>11</sup>

As an example of the true spirit of giving, the story of the widow's mite is forever immortalized as among the greatest of all the Savior's teachings:

"The people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites. . . .

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."<sup>12</sup>

### **Encouragement and advice for widows**

To you wonderful sisters who find yourselves as widows, please know that God loves you. You are the choice among the choice. I know whereof I speak. My own mother has been a widow for almost three years. She presides as a noble matriarch over an extended family of 247. My wife's mother, who is 97, remains faithful and continues to endure to the end, despite failing health. Dear sisters, your very lives, as an example of righteous living, continue to inspire younger family members to do better. You continue as teachers.

At some period in God's timetable, you will join your eternal companion and serve together, forever, in the great work in the spirit world.

For you young widows with ever-increasing family responsibilities, know that God is aware of your needs and that He will provide. Continue to exercise faith and good works. Faithful family and Church members will assist. Be willing to receive assistance from others as necessary. Your children will know that you provide them with a double measure of love. It is my testimony that our Heavenly Father will abundantly compensate your family with eternal blessings because of the goodness of your hearts.

### **Be caring and considerate of widows**

To the family and friends of widows, God knows of your service and He may judge your works by how well you assist the widow. President James E. Faust once shared with the General Authorities a wonderful story about how neighbors and friends in a small farming community in central Utah treated the widows. They each had so many hours or minutes to take water turns to irrigate their home

gardens. They agreed that they could each take a little less water so that the widows of the neighborhood could have more water for their gardens.

I recently observed five elderly widows drive together to a Church meeting in a modest car. They entered the meeting together and sat down beside each other. They seemed to draw strength and protection from one another. I felt the goodness of their noble lives as I watched their tender association with one another in the twilight of their lives.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord loves widows. I know that the leaders of the Church are concerned about the welfare of widows. We members should care for and assist the widows within our family, home, ward, and neighborhood. I urge you young people—members of the Primary, youth, and young adults—to take the opportunity to assist and draw strength from the widows in your community.

May we be more caring and considerate to the widows of Zion is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1993), "widow," 1352.

2. See Acts 6:1–3.
3. See 1 Timothy 5:3.
4. 1 Timothy 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 136:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 83:2, 4–5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 83:6.
8. James 1:27.
9. See 1 Kings 17:8–16.
10. See Luke 2:36–38.
11. See Luke 7:11–15.
12. Mark 12:41–44; see also Luke 21:1–4.

## President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling." Following the singing, Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

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## Sister Mary Ellen Smoot

### We are all creators

We are all creators. We are walking along a bridge in time that crosses the threshold of a new millennium. This is an exciting and significant time. These are the days the prophets have foreseen. This is an age of faith, opportunity, and wonder.

I marvel when I think of this world so rich in beauty, so perfect in function. This world was created by Jesus Christ under the direction of our Heavenly Father. Creation is one of the characteristics that defines God. He takes matter

without form and molds it into stars, planets, and solar systems. "Worlds without number have I created," He tells us.<sup>1</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we are children of God. Shouldn't we be about our Father's business? Shouldn't we be creators as well?

You might say, "I'm not creative." I'm here to tell you, you are. You are creators. Have you ever coaxed a smile from a baby? Have you ever taught someone to forgive? Have you helped someone learn to read? Prepared a family home evening? Organized a family reunion?

Possibly you were prompted to do something for a person you go visiting teaching or home teaching to that made a great difference in their lives. If you have done some of these things, you have been creative.

### **Create a tapestry of gospel living**

The raw materials of creation are all around us. President David O. McKay taught: "Sculptors of life are we, with our uncarved souls before us. Every one of us is carving a soul."<sup>2</sup>

I believe that we carve souls—our own and others'—every day. Let's determine now to make those souls pure and chaste. Create homes filled with love and serenity. Relieve suffering. Create enduring testimonies of eternal truths in ourselves and others.

Recently I visited with the family of a young mother who died while giving birth to her fifth child. I expected anguish but found hope and determination. Her husband cherished the time they had together. Their children understood the plan of salvation and knew they could be with their mother again, forever. She had never been too busy for those most dear to her. At her young age, this sister had served as a Relief Society president, always putting her marriage and family first.

As I visited with the mother of the deceased woman, she remarked that her highest priority was to raise her daughters to be righteous women. Even though her daughter's life was cut short, this daughter created a tapestry of righteous gospel living in her home.

Together your general Relief Society presidency, under the direction of our priesthood leaders, created a declaration for our Relief Society sisters around the world. The declaration reminds us who we are; and home, family, and personal enrichment night has been set aside to develop these skills.

### **Create a tapestry of service**

Do we recognize in our own lives the opportunities for creation that are there? Do we prize the gifts, talent, and choice spirits that God has given us? Do we share the creations of our hearts, minds, and hands with others?

Another mother and counselor in a stake Relief Society, though tremendous health problems threatened her, created a remarkable service project in her stake. Through fasting and prayer, miracles occurred, and the sisters of one stake created something extraordinary for others who were cold, hungry, and sick.

Who knows how many lives have been blessed because one woman refused to dwell on her afflictions and instead created the tapestry of service, a monument to the compassion and nobility of the human spirit.

### **Quilts for refugees in Kosovo**

This story is repeated by tens of thousands of faithful members each year. In July of last year, the Presiding Bishopric distributed a letter suggesting that any who wanted to contribute to the relief of the suffering of the refugees in Kosovo could make quilts and send them to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center for distribution. Our intent was to collect and ship 30,000 quilts.

We have received more than 125,000 quilts. These quilts have been sent not only to those suffering in Kosovo, but to disaster victims in Turkey, Venezuela, Mexico, and other countries, including Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

During this past year I was privileged to travel to Kosovo, where I personally wrapped many of these quilts around babies and women, grateful and teary eyed. We have found that because of this great organization, we can create in our own homes, teaching family, friends, and neighbors to serve and assist others clear

across the world. In the name of the Relief Society and humanitarian services of the Church, we can be creators. Isn't that exciting?

### Dare to create

We each have to say to ourselves, "What will I create of my life? My time? My future?"

First, go where the Spirit directs. Be still and listen. Your Heavenly Father will guide you as you draw near to Him. Immerse yourself in the holy word of the prophets, both ancient and modern, and the Spirit will speak to you. Be patient, ask in faith, and you will receive guidance in your creative efforts.

Second, don't be paralyzed by fear of making mistakes. Thrust your hands into the clay of your lives and begin. I love how Rebekah of old responded to Abraham's servant who came in search of a wife for Isaac. Her answer was simple and direct: "I will go," she said.<sup>3</sup>

Rebekah could have refused. She could have told the servant to wait until she had the proper send-off, a new wardrobe, until she lost a few pounds, or until the weather was more promising. She could have said, "What's wrong with Isaac that he can't find a wife in all of Canaan?" But she didn't. She acted, and so should we.

The time for procrastination is over. Begin! Don't be afraid. Do the best you can. Of course you will make mistakes. Everyone does. Learn from them and move forward.

Third, support others along the way. Every person on this earth is unique. We all have varied interests, abilities, and skills. We are each at different levels physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Finally, rejoice. Creation isn't drudgery. Creation flows from love. When we

do what we love, we rejoice along the way.

### Create to overcome troubles and find joy

If you are unhappy, if you are feeling weary, troubled, or disillusioned, may I ask you to try something? Instead of dwelling on your troubles, focus instead on creating something remarkable, something of eternal significance. Nurture a testimony; strengthen a relationship; write a family history; go to the temple; serve.

Read the family proclamation and the Relief Society declaration; make a commitment to live those principles and celebrate.

We are a joyful people. We are participants walking across the bridge of time at one of the greatest moments in the history of this world. "This is not a time for dragging feet or stooped shoulders," President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled. "Stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight."<sup>4</sup>

As Latter-day Saints, I pray that we will be about our Father's business and create something more of our lives. No matter what our situations, we can pray as Isaiah, "O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."<sup>5</sup> May our work and glory be a reflection of His is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moses 1:33.
2. In Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 288.
3. Genesis 24:58.
4. *Standing for Something: Ten Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* (2000), 101.
5. Isaiah 64:8.



## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Millions of new callings each year

Hundreds of thousands of people in the last year were baptized and confirmed members of the Church. Each was given the opportunity of a call to serve. For them and for the Church, that experience will shape the future. Many of us remember the first time we gave a talk or conducted a meeting or knocked on the door of a home as an official visitor. My heart beats a little faster just thinking about it.

The new members may have been baptized only days or weeks before their call to serve. Some of them had never seen anyone perform the service that now was theirs. Because we have no professional clergy, the challenge of calls to serve came to more than the new members. In the last year, it is estimated that nearly two million Latter-day Saints received either a new call to be a shepherd or were given some new sheep to watch over. Just less than half of those called were youth, some as young as 12 or 13 years of age. More than 30,000 missionaries were called and set apart in that time. Most of them were less than 20 years of age. They went with only brief training and little experience.

Someone who knows organizations in the world might predict failure for a rapidly growing church depending on so many novice lay members. Even those called may well have felt some apprehension. And yet when they see through the eyes of faith the challenge as it really is, confidence replaces fear because they turn to God.

My message is first to those newly called to serve in the Church, then to those who called them, and finally to those they will serve.

### Each calling is a trust from God

First, to the newly called: Confidence depends on your seeing the call for what it is. Your call to serve is not from human beings. It is a trust from God. And the service is not simply to perform a task. Whatever name it has, every call is an opportunity and an obligation to watch over and strengthen the children of our Heavenly Father. The Savior's work is to bring to pass their immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39). He called us to serve others so that we could strengthen our own faith as well as theirs. He knows that by serving Him we will come to know Him.

An inspired prophet saw service as the way we come to want what the Lord wants. He wrote, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Because you are called by Jesus Christ to His service, you may go forward with great confidence. First, you may be assured that He knows you and your capacity to grow. He has prepared you. Calls will stretch you, often at the start and always over their course, but He will give you the Holy Ghost to be your companion. The Holy Ghost will tell you what to do when your own abilities and efforts are not enough (see John 14:26). The Holy Ghost will prompt you to bear testimony with conviction. The Savior will let you feel the love He feels for those you serve. The call is an invitation to become like Him (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

You might well ask, "How will seeing my call that way make me more confident of success?" The answer is that seeing it in that lofty way will make it

more likely that you will go for help to the only source that is never-failing.

### **"You better do a lot of praying"**

I saw a young man nearly overwhelmed by a new call not long ago. The Lord had inspired His servant to call him to be the president of a stake. The young man had never been a bishop. He had never served in a stake presidency. The stake had in it many men of greater maturity and experience.

He was humbled when he heard the call. His wife through tears said to the servant of the Lord who called him, "Are you sure?" Her husband said quietly that he would serve. His wife nodded her support, tears streaming down her face. As you might have done at such a time, he wanted to talk with his father, who was far away. He called him that afternoon on the telephone. His father has been a dairy farmer all his life. He raised the boy into a man through milking cows and letting his son observe him stop to talk with neighbors to see how they were doing. The next morning, in his first talk as a stake president, this is how he recounted the conversation with his father:

"Many of you that know me know I am a man of few words. I must have gotten that from my father. As I called him yesterday to let him know that I was being called as a stake president, his one response to me was, 'Well, you better do a lot of praying.' That was his counsel to me. What better counsel could he give?"

His father couldn't have done much better. And you can see why. The Lord is his only hope for success. Most of the help will come through the ministrations of the Holy Ghost. The Lord's servants cannot succeed without it. We can have the Holy Ghost as a companion only if we plead for it and if we qualify for it. And both require a lot of praying—praying with real faith in our Heavenly Father and in His Beloved Son and in the

Holy Ghost (see D&C 90:24; Articles of Faith 1:1).

To have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, we must be cleansed of sin (see D&C 50:29). That comes only through faith enough in Jesus Christ to repent and qualify for forgiveness (see D&C 3:20). And then we have to stay away from sin. That takes prayer, both frequent and fervent (see 3 Nephi 18:18).

### **The Lord's Prayer—a standard of service**

"You better do a lot of praying" is good counsel for all of the Lord's servants, new or seasoned. It is what His wise servants do. They pray.

The disciples of Jesus Christ when He lived on the earth noticed that about Him. He was the Son of God. He was Jehovah. And yet He prayed often enough to His Heavenly Father that His disciples realized that they must know how to pray to be His servants. So they asked Him to teach them. You remember the record:

"And it came to pass, that, as [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. . . .

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:1-2, 4; see also Matthew 6:9-13).

We seldom use those exact words as we pray. But the words of that prayer are a perfect summary of what a servant of the Lord pleads for to qualify for the promise the Savior makes to all whom He calls: "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be

in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

Think of that prayer as a standard of service. The prayer begins with reverence for our Heavenly Father. Then the Lord speaks of the kingdom and its coming. The servant with a testimony that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ feels joy in its progress and a desire to give his or her all to build it up.

The Savior Himself exemplified the standard set by these next words of the prayer: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Luke 11:2). That was His prayer in the extremity of offering the Atonement for all mankind and all the world (see Matthew 26:42). The faithful servant prays that even the apparently smallest task will be done as God would have it done. It makes all the difference to work and to pray for His success more than for our own.

Then the Savior set for us this standard of personal purity: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:4). The strengthening we are to give those we watch over comes from the Savior. We and they must forgive to be forgiven by Him (see Matthew 6:14). We and they can hope to remain clean only with His protection and with the change in our hearts that His Atonement makes possible. We need that change to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Such a gift might seem too lofty and too distant for us and for those we serve. But a prophet of the Lord named Samuel called and anointed a young man named Saul. On that very day, Samuel promised Saul, "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy . . . , and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6).

That promise was fulfilled, not after many years or months or even days. Listen to the account in 1 Samuel, the 10th chapter:

"And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

"And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them" (1 Samuel 10:9-10).

You may have confidence in the Lord's service. The Savior will help you do what He has called you to do, be it for a time as a worker in the Church or forever as a parent. You may pray for help enough to do the work and know that it will come.

### **Watch over and train those you call**

Now, a word to those who have issued those calls in the Church. When you did, you conveyed the trust of the Lord. But He placed a trust with you as well. Just as those members were called to watch over and strengthen others, you were placed under the same obligation to watch over and strengthen them. If you issued the call and gave no training or did not watch to see that the training was enough, you failed them and the Lord. Even with that training, the path will become difficult for them. You know that, and so you must watch and listen to see when they need strengthening. You will give just enough help to strengthen their faith that the Lord is watching over them and over the people they serve and that they may turn with confidence to Him. To do that well, you must do a lot of praying yourself, for guidance and for them.

### **Strengthening those who serve us**

Finally, a word to those of us who are served by those who are newly called. Our opportunity and our obligation is the same as theirs. We are to watch and strengthen. And each of us has almost endless chances to do it. Every meeting

you attend, every class, every activity will have someone doing something that to them is at the limit of their capacities, or maybe a little beyond. Most of us carry into those situations the attitudes we learn in the world, where we may be quick to notice inferior service. It is too easy to think, "In the Lord's true Church, our standard of performance should be higher than that."

There is more than one way to help the Lord lift them to that standard. One is to express or show our displeasure. I've been the beneficiary of another way, the better way. I've sensed when I was not doing very well when I was speaking or teaching or leading in a meeting. Most people can tell when they are failing. I have been able to tell when I have been not doing well, and I've looked out and seen someone in the audience apparently not paying attention to me, with eyes closed. I've learned not to be irritated. And then they've opened their eyes and smiled at me, with a look of encouragement that was unmistakable. It was a look that said as clearly as if they had spoken to me: "I know the Lord will help you and lift you up. I'm praying for you." I've been in settings where many people listening to me were doing that. And I was lifted beyond what I knew were my abilities, or at least what I had thought my abilities were. You could serve that way when you see people struggling in their service. It will take a lot of praying, but you could watch and you could strengthen, even when your only call in the Church at that moment is to be a follower of Jesus Christ and your only tools are to pray and smile and encourage.

### **Miracle of growth through service**

There is a miracle appearing in the Church. I see it as I travel back to nations after an absence of only a short time. The members and the leaders are changed. Just as Alma promised, their souls have

been enlarged and their understanding enlightened and their minds expanded (see Alma 32:28, 34). They have served each other in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has sent them the Holy Ghost as a companion in answer to fervent prayer. Their watching over and testifying and loving and helping each other has let the Lord give a miracle of growth in the hearts and capacities of humble sons and daughters of God.

I know that God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers. I testify that His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, has called Gordon B. Hinckley as His prophet and president. I testify that through His authorized servants the Master calls us and that He sustains and transforms us in His service, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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### **President Hinckley**

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general president, has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir then sang that marvelous hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Spirit of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Val R. Christensen of the Seventy.

The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

We urge you as you travel home today to obey traffic rules and to use caution and to be courteous in every respect.

A video presentation entitled *Special Witnesses of Christ* will be shown over the

Church satellite system immediately following this session and will also be carried over KSL and KBYU.

We're happy to have with us today Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter. We're so grateful for her presence.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Gratitude for unity of Church members

Now it becomes my opportunity to say a few words, my brothers and sisters. I am overwhelmed with feelings of thanksgiving this morning. I feel so richly blessed of the Lord. As I look into the faces of the thousands upon thousands who are gathered in this new and beautiful hall and then think of the hundreds of thousands who are assembled across the world listening to this conference, I am almost overcome with feelings of gratitude for the great unity that exists among us. If I may speak personally for a little while, I think no man has been blessed so richly as I have been blessed. I cannot understand it. I so much appreciate your many expressions of kindness and love.

Through the great goodness of others I have traveled far and wide across the earth in the interest of this Church. I have had remarkable opportunities to speak to the world through the generosity of the media. I have lifted my voice in testimony in the great halls of this nation, from Madison Square Garden in New York to the Astrodome in Houston. Men and women of high station have received me and spoken with great respect concerning our work.

On the other hand, during these years I have come to know of the mean and contemptuous ways of our critics. I think the Lord had them in mind when He declared:

"Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, . . . but

have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

" . . . Those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. . . .

"Wo unto them. . . .

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them" (D&C 121:16-17, 19-20).

We leave to Him, whose right it is, judgments that may come to those who oppose His work.

### Gratitude for prayers and support

I return to my expressions of gratitude. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your prayers. Thank you for your support in the great work we are all trying to accomplish. Thank you for your obedience to the commandments of God. He is pleased and loves you. Thank you for your faithfulness in carrying forward the great responsibilities which you have. Thank you for your ready response to every call which is made upon you. Thank you for bringing up your children in the way of light and truth. Thank you for the unfailing testimonies which you carry in your hearts concerning God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Gratitude for youth

I am so grateful for the youth of the Church. There is so much of evil everywhere. Temptation, with all its titillating

influences, is about us everywhere. We lose some to these destructive forces, unfortunately. We sorrow over every one who is lost. We reach out to help them, to save them, but in too many cases our entreaties are spurned. Tragic is the course they are following. It is the way which leads down to destruction.

But there are so many, many hundreds of thousands of our young people who are faithful and true, who are straight as an arrow and as strong as a great wave of the sea in following the course they have mapped out for themselves. It is a course of righteousness and goodness, a course of accomplishment and achievement. They are making something of their lives, and the world will be so much the better for them.

I am profoundly grateful for this wonderful season of history in which we live. There has never been another like it. We, of all people who have walked the earth, are so richly and abundantly blessed.

### **Gratitude for a testimony of Christ**

But of all the things for which I feel grateful this morning, one stands out preeminently. That is a living testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One.

On one occasion at a missionary meeting in Europe, an elder raised his hand and said, "Give us your testimony and tell us how you gained it."

I feel I might try saying a few words this morning on the evolution of my testimony. This is a personal area, of course. I hope you will excuse that.

### **Early memories of spiritual feelings**

The earliest instance of which I have recollection of spiritual feelings was when I was about five years of age, a very small boy. I was crying from the pain of an earache. There were no wonder drugs at the time. That was 85 years ago. My mother

prepared a bag of table salt and put it on the stove to warm. My father softly put his hands upon my head and gave me a blessing, rebuking the pain and the illness by authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. He then took me tenderly in his arms and placed the bag of warm salt at my ear. The pain subsided and left. I fell asleep in my father's secure embrace. As I was falling asleep, the words of his administration floated through my mind. That is the earliest remembrance I have of the exercise of the authority of the priesthood in the name of the Lord.

Later in my youth, my brother and I slept in an unheated bedroom in the winter. People thought that was good for you. Before falling into a warm bed, we knelt to say our prayers. There were expressions of simple gratitude. They concluded in the name of Jesus. The distinctive title of Christ was not used very much when we prayed in those days.

I recall jumping into my bed after I had said *amen*, pulling the covers up around my neck, and thinking of what I had just done in speaking to my Father in Heaven in the name of His Son. I did not have great knowledge of the gospel. But there was some kind of lingering peace and security in communing with the heavens in and through the Lord Jesus.

### **Growth of testimony as a missionary**

When I went on a mission to the British Isles, that testimony quickened. Each morning my companion and I read the Gospel of John together, commenting on each verse. It was a wonderful, illuminating experience. That marvelous testament opens with a declaration of the divinity of the Son of God. It states:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . .

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3, 14).

I thought of that declaration much then, and I have thought of it much since. It leaves no doubt concerning the individuality of the Father and the Son. To the Son the Father gave the great responsibility of creating the earth, "and without him was not any thing made that was made."

I have seen much of ugliness in this world. Most of it is the work of man. But I think I have seen much more of beauty. I marvel at the majestic works of the Creator. How magnificent they are. And they are all the work of the Son of God.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He, the Son of the Father, came to earth. He condescended to leave His royal courts on high—where He stood as Prince, the Firstborn of the Father—to take upon Himself mortality, to be born in a manger, the humblest of all places, in a vassal state ruled by the centuries of Rome.

How could He have condescended further?

He was baptized of John in Jordan "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). His earthly ministry was preceded by the clever temptations of the adversary. He withstood, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Luke 4:8).

He went about Galilee, Samaria, and Judea preaching the gospel of salvation, causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise to life again. And then, to fulfill His Father's plan of happiness for His children, He gave His life as a price for the sins of each of us.

That testimony grew in my heart as a missionary when I read the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, which

further bore witness of Him. That knowledge became the foundation of my life, standing on the footings of the answered prayers of my childhood.

### Apostolic witness of Christ

Since then my faith has grown much further. I have become His Apostle, appointed to do His will and teach His word. I have become His witness to the world. I repeat that witness of faith to you and to all who hear my voice this Sabbath morning.

*Jesus is my friend.* None other has given me so much. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He gave His life for me. He opened the way to eternal life. Only a God could do this. I hope that I am deemed worthy of being a friend to Him.

*He is my exemplar.* His way of life, His absolutely selfless conduct, His outreach to those in need, His final sacrifice all stand as an example to me. I cannot measure up entirely, but I can try.

He marked the path and led the way,  
And ev'ry point defines  
To light and life and endless day  
Where God's full presence shines.  
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195]

*He is my teacher.* No other voice ever spoke such wondrous language as that of the Beatitudes:

"And seeing the multitudes, . . . he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Sunday, April 2, 2000

Morning Session

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:1–10).

No other teacher has ever offered the matchless counsel given the multitude on the mount.

*He is my healer.* I stand in awe at His wondrous miracles. And yet I know they happened. I accept the truth of these things because I know that He is the Master of life and death. The miracles of His ministry bespeak compassion, love, and a sense of humanity wonderful to behold.

*He is my leader.* I am honored to be one in the long cavalcade of those who love Him and who have followed Him during the two millennia that have passed since His birth.

Onward, Christian soldiers!  
Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
Going on before.  
Christ, the royal Master,  
Leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle,  
See his banners go!  
[“Onward, Christian Soldiers,” *Hymns*, no. 246]

*He is my Savior and my Redeemer.* Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty where we may go forward on the road that leads to eternal life. My gratitude knows no bounds. My thanks to my Lord has no conclusion.

*He is my God and my King.* From everlasting to everlasting, He will reign and rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To His dominion there will be no end. To His glory there will be no night.

None other can take His place. None other ever will. Unblemished and without fault of any kind, He is the Lamb of God, to whom I bow and through whom I approach my Father in Heaven.

### Witnesses of the Savior's divinity

Isaiah foretold of His coming:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Those who walked with Him in Palestine bore witness of His divinity. The centurion who watched Him die declared in solemnity, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Thomas, on seeing His resurrected body, cried out in wonder, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Those in this hemisphere to whom He appeared heard the voice of the Father introduce Him: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name” (3 Nephi 11:7).

And the Prophet Joseph, speaking in this dispensation, declared:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

To which I add my own witness that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6).

Gratefully, and with love undiminished, I bear witness of these things in



His Holy name, even the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

Elder Val R. Christensen offered the benediction.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television,

cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the invocation.

### President Monson

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "Come unto Him." Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Come unto Him."

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With all of you, brothers and sisters, I express appreciation to President Hinckley for his tireless shaping of the Church's future, of which this Conference Center is emblematic.

### Becoming spiritually content

In just a few words, a major insight came to the conscientious and the converted through Alma: "For I ought to be

content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me" (Alma 29:3). However, just prior, Alma urgently desired to be the "trump of God" so that he might "shake the earth" (Alma 29:1). But not because of ego; in fact, Alma wanted to declare repentance and the plan of redemption to all mankind so that there might be no more human sorrow (see Alma 29:2). Yet Alma's contentment rested on the reality that God finally allots to us according to our wills (see Alma 29:4). What could be more fair?

Thus becoming content with his calling, Alma then meekly hoped to be an instrument to help save some soul (see Alma 29:9). A significant spiritual journey is thus reflected in but nine soliloquy-like verses.

The same contentment awaits us if our own desires can be worked through and aligned.

What some mortals are allotted includes, for instance, very reduced chances because of poverty: "And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches" (3 Nephi 6:12).

Furthermore, malevolent, human social structures have included, in the past, tragic constraints like slavery and concentration camps.

Nevertheless, we are to do what we can within our allotted "acreage," while still using whatever stretch there may be in any tethers. Within what is allotted to us, we can have spiritual contentment. Paul described it as "godliness with contentment," signifying the adequate presence of attributes such as love, hope, meekness, patience, and submissiveness (1 Timothy 6:6).

### **Bearing limitations and deprivations**

Yet there are other fixed limitations in life. For instance, some have allot-

ments including physical, mental, or geographic constraints. There are those who are unmarried, through no fault of their own, or yearning but childless couples. Still others face persistent and unreconciled relationships within their circles of loved ones, including offspring who have "[become] for themselves," resistant to parental counsel (3 Nephi 1:29). In such and similar situations, there are so many prickly and daily reminders.

Being content means acceptance without self-pity. Meekly borne, however, deprivations such as these can end up being like excavations that make room for greatly enlarged souls.

Some undergo searing developments that cut suddenly into mortality's status quo. Some have trials to *pass through*, while still others have allotments they are to *live with*. Paul lived with his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Suffice it to say, such mortal allotments will be changed in the world to come. The exception is unrepented sin that shapes our status in the next world.

### **Doing all we can within our allotment**

Thus, developing greater contentment within certain of our existing constraints and opportunities is one of our challenges. Otherwise we may feel underused, underwhelmed, and underappreciated—while, ironically, within our givens are unused opportunities for service all about us. Neither should we pine away, therefore, for certain things outside God's givens, such as for the powerful voice of an angel, because there is so much to do within what has been allotted to us (see Alma 29:3–4). Furthermore, varied as our allotted circumstances may be, we can still keep the commandments of God!

Meanwhile, we serve as each other's clinical material in the particular sample of humanity constituting what is "allotted unto [us]." The sample may shrink or swell, but most important is *what we are and what we do* within those varied alloca-

tions and in the particular "work to which [we] have been called" (Alma 29:6).

Thus, "the holy present" contains the allotted acres for our discipleship. We need not be situated in prime time with prime visibility in order to work out our own salvation!

### Learning the necessary lessons of life

In contrast, however, as to improving our behavior, there are no borders that we cannot cross and no shortage of visas for those willing to venture!

Incremental improvement is, therefore, the order of the day, and it clearly requires the accompaniment of the Lord's long-suffering as we struggle to learn the necessary lessons.

Mary, having been told some wondrous things about herself and what lay ahead, nevertheless "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Pondering often precedes contentment.

Performance is what matters, not the size of the stage. The Sea of Galilee, only 13 miles by 7, was nevertheless large enough to provide the disciples with a vital experience involving faith and walking on the water (see Matthew 14:22-33). The wind was boisterous and frightening! Even so, compare the size of those Galilean swells and the length of that storm with what Nephi and party had to endure on the vast ocean! (see 1 Nephi 18:13-21). Yet both episodes provided the needed learning experiences. Of course, I should be careful about comparisons involving excesses of water, realizing Noah is in the historical audience!

Thus, less spectacular episodes, just as good individuals with lower profiles, are "no less serviceable" in order to get the job done (Alma 48:19).

On a larger scale, for instance, the prophet Mormon at first thought his people were sorrowing unto repentance (see Mormon 2:12-13). Yet he soon discerned that theirs was not actually the

sorrowing unto repentance but the "sorrowing of the damned," stranding them in a "no-man's-land." Compare that episode to the prodigal son's solitary working through of his own repentance; since his sorrow was real, he truly "came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Sometimes we learn "by sad experience," but sometimes not! (D&C 121:39).

### Responses matter, not allotments

Life's necessary defining moments come within our allotments, and we make "on the record" choices within these allotments. Our responses are what matter. Sufficient unto each life are the tests thereof! (see Matthew 6:34).

Meanwhile, people regularly sell their souls for much less than the whole world. In Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, Sir Thomas More is soon to be martyred, partly because his friend Rich, having been bought off by a local office, has betrayed him. More, "looking into Rich's face, with pain and amusement," speaks: "For Wales? Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world . . . But for Wales!" (*A Man for All Seasons* [1960], 92). Let this same rebuke hold for any preoccupation which preempts us from spiritual things!

Ponder how Jesus was and is the Lord of the universe (see D&C 45:1; 76:24; Moses 1:33; 2:1). Yet His ministry, as we all know, was accomplished in a very tiny geographical space. His ministerial travels were very limited. Yet therein the Savior accomplished the Atonement for all of mankind! There were certainly much more prominent hills than Golgotha and much more resplendent gardens than Gethsemane. No matter; these were sufficient to host the central act of all human history!

We can draw upon that glorious Atonement by repenting. We can learn to serve and to forgive within our sample of humanity, including settings no larger than the family or friendships.

### God's justice and mercy are perfect

The justice and mercy of God will have been so demonstrably perfect that at the Final Judgment there will be no complaints, including from those who once questioned what God had allotted in the mortal framework (see 2 Nephi 9:14–15; Alma 5:15–19; 12:3–14; 42:23–26, 30).

Hence, we can and “ought to be content with the things . . . allotted unto [us]” (Alma 29:3), being circumstantially content but without being self-satisfied and behaviorally content with ourselves (see 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Matthew 5:48).

Such contentment is more than shoulder-shrugging passivity. It reflects our participative assent rather than uncaring resignation.

The Lord knows our circumstances and the intents of our hearts, and surely the talents and gifts He has given us. He is able to gauge perfectly how we have performed within what is allotted to us, including by lifting up some of the many surrounding hands that hang down. Thus, yearning for expanded opportunities while failing to use those at hand is bad form spiritually.

What we could and have done within our allotted acreage, therefore, is known perfectly by the Master of the vineyard.

### Be meek and willingly obedient

Their meekness and larger capacity for spiritual contentment may be one reason why God uses the weak of the world to accomplish His work (see D&C 1:19, 23; 35:13; 133:58–59; 1 Corinthians 1:27). The worldly are usually not very interested in doing what they regard as the Lord's lowly work anyway.

Significantly, too, the Lord refuses to intimidate by sending legions of angels in order to ensure that individuals do His will (see Matthew 26:47–53). His will is to be done “because of the word,” not because we are compelled (Alma 36:26).

The rule has been, is, and will remain “Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself” (Moses 3:17). The Lord wants conversion without intimidation.

Let us remember in our age of spin, the only spin God desires is our freely turning away from sin and turning to Him. Therefore, the Lord does not seek to overwhelm us but instead to help us overcome the world! (see D&C 64:2; Revelation 3:21).

Thus, within our allotments we see how the saintly display kindness even within barbed-wire circumstances, yet others have barbed attitudes even within opulence. Meanwhile, the discontented continue to build their own pools of self-pity, some Olympic size.

### The Atonement brings contentment

We see something else in Alma's inspired and instructive episode. Alma acknowledges that God has placed individuals in every nation who can preach and teach His word (see Alma 29:8). Thus, if we press too much, too often, and too hard for enlarged personal roles, we could actually shrink the field of action needed by others. Furthermore, our trusting contentment lets the Holy Ghost have precious time in which to do His special work.

When spiritually aligned, a poise can come, even when we do not know “the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17). Such contented assurance produces not arrogance but quiet acceptance, which is its own form of being “anxiously engaged” but without all the bells and whistles (D&C 58:27; see also verse 28).

However, this spiritual contentment rests on our accepting the Atonement of Jesus, because we “have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world” (Mosiah 4:6).

Again, brothers and sisters, seeing Alma move from wanting to be a “trump” to being a humble “instrument” and from wanting to “shake the earth” to perhaps bringing “some soul to repentance” is a stunning transition! Furthermore, isn’t it wonderful that we are permitted to grow, whether that growth is expressed in the space of nine verses or in a lifetime?

### **Anna Jo’s allotment and faith**

Colleen and I have a special granddaughter, Anna Josephine, who was born without a left hand. The other day a conversation was overheard between Anna Jo, almost five, and her cousin Talmage, three. Talmage said reassuringly as they played together, “Anna Jo, when you grow up you will have five fingers.” Anna Jo said, “No, Talmage, when I grow up I won’t have five fingers, but when I get to heaven I will have a hand.”

If Anna Jo, who has difficult days ahead, stays steady within what has been allotted to her, she will continue to be a great blessing to many people!

How blessed we are that Alma’s words have been preserved for all of us. May we liken Alma’s words to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). I pray for this in the name of Him who counts all sparrows and all fingers and yet is the Lord of the universe, even Jesus Christ, amen!

### **President Monson**

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

Elder Maxwell, we thank our Father in Heaven for the miraculous extension of your apostolic ministry. We are grateful that the declaration of your testimony has continued on into this beautiful new pavilion. We love you, and we pray for you.

And President Hinckley, on behalf of nearly 11 million members of this Church, may we thank the Lord for the extension of your ministry. I remember explicitly the groundbreaking service for this building you conducted just under three years ago. In his benediction at that service, President Boyd K. Packer asked for safety in construction, beauty in completion, and then one more favor of heaven. He asked, President, that you would be allowed to see this sight now before our eyes, preside at this pulpit, and declare your testimony here. We all thank heaven for you and for that answer to prayer.

### **As doves to the windows**

These are surely some of the days which our faithful and farsighted ancestors saw in the earliest years of the Restoration. In a general conference of the Church in April 1844, the brethren recalled those first gatherings of 1830. One of them said:

“We [talked] about the kingdom of God as if we had the world at our command; we talked with great confidence, and talked big things, although we were not many [in number]; . . . we looked [and] if we did not see *this* [congregation], we saw by vision, the church of God, a thousand times larger [than it was then], although [at the time] we were not enough to well man a farm, or meet a woman with a milk pail. . . . All the members [of the Church] met in conference, in a room 20 feet square. . . . We talked

about . . . people coming as doves to the windows, that all nations should flock unto [the Church]. . . . If we had told the people what our eyes behold this day, we should not [have been] believed.”<sup>1</sup>

If this was their feeling in that fateful year of 1844, just prior to Joseph Smith’s martyrdom, what must those same brethren and sisters see from their eternal home on a day like this! So much has happened since then for which they and we need to be grateful. And, of course, this is not the end. We have much work yet to do, in both the quality and quantity of our faithfulness and our service. George A. Smith, counselor in the First Presidency to President Brigham Young, once said by way of caution, “We may build temples, erect stately domes, magnificent spires [and] grand towers, in honor of our religion, but if we fail to live the principles of that religion . . . and to acknowledge God in all our thoughts, we shall fall short of the blessings which its practical exercise would ensure.”<sup>2</sup> We must be humble and conscientious. The honor and the glory of all that is good goes to God, and there is much still ahead of us that will be refining, even difficult, as He leads us from strength to strength.

### **Our debt to our faithful forebears**

In all of this my mind has turned to those early Saints who are too often lost to history, those who quietly and faithfully bore the kingdom forward through far more difficult days. So many of them seem almost nameless to us now. Most went unheralded to their graves—often early graves. Some few have made it into a line or two of Church history, but most have come and gone with neither high office nor history’s regard. These folks, our collective ancestors, slipped into eternity as quietly and anonymously as they lived their religion. These are the silent Saints of whom President J. Reuben Clark once spoke when he thanked them all, “especially,” he said, “the meekest

and lowliest of them, [largely] unknown [and] unremembered, [except] round the hearthstones of their children and their children’s children who pass down from generation to generation the story of their faith.”<sup>3</sup>

Whether longtime member or newest of converts, we are all the beneficiaries of such faithful forebears. In this beautiful new building and in this historic conference convened in it, I have sensed how much I owe to those who had so much less than I but who seem in virtually every case to have done more with it to build the kingdom than I have done.

Perhaps it has always been so down through the dispensations. Jesus once reminded His disciples that they were reaping in fields wherein they had bestowed no labor.<sup>4</sup> Moses had said to his people earlier:

“The Lord thy God shall [bring] thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, . . . to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

“And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Sacrifices to build the Kirtland Temple**

My mind goes back 167 years to a little handful of women, older men, and those children that could labor who were left to keep construction going on the Kirtland Temple while virtually every man well enough to do so had undertaken a relief march of 1,000 miles to aid the Saints in Missouri. The records indicate that quite literally every woman in Kirtland was engaged in knitting and spinning in order to clothe the men and boys laboring on the temple.

Elder Heber C. Kimball wrote, “The Lord only knows the scenes of poverty, tribulation, and distress which we passed through in order to accomplish this.” It was recorded that one leader of the day, looking upon the suffering and poverty

of the Church, frequently went upon the walls of that building by day and by night, weeping and crying aloud to the Almighty to send means whereby they might finish that building.<sup>6</sup>

### **Peter Neilson's example of sacrifice**

It was not any easier when the Saints moved west and began to settle in these valleys. As a young man of Primary and Aaronic Priesthood age, I attended church in the grand old St. George Tabernacle, construction for which had begun in 1863. During very lengthy sermons I would amuse myself by gazing about the building, admiring the marvelous pioneer craftsmanship that had built that striking facility. Did you know, by the way, that there are 184 clusters of grapes carved into the ceiling cornice of that building? (Some of those sermons were *really* long!) But most of all I enjoyed counting the window panes—2,244 of them—because I grew up on the story of Peter Neilson, one of those little-noted and now-forgotten Saints of whom we have been speaking.

In the course of constructing that tabernacle, the local brethren ordered the glass for the windows from New York and had it shipped around the cape to California. But a bill of \$800 was due and payable before the panes could be picked up and delivered to St. George. Brother David H. Cannon, later to preside over the St. George Temple being built at the same time, was charged with the responsibility of raising the needed funds. After painstaking effort, the entire community, giving virtually everything they had to these two monumental building projects, had been able to come up with only \$200 cash. On sheer faith Brother Cannon committed a team of freighters to prepare to leave for California to get the glass. He continued to pray that the enormous balance of \$600 would somehow be forthcoming before their departure.

Living in nearby Washington, Utah, was Peter Neilson, a Danish immigrant who had been saving for years to add on to his modest two-room adobe home. On the eve of the freighters' departure for California, Peter spent a sleepless night in that tiny little house. He thought of his conversion in far-off Denmark and his subsequent gathering with the Saints in America. After coming west he had settled and struggled to make a living in Sanpete. And then, just as some prosperity seemed imminent there, he answered the call to uproot and go to the Cotton Mission, bolstering the pathetic and sagging efforts of the alkali-soiled, malaria-plagued, flood-bedeveled settlers of Dixie. As he lay in bed that night contemplating his years in the Church, he weighed the sacrifices asked of him against the wonderful blessings he had received. Somewhere in those private hours he made a decision.

Some say it was a dream, others say an impression, still others simply a call to duty. However the direction came, Peter Neilson arose before dawn on the morning the teams were to leave for California. With only a candle and the light of the gospel to aid him, Peter brought out of a secret hiding place \$600 in gold coins—half eagles, eagles, and double eagles. His wife, Karen, aroused by the predawn bustling, asked why he was up so early. He said only that he had to walk quickly the seven miles to St. George to give \$600 to Brother David H. Cannon.

As the first light of morning fell on the beautiful red cliffs of southern Utah, a knock came at Brother Cannon's door. There stood Peter Neilson, holding a red bandanna which sagged under the weight it carried. "Good morning, David," said Peter. "I hope I am not too late. You will know what to do with this money."

With that he turned on his heel and retraced his steps back to Washington, back to a faithful and unquestioning wife, and back to a small two-room adobe

house that remained just two rooms for the rest of his life.<sup>7</sup>

### **John R. Moyle's example of commitment**

One other account from those early, faithful builders of modern Zion. John R. Moyle lived in Alpine, Utah, about 22 miles as the crow flies to the Salt Lake Temple, where he was the chief superintendent of masonry during its construction. To make certain he was always at work by 8:00, Brother Moyle would start walking about 2:00 A.M. on Monday mornings. He would finish his work week at 5:00 P.M. on Friday and then start the walk home, arriving there shortly before midnight. Each week he would repeat that schedule for the entire time he served on the construction of the temple.

Once when he was home on the weekend, one of his cows bolted during milking and kicked Brother Moyle in the leg, shattering the bone just below the knee. With no better medical help than they had in such rural circumstances, his family and friends took a door off the hinges and strapped him onto that make-shift operating table. They then took the bucksaw they had been using to cut branches from a nearby tree and amputated his leg just a few inches below the knee.

When against all medical likelihood the leg finally started to heal, Brother Moyle took a piece of wood and carved an artificial leg. First he walked in the house. Then he walked around the yard. Finally he ventured out about his property. When he felt he could stand the pain, he strapped on his leg, walked the 22 miles to the Salt Lake Temple, climbed the scaffolding, and with a chisel in his hand hammered out the declaration "Holiness to the Lord."<sup>8</sup>

### **Be a holy people unto the Lord**

With the faith of our fathers and mothers so evident on every side today,

may I close with the remainder of the passage I cited at the outset of my remarks. It seems particularly relevant in our wonderful circumstances today. After Moses had told that earlier generation of the blessings they enjoyed because of the faithfulness of those who had gone before them, he said:

"Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth. . . .

"Ye shall not go after other gods, . . . the gods of the people which are round about you. . . .

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: [he] hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself. . . .

"[He] did not . . . choose you, because ye were more in number than any [other] people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

"But because [he] loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers. . . .

"Know therefore that the Lord . . . is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."<sup>9</sup>

We are still being blessed by that love from God and by the faithfulness of our spiritual and literal progenitors down through a thousand generations. May we do as much with the blessings we have been given as they did out of the deprivations so many of them faced. In such abundance may we never "forget the Lord" nor "go after other gods," but always be "an holy people unto the Lord." If we do so, those who hunger and thirst for the word of the Lord will continue to come "as doves to [our] windows." They will come seeking peace and growth and salvation. If we live our religion, they will find all of that and more.

### **An overwhelming debt of gratitude**

We are a blessed people. In such a marvelous time as this, I feel an overwhelming debt of gratitude. I thank my



Father in Heaven for blessings unnumbered and incalculable, first and foremost being the gift of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and King. I testify that Christ's perfect life and loving sacrifice constituted literally a King's ransom, an atonement willingly paid, to lead us not only from death's prison but also the prisons of sorrow and sin and self-indulgence.

I know that Joseph Smith beheld the Father and the Son and that this day is a direct extension of that day. I owe much for the precious knowledge of which I testify here. I owe much for the priceless heritage that has been given to me. Indeed I owe everything, and I pledge the rest of my life in giving it—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1844, 522–23; see also *History of the Church*, 6:288–89.
2. *Deseret News* (weekly), 17 July 1872, 348.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1947, 155; or "To Them of the Last Wagon," *Ensign*, July 1997, 35–36.
4. See John 4:38.
5. Deuteronomy 6:10–11.
6. "Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, 15 Apr. 1845, 867; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (1945), 67–68.
7. See Andrew Karl Larson, *The Red Hills of November* (1957), 311–13.
8. See Theodore Moyle Burton, "Two Traditions of John Rowe Moyle," in *Biographies and Reminiscences*, ed. Gene A. Sessions (1974), 202–3, from the James Henry Moyle Collection, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also Vaughn J. Featherstone, *Man of Holiness* (1998), 140–41.
9. Deuteronomy 6:12, 14; 7:6–9.

## Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

### Teaching the gospel on an airplane

A few years ago, right before Christmas, I had a stake conference assignment in California. On the flight back to Utah, I decided to take a short nap. My seat was C, near the aisle. Just before the cabin door closed, a beautiful lady in her mid-70s stood beside me and said, "May I have my seat?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." That was the end of my nap. She loved to talk.

She said, "I don't know why I should have to fly to a cold place like Utah at Christmastime to visit my grandchildren. I hate to leave sunny California."

She went on to say, "Besides, there are strange and weird people in Utah. They call themselves 'Mormons.' My daughter married one of them."

I said, "I am sorry, but before you go any further, I should tell you that I am one of them."

Then she said, "I am sorry—I didn't mean that."

I said, "Oh, you really meant that, didn't you?"

Our conversation went on until we were above Provo. We knew we would soon be landing in Salt Lake.

"Patti"—that's her name—"you have been talking for most of the flight. I feel like I have known you from the pre-earth life. Before we land in Salt Lake City, I'd like to ask you a few questions if I may."<sup>1</sup>

I asked her sincerely,<sup>2</sup> "Patti, your deceased husband—do you know you can see him again?"

She said, "Oh, is that possible?"

"Do you know your deceased son, Matt, who died as a baby—you will see him also in the future?"

Her eyes became moist, and her voice was shaking. The Spirit of the Lord touched her. I sensed she had missed them so much.

Then I prayerfully asked her, "Patti, do you know you have a loving and kind Heavenly Father, who loves you so dearly?"

She said, "Do I?"

"Patti, do you know your Heavenly Father has a special plan for you and that your family can be forever?"

"Can we?" she replied.

"Have you ever heard the plan before?"

She said, "No."

Very sincerely I asked her, "Would you like to know about it?"

"Yes, I would," she responded.

The Spirit of the Lord touched her deeply. And the Lord promises us, "For mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts."<sup>3</sup>

He also said: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."<sup>4</sup>

### The love of God is in our hearts

Nephi desired to see father Lehi's dream—the tree of life<sup>5</sup>—and he did. Then Nephi also saw the beautiful baby Jesus.<sup>6</sup> And the angel asked, "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?"<sup>7</sup>

Nephi replied, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."<sup>8</sup>

Before we came to this earth, our Heavenly Father gently and peacefully placed in our bosoms "the love of God." In Heavenly Father's eyes, you are a very special child. My friend Patti has the spark of divinity in her soul. When Patti

heard the word of Heavenly Father, she was touched deeply and she responded to His voice.

We were total strangers, but the Lord placed one of His precious daughters quietly next to me. I was praying earnestly that the Spirit of the Lord would touch her and speak to her.

### How to share the message of the Lord

How can you and I share the beautiful message of the Lord Jesus Christ?

*First, cultivate an awareness; bring others to a knowledge.* President Gordon B. Hinckley teaches us:

"Let there be cultivated an awareness in every member's heart of his [or her] own potential for bringing others to a knowledge of the truth. . . . Let him pray with great earnestness about it. Let each member pray."<sup>9</sup>

President Hinckley then quotes the testimony of Alma:

"O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee. . . .

"Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious; . . . give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, . . . unto thee."<sup>10</sup>

In the LDS Bible Dictionary it states, "The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them."<sup>11</sup>

*Second, a good example is our best tool.* President Hinckley taught us, "The most effective tract we will carry will be the goodness of our own lives."<sup>12</sup> As we live the gospel, we will be like a lighthouse on a hilltop,<sup>13</sup> "the light" and "the salt of the earth."<sup>14</sup>

We can partake of "the love of God," "the tree of life," and drink from "the fountain of living waters"<sup>15</sup> daily by communing with our Holy Father, immersing ourselves in the scriptures, and medi-

tation. Then the Lord will bless us to be more sensitive to speak to those souls which He has prepared for us.

*Third, act at a time when you feel the Spirit.* Elder M. Russell Ballard taught us: "The key to success in bringing souls unto Christ is to act at a time when you feel the Spirit and you sense that your friend does also. . . . Through our faith, our trust in the Lord, and our good works, we can bring many souls unto the Lord."<sup>16</sup>

As we seek and pray in faith,<sup>17</sup> the Lord will guide us, and His elect will soon embrace<sup>18</sup> "the glad tidings of great joy,"<sup>19</sup> to partake of the eternal and "infinite atonement"<sup>20</sup> of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Patti's baptism and sealing**

The missionaries taught Patti. Three weeks later, while she was staying in Utah, Patti called me. "Brother Kikuchi, this is Patti. I am going to be baptized. Would you come to my baptismal services?"

My wife and I went to her baptism. Many members were kindly fellowshiping her. Oh, I shall never forget her joyful countenance as she came out of the water!

I shall never forget her sweet tears at the sacred altar in the Salt Lake Temple a year later. I remember her peaceful and celestial glow when she was sealed to her deceased husband and son and living daughter who had become a member of the Church. She now knows her family is forever in the Lord. My friend Patti Louise Donaldson found the Lord Jesus Christ. Now she lives in Utah.

### **"I will draw near unto you"**

My dear friends who are within the sound of my voice, you are a son or daughter of Heavenly Father. You were once in His holy presence. I know that your Heavenly Father has a special plan

for you and your family to return to live with Him. Let's go home. Let us prepare to go home to our Heavenly Father's place. We want to share with you your Heavenly Father's love. You will find the love of God, which is "the most joyous"<sup>21</sup> to your soul.

My dear brothers and sisters, I testify to you that Heavenly Father sent His Only Begotten Son and that Jesus Christ died for you and me. He said:

"How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . .

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."<sup>22</sup>

He loves you. He knows you. He lives. In 1820 Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus, came to the boy Joseph and established His kingdom so that we may be able to go home. By now, can you hear "the voice of the good shepherd"?<sup>23</sup> Your Savior is calling you. Come, come and partake of His love. He invites you, "Ye shall call upon me while I am near." Then He promises, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."<sup>24</sup> I know that He lives. I know that President Hinckley is our prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 28:16.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 30:5, 11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 29:7.
4. John 10:14, 27.
5. See 1 Nephi 11:8–9.
6. See 1 Nephi 11:15–20.

7. 1 Nephi 11:21.
8. 1 Nephi 11:22.
9. "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106.
10. Alma 31:34–35.
11. Bible Dictionary, "Prayer," 753.
12. *Ensign*, May 1999, 107.
13. See Luke 11:33, 36.
14. Matthew 5:13–14.
15. 1 Nephi 11:22, 25.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 33.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:18.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 31:7.
19. Mosiah 3:3.
20. See Alma 34:10, 12.
21. 1 Nephi 11:23.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19.

23. Alma 5:38.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 88:62–63.

### President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elders Loren C. Dunn and John B. Dickson of the Seventy will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder Loren C. Dunn

### The importance of being a good father

I was in a busy airport last week and there, amidst great numbers of people rushing to catch their planes, was a father kneeling down by his son, patiently feeding him an ice cream cone which the son was too small to hold himself. The little boy needed help because his snowsuit, which kept him warm, also made it impossible for his arms to bend. I thought to myself, "What a great dad!"

There should be no other word that is more important to us than *father* or *mother*, and it is the word *father* that I would like to talk about. It's not just a matter of how to be a good father. There is plenty written and much good advice given, even at this conference. It is the commitment to be a good father that I want to talk about also.

### "Because my father sent me"

The history of the gospel of Jesus Christ from Adam and Eve down to the present day is closely associated with

father and mother and family. The introductory pages of the Book of Mormon have the great prophet Nephi, while recounting the trials and blessings of his day, first paying homage to his father: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days."<sup>1</sup>

Enos, likewise, first recognized his father for the preparation he received: "Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it."<sup>2</sup>

When the Prophet Joseph Smith first received the vision of the angel Moroni, he was instructed to tell his father, who, in turn, confirmed that it was true and

that Joseph should follow the directions of Moroni. Even with the restoration of the gospel, the Lord did not separate a son from his righteous father.

The Savior of the world, in giving us a definition of the meaning of the gospel in 3 Nephi, chapter 27, said simply that He came to work out the plan of salvation and give His life for the sake of all mankind because His Father sent Him. The love between the Father and the Son was so perfect that the Savior gave it as His first reason for coming into mortality and the suffering He did for us in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

The gospel is designed to teach us what to do as fathers and mothers, and it would seem that when families are intact, we may very well do good things and give as our first reason "because my Father sent me"<sup>3</sup> or because a father showed me the way.

#### **A father's encouragement to "cowboy up"**

I have had the honor of working with the missionaries of the Church for over three decades, and I know that a great many of them were able to get through those first shaky minutes and hours and days of their mission because of their fathers or mothers. I remember one experience of a fine young man who spent his life on the ranch, just as his own father did. When the boy got into the mission field, it was all strange: too many people, not enough open spaces. He wanted badly to go home. Finally the mission president had the young missionary call his father. The father listened patiently as his son said how homesick he was, and then the father spoke in terms that his son could understand, and as I heard about this, it brought a smile to my face. He said with firmness but love, "Son, you're just going to have to 'cowboy up.'" The boy knew exactly what that meant, and he is hanging on as the spirit of his mission begins to come. He knows his father will not give up on him.

Innumerable are the numbers of those young people who did not quit and go home during those first days of being away at school or away from home the first time because of the good influence of fathers and mothers.

#### **A charge from President McKay**

When I sat across from President David O. McKay and was first called to this calling some 32 years ago, I remember that after he discussed with me what would be expected, he then charged me to serve by asking me to carry out this calling in a way that would be pleasing to my own father. That was enough of a challenge for a lifetime. President McKay knew my father, who had been a stake president for 20 years, and I looked on my father as one of the greatest men I knew. My first understanding of how important I was to my father and how real the Savior was, was when I heard him pray for us in family prayer.

#### **Commit to being good fathers**

Now there are some exceptions, such as death and other serious circumstances, but what is needed today is for fathers to commit to being fathers, whatever that might take—to assume the responsibility and to live by it, that you may become an anchor to all who come after you. If the example has not been set in your life, then reach out and try to help establish it, and resolve that that example will begin with you if there is no one else. If all is not perfect in your home, then let it begin with you.

It was President Harold B. Lee who said that the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers and the fathers to the children was not only a commission to do work for the dead, but it also applied to the living and the importance of keeping those family relationships intact in this life.<sup>4</sup>

### **“As a father he succeeded”**

I finish with the words of the poet Edgar A. Guest, who wrote of an average, everyday man—a father—and his family. The last words of his poem say, “This his praise, if praise be needed, / As a father he succeeded.”<sup>5</sup> A father succeeds when he steps forward and accepts his commitment as a father, always loving, praying for, and doing what he can for his family, and never giving up.

May the sacred name of Heavenly Father be spoken with reverence in our homes.

May the name of *father* carry with it the kind of love and confidence that will bring peace and hope and righteous determination.

### **Testimony**

May I add at this point my own witness and testimony as to the truthfulness of this work, adding to that which has been said from this pulpit during this great conference. I feel like I have stood with the Prophet Joseph in the Sacred Grove when there appeared the Father and the Son; I have sat with the Saints in

Kirtland when the temple of the Lord was accepted and dedicated; I received my covenants in Nauvoo; I knelt at the cemetery in Winter Quarters when a loved one was buried; I also held up my arm to sustain Brigham Young as the President of the Church; I stood on Ensign Peak with Brother Brigham the day after he arrived in the valley, when he looked over an expanse which he had already seen by revelation and knew from that experience where the temple was to be built. I know this work is true. I know God lives. I know He lives. I know God lives. I know that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and our Savior, that the Prophet Joseph saw what he said he saw, that Gordon B. Hinckley carries the keys of this great work today, and that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. 1 Nephi 1:1.
2. Enos 1:1.
3. 3 Nephi 27:13.
4. See “Preparing to Meet the Lord,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1965, 123–24.
5. “Old Man Green,” in *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* (1934), 560.

## **Elder John B. Dickson**

### **A brief introduction to the Church**

It is exciting to be with you today in this beautiful Conference Center. I would like to give a brief synopsis of some of our beliefs to those who are learning about the Church.

The situation of many of you may be like that of my deceased father-in-law, Robert E. Jones, who joined the Church in 1960. He had been raised in a wonderful Christian home, where reading the Bible and adhering to Christian principles were a normal part of family life. At his mother’s knee he learned many truths, including the importance of hav-

ing faith in Jesus Christ and following His example.

As he examined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he was able to retain truths formerly acquired, while enjoying a rich treasure of additional knowledge. I would like to mention 10 points that he understood that can also help you.

**1. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a plan of happiness for the human family.**

We proclaim that there truly is a God in heaven and that the human family lived with Him in a premortal exist-

tence. We are God's children. He loves us and has prepared a plan whereby through His Son, Jesus Christ, we will enjoy blessings beyond this mortal life. These blessings include an immortal, glorious, resurrected body for all mankind and the opportunity to return to our Heavenly Father's presence as eternal families for those who have faith in Jesus Christ and are obedient to the conditions of His gospel.

## **2. Jesus Christ organized His Church during His mortal ministry.**

The Bible helps us understand that Jesus organized His Church with apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and other Church officials who held the priesthood, which is the authority to act in God's name. Their work was to bring all men to a "unity of the faith" regarding Jesus Christ and His teachings (Ephesians 4:13).

## **3. The Church of Christ and many simple truths were lost.**

Several Bible prophets declared that there would be a "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) from the true gospel, a time when there would be a "famine" (Amos 8:11) regarding the word of God and "divisions" (1 Corinthians 11:18) caused as "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29) would enter and disrupt the flock or the people of the Church. These prophecies became a reality when, in the years following the Savior's Crucifixion, the Apostles were killed, the authority to direct the Church was eventually lost, and for many centuries, including the period known as the Dark Ages, the Church of Jesus Christ was not found on the earth.

## **4. The hearts of men and a location were prepared for a restoration of the gospel.**

The closing of the Dark Ages took place as the Reformation unfolded, where brave men and women recognized the need to incorporate doctrines that Jesus had instituted back into the church. We are grateful for the great reformers such as Luther, Wycliffe, Wesley, Tyn-

dale, and many others who helped set the stage for open religious dialogue, study of the scriptures, and the desire engendered in the hearts of good men and women for an expression of religious liberty. But their faith, their desire, their sacrifice, and even their martyrdom were insufficient to restore that which was lost.

The founding fathers of the United States of America were inspired in drafting a constitution that guarantees religious and other freedoms for all. Religious tolerance and changing attitudes helped prepare a people, while the conditions created under the umbrella of the U.S. Constitution prepared a location where the restoration of the gospel could take place.

## **5. Latter-day events were anticipated by the prophets of old.**

Old Testament prophets spoke of the last days as an era when all the ordinances and blessings of the gospel would be available to man. Daniel, Jeremiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Malachi, and other ancient prophets spoke of the great events that would take place in our day. Isaiah spoke of the "marvellous work and a wonder" that would come to pass, referring to the promised restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 29:14). The Apostle Peter spoke of the "restitution of all things" in the latter days (Acts 3:21).

## **6. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness.**

We declare that the great restoration that the ancient prophets spoke of began in 1820, when the Lord called a young man named Joseph Smith to reestablish the Church. The Restoration began as young Joseph, perplexed by the confusion among the churches of his day, sought to know which church was true. I solemnly declare that, in a sacred grove of trees in upstate New York, this young man was visited by the Father and the Son and was told he was to join none of the existing churches. He learned that he was to be an instrument in the hands of God to again establish the Church of Jesus Christ.

In time Joseph received the priesthood of God, giving him the authority to organize the Church once again. The Church now exists with apostles, prophets, and others who have authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel. Since its organization on April 6, 1830, the Church has begun to fill the whole earth, as the ancient prophet Daniel had prophesied (see Daniel 2:35, 45). We now find ourselves on the threshold of unprecedented growth, when millions are receiving this good news and are joining the Church.

**7. Another witness of Christ has been given to our generation.**

In 1827 Joseph Smith received ancient metal plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. It contains a history of God's dealings with His people in ancient America and stands beside the Bible as another witness of Jesus Christ. From its pages we learn more fundamental truths about the nature of God, the mission of His Son, and His plan for His children.

**8. The family can be eternal.**

An exciting truth that has been revealed again in our day is that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" and that families can be eternal ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Authority has been conferred upon man once again, whereby in sacred temples a man can be eternally sealed to his wife, a woman to her husband, parents to their children, and the extended family eternally linked together.

Dear friends and neighbors, we know that you love your families as we love ours, and we are pleased to share these sacred truths with you.

**9. People have been called of God to teach you.**

Approximately 60,000 young men and women on missions worldwide are

called to teach interested parties about the doctrine of the Church. They pay their own way and for a time set themselves apart from worldly pursuits in order to teach you. If you will invite them, they will teach you and answer your questions.

**10. You can know with assurance that these things are true.**

A time-tested, heaven-inspired solution to knowing the truth about the Book of Mormon or other matters is set forth by Moroni, the last Book of Mormon prophet. He said:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5).

My father-in-law, myself, and millions of others have put Moroni's declaration and promise to the test and found that these things are true. My sincere promise is that you can do as Moroni has prompted and experience the same rewarding result.

I humbly declare that Jesus is the Christ, the literal Son of God, and that His gospel has been restored to the earth in our day for the benefit and blessing of all mankind, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Monson**

Elders Loren C. Dunn and John B. Dickson of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### The Creation

We will long remember this inspiring conference in the new Conference Center. Not long ago, there was only a deep hole in the ground where this building now stands. We have watched its construction with interest and awe.

The process of construction is truly inspiring to me. From conception to completion, any major building project reflects upon the work of the Master Creator. In fact, the Creation—of planet Earth and of life upon it—undergirds all other creative capability. Any man-made creation is possible only because of our divine Creator. The people who design and build are given life and capacity by that Creator. And all materials used in the construction of an edifice are ultimately derived from the rich resources of the earth. The Lord declared, “The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things.”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult for mortal minds to comprehend the majesty of the Creation. It is much easier for us to think about good things to eat or fun things to do. But I would like to stretch our minds to think of things beyond our easy grasp. The creation of man and woman was wondrous and great.<sup>2</sup> So was the creation of the earth as their mortal dwelling place.

The entire Creation was planned by God. A council in heaven was once convened in which we participated.<sup>3</sup> There our Heavenly Father announced His divine plan.<sup>4</sup> It is also called the plan of happiness,<sup>5</sup> the plan of salvation,<sup>6</sup> the plan of redemption,<sup>7</sup> the plan of restoration,<sup>8</sup> the plan of mercy,<sup>9</sup> the plan of deliverance,<sup>10</sup> and the everlasting gospel.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the plan is to provide opportunity for the spirit children of God to progress toward an eternal exaltation.

### Components of the plan

The plan required the Creation, and that in turn required both the Fall and the Atonement. These are the three fundamental components of the plan. The creation of a paradisiacal planet came from God.<sup>12</sup> Mortality and death came into the world through the Fall of Adam.<sup>13</sup> Immortality and the possibility of eternal life were provided by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement were planned long before the actual work of the Creation began.

While visiting the British Museum in London one day, I read a most unusual book. It is not scripture. It is an English translation of an ancient Egyptian manuscript. From it I quote a dialogue between the Father and the Son. Referring to His Father, Jehovah—the premortal Lord—says:

“He took the clay from the hand of the angel, and made Adam according to Our image and likeness, and He left him lying for forty days and forty nights without putting breath into him. And He heaved sighs over him daily, saying, ‘If I put breath into this [man], he must suffer many pains.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be an advocate for him.’ And My Father said unto Me, ‘If I put breath into him, My beloved Son, Thou wilt be obliged to go down into the world, and to suffer many pains for him before Thou shalt have redeemed him, and made him to come back to his primal state.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be his advocate, and I will go down into the world, and will fulfil Thy command.’”<sup>15</sup>

Although this text is not scripture, it reaffirms scriptures that teach of the deep and compassionate love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for us—

attesting that Jesus volunteered willingly to be our Savior and Redeemer.<sup>16</sup>

The Lord God declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>17</sup> He who, under direction of the Father, had created the earth, subsequently came into mortality to do the will of His Father<sup>18</sup> and to fulfill all prophecies of the Atonement.<sup>19</sup> His Atonement would redeem every soul from the penalties of personal transgression, on conditions that He set.<sup>20</sup>

### Phases of the Creation

Each phase of the Creation was well planned before it was accomplished. Scripture tells us that "the Lord God, created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth."<sup>21</sup>

The physical Creation itself was staged through ordered periods of time. In Genesis<sup>22</sup> and Moses,<sup>23</sup> those periods are called *days*. But in the book of Abraham, each period is referred to as a *time*.<sup>24</sup> Whether termed a *day*, a *time*, or an *age*, each phase was a period between two identifiable events—a division of eternity.<sup>25</sup>

Period one included the creation of atmospheric heavens and physical earth, culminating in the emergence of light from darkness.<sup>26</sup>

In period two, the waters were divided between the surface of the earth and its atmospheric heavens. Provision was made for clouds and rain to give life to all that would later dwell upon the earth.<sup>27</sup>

In period three, plant life began. The earth was organized to bring forth grass, herbs, trees, and vegetation—each growing from its own seed.<sup>28</sup>

Period four was a time of further development. Lights in the expanse of the heaven were organized so there could be seasons and other means of measuring time. During this period, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth were

placed in proper relationship to one another.<sup>29</sup> The sun, with its vast stores of hydrogen, was to serve as a giant furnace to provide light and heat for the earth and life upon it.<sup>30</sup>

In period five, fish, fowl, and "every living creature" were added.<sup>31</sup> They were made fruitful and able to multiply—in the sea and on the earth—each after its own kind.<sup>32</sup>

In the sixth period, creation of life continued. The beasts of the earth were made after their kind, cattle after their kind, and everything which "creepeth upon the earth"—again, after its own kind.<sup>33</sup> Then the Gods counseled together and said:

"Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . .

"So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Adam and Eve were formed.<sup>35</sup> And they were blessed to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."<sup>36</sup>

The seventh period was designated as a time of rest.<sup>37</sup>

### The Creation testifies of a Creator

I testify that the earth and all life upon it are of divine origin. The Creation did not happen by chance. It did not come *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). And human minds and hands able to build buildings or create computers are not accidental. It is God who made us and not we ourselves. We are His people!<sup>38</sup> The Creation itself testifies of a Creator. We cannot disregard the divine in the Creation. Without our grateful awareness of God's hand in the Creation, we would be just as oblivious to our provider as are goldfish swimming in a bowl. With deep gratitude, we echo the words

of the Psalmist, who said, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."<sup>39</sup>

### **Purpose and destiny of the earth**

This earth is but one of many creations over which God presides. "Worlds without number have I created," He said. "And I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."<sup>40</sup> Grand as it is, planet Earth is part of something even grander—that great plan of God. Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. Scripture explains that a husband and wife "shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."<sup>41</sup>

And as part of the planned destiny of the earth and its inhabitants, here our kindred dead are also to be redeemed.<sup>42</sup> Families are to be sealed together for all eternity.<sup>43</sup> A welding link is to be forged between the fathers and the children. In our time, a whole, complete, and perfect union of all dispensations, keys, and powers is to be welded together.<sup>44</sup> For these sacred purposes, holy temples now dot the earth.

Though our understanding of the Creation is limited, we know enough to appreciate its supernal significance. And that store of knowledge will be augmented in the future. Scripture declares:

"In that day when the Lord shall come [again], he shall reveal all things—

"Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

"Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven."<sup>45</sup>

Yes, further light and knowledge will come. The Lord said:

"If there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

"All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, . . . and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times."<sup>46</sup>

Eventually "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory."<sup>47</sup> At the Second Coming of the Lord, the earth will be changed once again. It will be returned to its paradisiacal state and be made new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.<sup>48</sup>

### **Our responsibilities**

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, we should understand our significant responsibilities. Both the creations of God and the creations of man teach us the importance of each component. Do you think that the absence of one piece of granite from the face of this building would be noticed? Of course it would!

So it is with each son or daughter of God. We cannot let "the head say unto the feet it [has] no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?"<sup>49</sup> Just as "the body [has] need of every member,"<sup>50</sup> so the family has need of every member. All members of a family are to be linked, sealed, and "edified together, that the system may be kept perfect."<sup>51</sup>

The Creation, great as it is, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We come to the earth for a brief period of time, endure our tests and trials, and prepare to move onward and upward to a glorious homecoming.<sup>52</sup> Our thoughts and deeds while here will surely be more purposeful if we understand God's plan and are thankful for and obedient to His commandments.<sup>53</sup>

As beneficiaries of the divine Creation, what shall we do? We should care

for the earth, be wise stewards over it, and preserve it for future generations.<sup>54</sup> And we are to love and care for one another.<sup>55</sup>

We are to be creators in our own right—builders of an individual faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in His Church. We are to build families and be sealed in holy temples. We are to build the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.<sup>56</sup> We are to prepare for our own divine destiny—glory, immortality, and eternal lives.<sup>57</sup> These supernal blessings can all be ours through our faithfulness.

I testify that God lives! Jesus is the Christ and Creator! He is Lord over all the earth. He has established His Church in these latter days to accomplish His divine purposes. Joseph Smith is the great prophet of the Restoration. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today, whom I sustain with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 64–69; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 110–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85–87.
3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 349–50, 365.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9; Abraham 3:22–27.
5. See Alma 42:8, 16.
6. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
7. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–34; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 29:2; 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11–13.
8. See Alma 41:2.
9. See Alma 42:15, 31; 2 Nephi 9:6.
10. See 2 Nephi 11:5.
11. See Revelation 14:6; Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; 36:5; 68:1; 77:8–9, 11; 79:1; 84:103; 99:1; 101:22, 39; 106:2; 109:29; 65; 124:88; 128:17; 133:36; 135:3, 7; 138:19, 25; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
12. Latter-day revelation affirms that Michael (known also as Adam; see D&C 27:11; 107:54; 128:21) participated in the process of creation as well.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 6:48; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:49.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:21–28.
15. "Discourse on Abbatôn by Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria," in *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (1914), 482. Timothy, archbishop of Alexandria, died in A.D. 385. Brackets are included in Budge's English translation.
16. See John 3:16; 10:14–15, 17–18.
17. Moses 1:39.
18. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
19. For a comprehensive study of the prophecies of prophets pertaining to Christ, see D. Kelly Ogden and R. Val Johnson, "All the Prophets Prophesied of Christ," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 31–37; *Liahona*, Apr. 1994, 10–18.
20. See 2 Nephi 9:20–27; Mosiah 26:21–23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:19.
21. Moses 3:5; see also Moses 6:51.
22. See Genesis 1:5–2:3.
23. See Moses 2:5–3:3.
24. See Abraham 4:8–5:3.
25. Abraham likened one day in the Lord's time to 1,000 years (see Abraham 3:4).
26. See Genesis 1:1–5; Moses 2:1–5; Abraham 4:1–5.
27. See Genesis 1:6–8; Moses 2:6–8; Abraham 4:6–8.
28. See Genesis 1:9–13; Moses 2:9–13; Abraham 4:9–13.
29. See Genesis 1:14–19; Moses 2:14–19; Abraham 4:14–19.
30. See Henry Eyring, "World of Evidence, World of Faith," in *Of Heaven and Earth: Reconciling Scientific Thought with LDS Theology*, ed. and comp. David L. Clark (1998), 59.
31. Abraham 4:20–21.
32. See Genesis 1:20–23; Moses 2:20–23; Abraham 4:22–23.
33. See Genesis 1:24–31; Moses 2:24–31; Abraham 4:24–31.

34. Abraham 4:26–27.
35. Note that the Lord called the first man *and woman* “Adam” (see Genesis 5:2; Moses 6:9).
36. Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; see also Abraham 4:28; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 1:30.
37. See Genesis 2:1–3; Moses 3:1–3; Abraham 5:1–3.
38. See Psalm 100:3.
39. Psalm 104:24.
40. Moses 1:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 49:16.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 49:17; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
44. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 101:32–34.
46. Doctrine and Covenants 121:30–31.
47. Articles of Faith 1:10.
48. See Revelation 21:1; Ether 13:9; Doctrine and Covenants 29:23–24.
49. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
50. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110.
51. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110; see also 1 Corinthians 12:14–26.
52. See Psalm 116:15; Alma 42:8.
53. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:20–21.
54. The Lord has entrusted us to care for the earth. He said: “It is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine” (D&C 104:13–15; see also Revelation 7:3).
55. See John 13:34–35; 15:12; Romans 12:10–13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11–4:12; Mosiah 4:15; Doctrine and Covenants 88:123.
56. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (King James Version, Matthew 6:33, footnote a).

57. See Romans 2:7; Doctrine and Covenants 75:5; 128:12; 132:19–24.

### President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, and the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by returned missionaries, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet services who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

As you leave the conference session this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be the concluding speaker for this conference. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing “Sing We Now at Parting.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A time of new beginnings

I'm sure you are rather weary of listening to me. I'll do my best.

What a wonderful conference this has been, my brethren and sisters. We have rejoiced in all that has occurred. The speakers have been inspired, every one of them. The music has been superb. The prayers have been beautiful and touching. We have been uplifted in every way as we have participated together.

There was a popular piece of music when I was young that said, "The song is ended but the melody lingers on."<sup>1</sup>

I pray that will be the case with this conference. When we leave, I hope we will have pleasant recollections and fond memories of this great occasion.

As we return to our homes, let us go with thanksgiving in our hearts. We have been present and have participated in the proceedings of the 170th general conference of the Church. We have for the first time used this great new building. We have been here April 1 and 2 of the year 2000, the opening of a new century and a great new millennium. There is something wonderfully significant about all of this. It is a time of new beginnings.

I hope that each of us will long remember what we have heard, but more importantly, what we have felt. May it become an anchor in our lives, a guide by which to live, a training time where we learned to shape our actions toward others and our attitudes toward ourselves.

### Apply conference messages at home

I pray that the effects of this conference will be felt in our homes.

I hope that each one of us will be a better husband or wife, kinder to one another, more thoughtful, more restrained

in criticism, and more generous with compliments. I hope that as fathers and mothers we will strive more fully to rear our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," (Ephesians 6:4), treating them with respect and love, giving encouragement at every opportunity, and subduing our critical remarks. I hope that as sons and daughters we will be more respectful than we have been, that we will look to our parents with the knowledge that they love us, and that we will try to be more obedient in following their counsel.

### Reach out with love in missionary service

Let us as Latter-day Saints reach out to others not of our faith. Let us never act in a spirit of arrogance or with a holier-than-thou attitude. Rather, may we show love and respect and helpfulness toward them. We are greatly misunderstood, and I fear that much of it is of our own making. We can be more tolerant, more neighborly, more friendly, more of an example than we have been in the past. Let us teach our children to treat others with friendship, respect, love, and admiration. That will yield a far better result than will an attitude of egotism and arrogance.

Let us study the ways of the Lord, reading His life and teachings in the sacred scripture He has given us. Let us take a little time to meditate, to think of what we can do to improve our lives and to become better examples of what a Latter-day Saint should be.

Let us reach out to the world in our missionary service, teaching all who will listen concerning the restoration of the gospel, speaking without fear but also without self-righteousness, of the First

Vision, testifying of the Book of Mormon and of the restoration of the priesthood. Let us, my brothers and sisters, get on our knees and pray for the opportunity to bring others into the joy of the gospel.

### **Report and announcement on temples**

Now, in closing, may I give you just a very brief report on temples. As of today we have 76 in operation. That is many more than we had a few years ago. We will dedicate the Palmyra temple this coming Thursday. That will be a great occasion. The temple overlooks the Sacred Grove. Then on Sunday—next Sunday—we will dedicate the Fresno California Temple. We plan on dedicating altogether 36 new temples in the year 2000. I think we will accomplish all we set out to do. Quite a number of others in construction or announced will not be completed until 2001 or 2002.

Now, additionally, we announce at this conference that we hope to build a house of the Lord in Aba, Nigeria. Brother Pace, we may be delayed in Ghana, but we hope there will be no delay in Nigeria. Others in Asunción, Paraguay; Helsinki, Finland; Lubbock, Texas; Snowflake, Arizona; and somewhere in the Tri-Cities area of the state of Washington.

So we shall go on in the process of bringing temples to the people.

### **Expression of love, blessing, testimony**

Now, we have been on a great shake-down cruise, as it were. This building has been filled to capacity. I don't see an empty seat anywhere. It is a miracle! It is a tremendous and wonderful thing, for which we thank the Lord with all our hearts.

I leave with you my love and blessing and my testimony of this divine work. God our Eternal Father lives. You know that. I know that. His Beloved Son, the resurrected Redeemer of the world, stands at His side. You know that also, as do I. They appeared to the Prophet Joseph and ushered in this glorious work. How fortunate we are to be a part of it. Let us stand a little higher and let the nobility of good character shine through our lives, I humbly pray in the name of Him who is our great Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

God bless you, my beloved friends, my brothers, my sisters, my associates, in this great and holy work. Thank you.

### **NOTE**

1. Irving Berlin, "The Song Is Ended (but the Melody Lingers On)" (1927).

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The choir sang "Sing We Now at Parting."

Elder Ronald T. Halverson offered the benediction.

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## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC**

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the general priesthood session was provided by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music

and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventieth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 7 and 8, 2000



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# Report of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 7 and 8, 2000. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 7, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. These proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B.

Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H.

Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org. We also express appreciation to other Internet service providers who have given of their time in providing access to the conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A great family in reverence and worship

My brothers and sisters, what a wonderful occasion this is! I know of nothing else like it in all the world. We are gathered this morning as a great family in reverence and worship of the Lord our God. We are of one faith and one doctrine. We speak words of testimony concerning God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son. We declare with conviction and certainty that they have restored in this last dispensation The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The great voices of radio, television, and cable are now joined by the Internet to carry our words literally to the ends of the earth. To meetinghouses scattered far and wide, the satellite will beam our signal to congregations large and small. And

Saints across the earth will listen in their own homes to the proceedings of this great conference by means of the Internet.

Workmen have labored long and hard in preparing for this great occasion. We thank each one of them for his devoted service. Tomorrow we shall dedicate this magnificent Conference Center and other facilities. An important chapter in the history of our people will then have been written.

Welcome to each of you, wherever you may be. May we all be touched by the Holy Spirit as we meet together in solemn worship is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Lessons learned from suffering

After recovering from three major surgeries which have prevented me from speaking in the past two general conferences, what a joy it is to be able to stand in this beautiful Conference Center today to teach and bear testimony to those who desire to hear the word of the Lord.

In the past two years, I have waited upon the Lord for mortal lessons to be taught me through periods of physical pain, mental anguish, and pondering. I learned that constant, intense pain is a great consecrating purifier that humbles us and draws us closer to God's Spirit. If we listen and obey, we will be guided by His Spirit and do His will in our daily endeavors.

There were times when I have asked a few direct questions in my prayers, such as, "What lessons dost Thou want me to learn from these experiences?"

As I studied the scriptures during this critical period of my life, the veil was thin and answers were given to me as they were recorded in lives of others who had gone through even more severe trials.

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7-8).

Dark moments of depression were quickly dispelled by the light of the gospel as the Spirit brought peace and comfort with assurances that all would be well.

### Enduring to the end

On a few occasions I told the Lord that I had surely learned the lessons to be taught and that it wouldn't be necessary for me to endure any more suffering. Such entreaties seemed to be of no avail, for it

was made clear to me that this purifying process of testing was to be endured in the Lord's time and in the Lord's own way. It is one thing to teach, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). It is another to live it. I also learned that I would not be left alone to meet these trials and tribulations but that guardian angels would attend me. There were some that were near angels in the form of doctors, nurses, and most of all my sweet companion, Mary. And on occasion, when the Lord so desired, I was to be comforted with visitations of heavenly hosts that brought comfort and eternal reassurances in my time of need.

Though my personal suffering is not to be compared to the Savior's agony in Gethsemane, I gained a better understanding of His Atonement and His suffering. In His time of agony, He asked His Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). His Father in Heaven sent an angel to sustain and comfort Him in His time of need (see Luke 22:43).

Jesus chose not to be released from this world until He had endured to the end and completed the mission He had been sent to accomplish for mankind. Upon the cross of Calvary, Jesus commended His spirit to His Father with a simple statement: "It is finished" (John 19:30). Having endured to the end, He was released from mortality.

We too must endure to the end. The Book of Mormon teaches, "Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved" (2 Nephi 31:16).

### **The covenant of baptism**

The experiences of the last two years have made me stronger in spirit and have given me courage to testify more boldly to the world the deep feelings of my heart. I stand before you today with a resolve to teach the gospel principles like the proph-

ets of old—without the fear of man, speaking clearly with plain talk, and teaching simple gospel truths.

In that spirit, I wish to speak on the ordinance of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, which takes us out of this world and into the kingdom of God.

There is a familiar phrase: to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world (see John 17:11, 14–16). Our mortal existence is necessary to fulfill the plan of salvation. We must therefore live in this world, but we must also resist the worldly influences that are ever before us.

### **Being in the kingdom and of the kingdom**

Jesus taught, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). These words led me to ponder more concerning His kingdom. I concluded that when we are baptized by immersion by one with the proper priesthood authority and choose to follow our Savior, we then are *in* His kingdom and *of* His kingdom.

Being of the kingdom of God requires that we heed the Savior's admonition "Follow thou me" (2 Nephi 31:10). Nephi taught that we follow Jesus by keeping Heavenly Father's commandments: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Nephi 31:10).

At baptism we make a covenant with our Heavenly Father that we are willing to come into His kingdom and keep His commandments from that time forward, even though we still live in the world. We are reminded from the Book of Mormon that our baptism is a covenant to "stand as witnesses of God [and His kingdom] *at all times and in all things, and in all places* that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9; italics added).



### Understanding covenant changes lives

When we understand our baptismal covenant and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will change our lives and establish our total allegiance to the kingdom of God. When temptations come our way, if we will listen, the Holy Ghost will remind us that we have promised to remember our Savior and obey the commandments of God.

President Brigham Young said: "All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. They covenant to cease sustaining, upholding and cherishing the kingdom of the Devil and the kingdoms of this world. They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God and no other kingdom. They take a vow of the most solemn kind, before the heavens and earth, . . . that they will sustain truth and righteousness instead of wickedness and falsehood, and build up the Kingdom of God, instead of the kingdoms of this world" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 160).

### Jesus' baptism set the example

Entering into the kingdom of God is so important that Jesus was baptized to show us "the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which [we] should enter" (2 Nephi 31:9). "Notwithstanding he being holy, he sheweth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7).

Born of a mortal mother, Jesus was baptized to fulfill His Father's commandment that sons and daughters of God should be baptized. He set the example for all of us to humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father. We are all welcome to come into the waters of baptism. He was baptized to witness to His Father that

He would be obedient in keeping His commandments. He was baptized to show us that we should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 31:4-9).

As we follow the example of Jesus, we demonstrate that we will repent and be obedient in keeping the commandments of our Father in Heaven. We humble ourselves with a broken heart and a contrite spirit as we recognize our sins and seek forgiveness of our trespasses (see 3 Nephi 9:20). We covenant that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him.

"For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

"And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:17-18).

This is the promise that we were given when we came into the kingdom through baptism and when hands were laid upon our heads, the gift of the Holy Ghost was bestowed upon us, and we were confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—which means we became "fellowcitizens with the saints" in the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19) and "should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

### Teach children the significance of baptism

We cannot take lightly the law given to us to teach our children the doctrine of repentance; faith in Christ, the Son of the living God; and baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands when eight years old, which is the age of accountability appointed by God (see D&C 68:25-27). We need to do a better job of teaching our children and our grandchildren to understand what it means to enter the kingdom of God, for we will be held accountable.

Many members of the Church do not fully understand what happened when they went into the waters of baptism. It is

very important for us to understand the marvelous gift of the remission of sins, but there is much more. Do you understand and do your children understand that when they are baptized they are changed forever? Adult converts to the Church often have a better understanding of this transformation because they feel the contrast as they come out of the world into the kingdom of God.

When we are baptized, we take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Taking upon us His name is one of the most significant experiences we have in life. Yet sometimes we pass through that experience without having a full understanding.

How many of our children—how many of us—really understand that when we were baptized, we took upon us not only the name of Christ but also the law of obedience?

#### **How the gift of the Holy Ghost helps us**

Each week in sacrament meeting we promise to remember the atoning sacrifice of our Savior as we renew our baptismal covenant. We promise to do as the Savior did—to be obedient to the Father and always keep His commandments. The blessing we receive in return is to always have His Spirit to be with us.

The gift of the Holy Ghost, given to us when we are confirmed, gives us the ability to discern the difference between the giving ways of the kingdom of God and the taking practices of the world. The Holy Ghost gives us the strength and courage to conduct our lives in the ways of the kingdom of God and is the source of our testimony of the Father and the Son. As we obey the will of our Father in Heaven, this priceless gift of the Holy Ghost will be with us continually.

We need the Holy Ghost as our constant companion to help us make better choices in the decisions that confront us daily. Our young men and women are

bombarded with ugly things of the world. Companionship with the Spirit will give them the strength to resist evil and, when necessary, repent and return to the strait and narrow path. None of us are immune from the temptations of the adversary. We all need the fortification available through the Holy Ghost. Mothers and fathers should prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in their dedicated homes. Having the gift of the Holy Ghost helps family members make wise choices—choices that will help them return with their families to their Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, to live with Them eternally.

#### **Loving God and our fellowmen**

The scriptures confirm that the truly converted do more than just forsake the enticements of the world. They love God and their fellowmen. Their minds and hearts are centered on the Savior's atoning sacrifice. From the moment of their respective conversions, Enos, Alma the Younger, Paul, and others turned wholeheartedly to the task of bringing themselves and their fellowmen to God. Worldly power and possessions lost their former significance. The sons of Mosiah refused an earthly kingdom and risked their lives for the sake of others. These faithful sons were driven by the hope that they might be able to help save even one soul—thus winning for themselves and their brethren a place in God's eternal kingdom.

#### **Effects baptism should have in daily life**

By choosing to be in His kingdom, we separate—not isolate—ourselves from the world. Our dress will be modest, our thoughts pure, our language clean. The movies and television we watch, the music we listen to, the books, magazines, and newspapers we read will be uplifting. We will choose friends who encourage

our eternal goals, and we will treat others with kindness. We will shun the vices of immorality, gambling, tobacco, liquor, and illicit drugs. Our Sunday activities will reflect the commandment of God to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We will follow the example of Jesus Christ in the way we treat others. We will live to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord.

We will be examples "of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

We will receive "a mighty change . . . in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." We will keep our "covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things . . . all the remainder of our days" (Mosiah 5:2, 5).

We will demonstrate that we "are desirous to . . . be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

### Teaching about baptism

I urge all parents to prepare your children and all missionaries to prepare your converts for the sacred baptismal ordinance. Teach them of its significance so that their baptism will be impressed upon their spiritual memory for the rest of their lives. Take them to sacrament meeting weekly to renew their baptismal covenants through the ordinance of the sacrament. Be a good example for them to follow. Teach them that because of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the way they look at the things of the world should change. A mighty change must take place in their hearts and in their minds so they

will be able to turn from temptations of the world and from that time forward put their "heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2) into being citizens in the kingdom of God.

### Gratitude for baptism and confirmation

I feel great gratitude for my baptism and confirmation into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am grateful for the spiritual strength and guidance the gift of the Holy Ghost has given me throughout my life. I am thankful for good parents and teachers who impressed the significance of baptism upon me so that the memory and feelings of that occasion have been an enduring influence throughout my life.

I testify of the divinity of the gospel, restored in this latter day. I testify of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the efficacy and power of the priesthood and its gospel ordinances. I pray that each of us as members of His kingdom will understand that our baptism and confirmation is the gateway *into* His kingdom. When we enter, we covenant to be *of* His kingdom—forever! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Father in Heaven."

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### President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Father in Heaven."

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. We will then ask Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Loren C. Dunn, who will be given emeritus status during this conference, to bear their testimonies.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### Doctrine of the redemption of the dead

Christian theologians have long wrestled with the question, What is the destiny of the countless billions who have lived and died with no knowledge of Jesus?<sup>1</sup> With the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ has come the understanding of how the unbaptized dead are redeemed and how God can be “a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.”<sup>2</sup>

While yet in life, Jesus prophesied that He would also preach to the dead.<sup>3</sup> Peter tells us this happened in the interval between the Savior’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> President Joseph F. Smith witnessed in vision that the Savior visited the spirit world and “from among the righteous [spirits] . . . organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. . . . These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, [and] the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.”<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine that the living can provide baptism and other essential ordinances to the dead, vicariously, was revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>6</sup> He learned that the spirits awaiting resurrection are not only offered individual salvation but that they can be bound in heaven as husband and wife and be sealed to their fathers and mothers of all generations past and have sealed to them their children of all generations future. The Lord instructed the Prophet that these sacred rites are appropriately performed only in a house built to His name—a temple.<sup>7</sup>

The principle of vicarious service should not seem strange to any Christian. In the baptism of a living person, the officiator acts, by proxy, in place of the Savior. And is it not the central tenet of our faith that Christ’s sacrifice atones for our

sins by vicariously satisfying the demands of justice for us? As President Gordon B. Hinckley has expressed:

“I think that vicarious work for the dead more nearly approaches the vicarious sacrifice of the Savior Himself than any other work of which I know. It is given with love, without hope of compensation, or repayment or anything of the kind. What a glorious principle.”<sup>8</sup>

Some have misunderstood and suppose that deceased souls “are being baptised into the Mormon faith without their knowledge”<sup>9</sup> or that “people who once belonged to other faiths can have the Mormon faith retroactively imposed on them.”<sup>10</sup> They assume that we somehow have power to force a soul in matters of faith. Of course, we do not. God gave man his agency from the beginning.<sup>11</sup> “The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,”<sup>12</sup> but only if they accept those ordinances. The Church does not list them on its rolls or count them in its membership.

Our anxiety to redeem the dead, and the time and resources we put behind that commitment, are, above all, an expression of our witness concerning Jesus Christ. It constitutes as powerful a statement as we can make concerning His divine character and mission. It testifies, first, of Christ’s Resurrection; second, of the infinite reach of His Atonement; third, that He is the sole source of salvation; fourth, that He has established the conditions for salvation; and fifth, that He will come again.

### The power of Christ’s Resurrection

As regards the Resurrection, Paul asked, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”<sup>13</sup> We are baptized for the dead because we know that they will rise. “The

soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”<sup>14</sup> “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”<sup>15</sup>

It matters tremendously what we do in relation to those who have gone before, because they live today as spirits and shall live again as immortal souls, and that because of Jesus Christ. We believe His words when He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”<sup>16</sup> By the baptisms we perform in behalf of the dead, we testify that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The infinite reach of Christ's Atonement**

By identifying our ancestors and performing for them the saving ordinances they could not themselves perform, we are testifying of the infinite reach of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Christ “died for all.”<sup>18</sup> “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”<sup>19</sup>

“God is no respecter of persons:

“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”<sup>20</sup>

“Doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.”<sup>21</sup>

Our Lord “inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen;

and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”<sup>22</sup>

It is inconceivable that this invitation, universally extended in life, would be rescinded for those who had not heard it before they died. With Paul, we are persuaded that death poses no such obstacle: “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Christ is the sole source of salvation**

Our anxiety to ensure that our kindred dead are offered baptism in Jesus' name is testament to the fact that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him].”<sup>24</sup> Peter proclaimed:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”<sup>25</sup>

“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>26</sup>

Some contemporary Christians, concerned for the billions who have died without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, have begun to wonder if there truly is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”<sup>27</sup> To believe that Jesus is the only savior, they say, is arrogant, narrow-minded, and intolerant. We say, however, that this is a false dilemma. There is no injustice in there being but One through whom salvation may come, when that One and His salvation are offered to every soul, without exception. We need not tamper with the doctrine or temper the good news of Christ.

### **Conditions of salvation set by Christ**

Because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, we also accept His au-

thority to establish the conditions by which we may receive His grace. Otherwise we would not concern ourselves with being baptized for the dead.

Jesus confirmed that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.”<sup>28</sup> Specifically, He said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>29</sup> This means we must “repent, and be baptized every one . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and . . . receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding He was sinless, Jesus Christ Himself was baptized and received the Holy Ghost to witness “unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments”<sup>31</sup> and to show us “the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which [we] should enter, he having set the example before [us].” And He said, “He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.”<sup>32</sup>

There are no exceptions granted; none are needed. As many as will believe and be baptized—including by proxy—and endure in faith shall be saved, “not only those who believed after [Christ] came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came.”<sup>33</sup> It is for this reason that the gospel is preached “also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”<sup>34</sup>

## The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Our work for the dead bears witness that Jesus Christ will come again to this earth. In the final verses of the Old Testament, Jehovah declared:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”<sup>35</sup>

In an inspired commentary on this scripture, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated, “The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead.”<sup>36</sup>

The vicarious ordinances we perform in temples, beginning with baptism, make possible an eternal welding link between generations that fulfills the purpose of the earth’s creation. Without this, “the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [Christ’s] coming.”<sup>37</sup> Elijah has, in fact, come as promised to confer the priesthood power that turns hearts and establishes the welding links between the fathers and the children so that once again what is bound on earth “shall be bound in heaven.”<sup>38</sup> When he came, Elijah declared, “The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.”<sup>39</sup>

We are anxiously about the task of searching out our fathers and mothers of generations past and binding them to us and us to them. Is not this the strongest possible evidence of our conviction that Jesus Christ will come again to reign upon the earth? We know He will, and we know what He expects we will have done in preparation for His return.

## The dead will be redeemed

In the scriptures, the spirits of the dead are sometimes referred to as being in darkness or in prison.<sup>40</sup> Contemplating God’s glorious plan for the redemption of these, His children, the Prophet Joseph Smith penned this psalm:

“Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth

into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free."<sup>41</sup>

Our charge extends as far and as deep as the love of God to encompass His children of every time and place. Our efforts on behalf of the dead bear eloquent witness that Jesus Christ is the divine Redeemer of all mankind. His grace and promises reach even those who in life do not find Him. Because of Him, the prisoners shall indeed go free. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See John Sanders, introduction to *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, by Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders (1995), 9. There are several theories concerning the "unevangelized" dead, ranging from an inexplicable denial of salvation, to dreams or other divine intervention at the moment of death, to salvation for all, even without faith in Christ. A few believe that souls hear of Jesus after death. None explain how to satisfy Jesus' requirement that a man must be born of water and spirit to enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:3–5). Lacking the knowledge once had in the early Church, these earnest seekers have been "forced to choose between a weak law that allow[s] the unbaptized to enter heaven, and a cruel God who damn[s] the innocent" (Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* [1987], 101).
2. Alma 42:15.
3. See John 5:25.
4. See 1 Peter 3:18–19.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 138:30, 33.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 124; 128; 132; *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1984), 486; *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (1991), 49.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–36. Today's expansive construction of temples across the world has as one of its primary purposes to provide the place where ordinances essential to salvation may be performed for those who, in life, were not privileged to receive them.
8. "Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 73.
9. Ben Fenton, "Mormons Use Secret British War Files 'to Save Souls,'" *Telegraph* (London), 15 Feb. 1999.
10. Greg Stott, "Ancestral Passion," *Equinox*, April/May 1998, 45.
11. See Moses 7:32; see also Alma 5:33–36; 42:27.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58.
13. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
14. Alma 40:23.
15. Romans 14:9.
16. John 11:25.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22, 25–26.
18. 2 Corinthians 5:15.
19. 1 John 2:2.
20. Acts 10:34–35.
21. 2 Nephi 26:25.
22. 2 Nephi 26:33.
23. Romans 8:38–39.
24. John 14:6.
25. Acts 4:12; see also 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 5:8.
26. 1 Timothy 2:5.
27. Ephesians 4:5. See, for example, John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions," in John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977), 180.
28. Matthew 7:14.
29. John 3:5.
30. Acts 2:38.
31. 2 Nephi 31:7; see also Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:29–34.
32. 2 Nephi 31:9, 12.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 20:26.
34. 1 Peter 4:6.
35. Malachi 4:5–6; see also 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 2.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 2:3; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.

38. Matthew 16:19; see also Matthew 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 132:46.  
 39. Doctrine and Covenants 110:16.  
 40. See Isaiah 24:22; 1 Peter 3:19; Alma 40:12–13; Doctrine and Covenants 38:5; 138:22, 30. Even the righteous spirits are spoken of as faithful “captives” awaiting deliverance from the bands of death (see D&C 138:18–19).  
 41. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.

## Elder Alexander B. Morrison

Very early in Jesus’ ministry, two disciples came to Him and asked, “Master, . . . where dwellest thou?” Jesus’ brief yet profound reply, “Come and see,” provides the basis for my few poor remarks today (John 1:38–39).

### Seek to know the Savior

“Come and see,” come seeking to know Him, and I promise you will find Him and see Him in His true character as the risen, redeeming Savior of the world. “Come and see,” and you will recognize Him as the Christ of the empty sepulchre, the conqueror of Calvary, who broke the bands of death and rose triumphant from the tomb to bring immortality to all and eternal life to the faithful. He is the “lamb without blemish and without spot,” foreordained in His messianic role “before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19–20). “He was wounded for our transgressions [and] bruised for our iniquities: . . . with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

### He will heal and strengthen you

“Come and see,” and in your coming lay your burdens at His feet. Give away all your sins that you might see and know Him (see Alma 22:18). “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” He said, “and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

Come unto Him, and He will take away your sins and heal your soul, though

it be sick with sin. He will replace hatred with love and selfishness with service. He will strengthen your shoulders to better bear your burdens and give you new courage and hope for the journey ahead.

### He will teach you who you are

“Come and see,” and as you do so your eyes will be opened and you will *really* see, perhaps for the first time, who *you* are and who *He* is. You will come to see yourself as a child of God, of divine parentage, possessed of infinite capacities to grow spiritually and become more like Him. You will come to understand that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), and you will see all men everywhere as your brothers and all women as your sisters, with all that implies in terms of sibling responsibility. You will see that “he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33).

### You will find His Church

“Come and see,” and as you do so you will find His Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a church directed on earth by living prophets, seers, and revelators, but its head is no mortal man, but Jesus, the Lord God Omnipotent Himself. As you “come and see,” you will find a happy people—an optimistic and joyful people—who, while struggling to overcome the usual faults and foibles of humanity, yet strive to be



better, to do good to all men, to build the city of God wherein all may dwell together in righteousness. As you "come and see," you will find a people with a deep and abiding concern for the poor and the needy, a people who reach out a helping hand to aid the widow and orphan, the sick and afflicted, the poor and oppressed. "Come and see" the fruits of gospel living. Taste them for yourself, and you will find them sweet and delicious. As you come to know "that when ye are in the service of your fellow [men] ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17), you will seek to wear out your life in the service of the Master.

### **"Come and see"**

I finish where I began: Jesus' statement "Come and see" provides both an invitation and a promise to all people everywhere. Come to Him; see Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords; recognize in Him the great Messiah, who will come again with healing in His wings to set His people free (see Malachi 4:2; 2 Nephi 25:13; "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59). He will wrap you about in the cloak of His redeeming love, and your life will be changed forever.

Of that I testify, as one of His servants, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Loren C. Dunn**

### **Dedication of the Boston Temple**

Just six days ago President Gordon B. Hinckley, accompanied by President Boyd K. Packer and Elder Neil L. Andersen and their wives, dedicated the Boston Massachusetts Temple. The dedication came at the end of an open house that saw over 83,000 people go through the temple. There were over 16,000 who attended the four sessions of the dedication, either at the temple or at nearby stake centers.

While every temple is important and offers the same ordinances necessary for eternal life, this dedication was, in many ways, historic. This is the first temple in a city recognized as the birthplace of freedom in what was then the New World. The city is also recognized as the early home of many of the first leaders and members of the Church. The dedication seemed to represent the coming together of the great heritage of America and the sacred roots of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some in attendance had previous ties to Boston and the surrounding area. Most were there because they live there and were rejoicing in the dedication of a tem-

ple in their midst. All were there as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God," as President Hinckley said at the cornerstone ceremony, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," with Jesus Christ Himself as "the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

There were native residents of the area who came, many with their children and grandchildren—three generations of worthy temple recommend holders.

In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Lord to break off the yoke of the persecutions of that day (see D&C 109:31-33, 47). While challenges still remain, we are seeing the yoke of misunderstanding and prejudice being broken in this era of temple building and open houses.

### **Mirrors in the sealing rooms**

In the temple, in the sealing rooms, we find mirrors that are on opposite walls from each other. As a person looks in the mirror, he can see his reflection going

back from one generation to another, as it were, forward from one generation to another, and there is no end, signifying the eternal nature of us all. Perhaps there is another reason for the mirrors situated in that way. It speaks of all who came before us and all who will come after us.

### Testimony

I think of the words of the Prophet Joseph: "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!" (D&C 76:22).

For all who have borne witness of this work and all who will yet bear witness of this work, in my day and my time, I bear that witness and testimony to you this day at this time. I know that there is a God in heaven, and I know He lives. I know God lives. I *know* He lives. I know He lives, and I know that He is the Father of all of us. I know that God our Father is in this work in great congregations such as this, and in the smallest branch and the smallest congregation God is in this work. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer and that He has purchased us by the shedding of His blood and by the anguish which He suffered in Gethsemane. I know that apostles and prophets are at the foundation of this work, beginning with the Prophet Joseph and coming to President Gordon

B. Hinckley this day. This, my brothers and sisters, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This work is true. May the Lord bless us to live by it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy. Brother Dunn, Brother Morrison, and Brother Busche, who have served as members of the First Quorum for many years, are being given emeritus status at this conference, together with their associates of the Second Quorum, who have served so faithfully and well and have gone far and wide in carrying forward this great work across the world. We thank each one of them and pray for the blessings of the Lord upon them.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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## Sister Margaret D. Nadauld

### Faithful women have a glorious mission

It is a remarkable blessing to be a daughter of God today. We have the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have the priesthood restored to the earth. We are led by a prophet of God who holds all of the priesthood keys. I love and honor President Gordon B. Hinckley and all of our brethren who bear the priesthood worthily.

I am inspired by the lives of good and faithful women. From the beginning of time the Lord has placed significant trust in them. He has sent us to earth for such a time as this to perform a grand and glorious mission. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that even before we were born, we were among those who "received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth

in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men" (D&C 138:56). What a wonderful vision that gives us of our purpose on earth.

Where much is given, much is required. Our Heavenly Father asks His daughters to walk in virtue, to live in righteousness so that we can fulfill our life's mission and His purposes. He wants us to be successful, and He will help us as we seek His help.

### **Women were given special qualities**

That women were born into this earth female was determined long before mortal birth, as were the divine differences of male and female. I love the clarity of the teachings of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in the proclamation on the family, where they state, "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."<sup>1</sup> From that statement we are taught that every girl was feminine and female in spirit long before her mortal birth.

God sent women to earth with some qualities in extra capacity. In speaking to young women, President Faust observed that femininity "is the divine adornment of humanity. It finds expression in your . . . capacity to love, your spirituality, delicacy, radiance, sensitivity, creativity, charm, graciousness, gentleness, dignity, and quiet strength. It is manifest differently in each girl or woman, but each . . . possesses it. Femininity is part of your inner beauty."<sup>2</sup>

### **Care for outward appearance**

Our outward appearance is a reflection of what we are on the inside. Our lives reflect that for which we seek. And if with all our hearts we truly seek to know the Savior and to be more like Him, we shall be, for He is our divine, eternal Brother. But He is more than that. He is

our precious Savior, our dear Redeemer. We ask with Alma of old, "Have ye received his image in your countenances?" (Alma 5:14).

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their outward appearance. These women understand their stewardship over their bodies and treat them with dignity. They care for their bodies as they would a holy temple, for they understand Paul's teaching, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Women who love God would never abuse or deface a temple with graffiti. Nor would they throw open the doors of that holy, dedicated edifice and invite the world to look on. How even more sacred is the body, for it was not made by man. It was formed by God. We are the stewards, the keepers of the cleanliness and purity with which it came from heaven. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

Grateful daughters of God guard their bodies carefully, for they know they are the wellspring of life and they reverence life. They don't uncover their bodies to find favor with the world. They walk in modesty to be in favor with their Father in Heaven, for they know He loves them dearly.

### **Minister to others**

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their attitude. They know that the errand of angels is given to women, and they desire to be on God's errand to love His children and minister to them, to teach them the doctrines of salvation, to call them to repentance, to save them in perilous circumstances, to guide them in the performance of His work, to deliver His messages.<sup>3</sup> They understand that they can bless their Father's children in their homes

and neighborhoods and beyond. Women who are grateful to be daughters of God bring glory to His name.

### **Magnify gifts**

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their abilities. They fulfill their divine potential and magnify their God-given gifts. They are capable, strong women who bless families, serve others, and understand that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They are women who embrace enduring virtues in order to be all that our Father needs them to be. The prophet Jacob spoke of some of those virtues when he said their "feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God" (Jacob 2:7).

### **Reverence motherhood**

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their reverence for motherhood, even when that blessing has been withheld from them for a time. In those circumstances, their righteous influence can be a blessing in the lives of children they love. Their exemplary teachings can echo the voice of a faithful home and resonate truth in the hearts of children who need another witness.

Grateful daughters of God love Him and teach their children to love Him without reservation and without resentment. They are like the mothers of Heman's youthful army, who had such great faith and "had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47).

When you observe kind and gentle mothers in action, you see women of great strength. Their families can feel a spirit of love and respect and safety when they are near her as she seeks the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the guidance of His Spirit. They are blessed

by her wisdom and good judgment. The husbands and children whose lives they bless will contribute to the stability of societies all over this world. Grateful daughters of God learn truths from their mothers and grandmothers and aunts. They teach their daughters the joyful art of creating a home. They seek fine educations for their children and have a thirst for knowledge themselves. They help their children develop skills that they can use in serving others. They know that the way they have chosen is not the easy way, but they know it is absolutely worth their finest efforts.

They understand what Elder Neal A. Maxwell meant when he said: "When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses?"<sup>4</sup>

Daughters of God know that it is the nurturing nature of women that can bring everlasting blessings, and they live to cultivate this divine attribute. Surely when a woman reverences motherhood, her children will arise up and call her blessed (see Proverbs 31:28).

### **Not like women of the world**

Women of God can never be like the women of the world. The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune; we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity.

Oh, how we pray that every young woman will grow up to be all the wonderful things she is meant to be. We pray that her mother and father will show her the right way. May daughters of God honor the priesthood and sustain worthy priesthood holders. May they understand their own great capacity for strength in the timeless virtues that some would scoff at in a modern, liberated world for women.

### Understand and nourish potential

May mothers and fathers understand the great potential for good their daughters inherited from their heavenly home. We must nourish their gentleness, their nurturing nature, their innate spirituality and sensitivity, and their bright minds. Celebrate the fact that girls are different from boys. Be thankful for the position they have in God's grand plan. And always remember what President Hinckley said: "Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been cre-

ated, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good."<sup>5</sup>

Fathers, husbands, young men, may you catch a vision of all that women are and can be. Please be worthy of God's holy priesthood, which you bear, and honor that priesthood, for it blesses all of us.

Sisters, regardless of your age, please understand all that you are and must be, all that you were prepared to be in royal courts on high by God Himself. May we use with gratitude the priceless gifts we have been given for the lifting of mankind to higher thinking and nobler aspirations, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. "Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 2000, 96.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 35.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 14; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
5. "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Guidance for our mortal journey

Recently Sister Nelson and I were in Denmark during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Church in Scandinavia. Between meetings, we took a few hours to search for villages where two of my father's grandparents were born. They were among the early converts to the Church in Denmark. Father's paternal grandmother's family lived in the western part of the country.<sup>1</sup> His paternal grandfather's family lived in northern Denmark.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to a good driver and a superb map, we found each town on our list and obtained treasured information. During the entire journey, my

hands were riveted to that valuable map so essential to achieve our goals.

In contrast, many people travel through life without good guidance, lacking knowledge of a desired destination or how to get there. But if rapt attention is paid to a road map for a day's journey, isn't it also wise to pay attention to authoritative guidance on our journey through life? To this end I would like to speak—on *why* we need guidance, *where* we obtain it, and *how* we can achieve it.

### Why we need guidance

The question *why* focuses on the purpose of life. The ultimate objective in our

mortal journey has been revealed by our Creator, who said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."<sup>3</sup>

His gift of eternal life is subject to conditions established by Him.<sup>4</sup> Those conditions constitute a plan or, to use my analogy, a spiritual road map. And when trouble comes, guidance is needed most. In our journey in Denmark, we met an unexpected detour that led us astray. In order to get back on course, we stopped the car. We studied the map with great care. Then we made the necessary course correction.

What if you are lost and have no map? Suppose you are alone. You do not know where you are. What can you do? You call for help! You call home! Call the Church! Pray! When connected with your help line, you learn that you need to make a climb here or a turn there to get back on course. Or you may have to go back to the beginning in order to be certain that you can get where you want to go.

### **Where we obtain guidance**

That brings us to the question of *where* do we obtain the guidance we need. We turn to Him who knows us best—our Creator. He allowed us to come to earth with freedom to choose our own course. In His great love, He did not leave us alone. He provided a guide—a spiritual road map—to help us achieve success in our journey. We call that guide the standard works, so named because they—the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—constitute the *standard* by which we should live. They serve as a standard of reference, as are standards of time, weights, and measures that are kept in national bureaus of standards.

To reach our objective of eternal life, we need to follow teachings in the standard works and other revelations received

from prophets of God.<sup>5</sup> Our loving Lord foresaw our need for guidance: "For strait is the gate," He said, "and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it."<sup>6</sup>

Few find the way, because they ignore the divine road map provided by the Lord. An even more serious mistake is to ignore the Maker of the map. God declared in the first of His Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>7</sup> Yet carnal man tends to let his loyalty drift toward idols.

For example, we marvel at computers and the Internet, which enable transmission of data with remarkable speed. We are truly grateful for these electronic servants. But if we let them take over our time, pervert our potential, or poison our minds with pornography, they cease being servants and become instead false gods.

The Master warned of those who "seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol."<sup>8</sup>

False gods can only lead to dead ends. If our journey through life is to be successful, we need to follow divine direction. The Lord said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."<sup>9</sup> And the Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."<sup>10</sup>

Following such counsel demands not only conviction but conversion and often repentance. That would please the Lord, who said, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn . . . from all your abominations."<sup>11</sup>

In your journey through life, you meet many obstacles and make some mistakes. Scriptural guidance helps you to recognize error and make the necessary correction. You stop going in the wrong

direction. You carefully study the scriptural road map. Then you proceed with repentance and restitution required to get on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."<sup>12</sup>

Brothers and sisters, our busy lives force us to focus on things we *do* from day to day. But the development of character comes only as we focus on who we really *are*. To establish and accomplish those greater goals, we do need heavenly help.

### ***How we can achieve scriptural guidance***

Once we understand *why* we need guidance and *where* we obtain it, we then ask, *how* can we achieve it? How can we truly live, not "by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?"<sup>13</sup>

### ***Make the scriptures part of our nature***

We begin with a determination to "lik[e]n all scriptures unto us . . . for our profit and learning."<sup>14</sup> If we "press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, . . . [we] shall have eternal life."<sup>15</sup>

To feast means more than to taste. To feast means to savor. We savor the scriptures by studying them in a spirit of delightful discovery and faithful obedience.<sup>16</sup> When we feast upon the words of Christ, they are embedded "in fleshy tables of the heart."<sup>17</sup> They become an integral part of our nature.

Many years ago a medical colleague chastised me for failing to separate my professional knowledge from my religious convictions. That startled me because I did not feel that truth should be fractionalized. Truth is indivisible.

Danger lurks when we divide ourselves with expressions such as "my private life," "my professional life," or even "my best behavior." Living life in separate compartments can lead to internal conflict and exhausting tension. To es-

cape that tension, many people unwisely resort to addicting substances, pleasure seeking, or self-indulgence, which in turn produces more tension, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Inner peace comes only as we maintain the integrity of truth in all aspects of our lives. When we covenant to follow the Lord and obey His commandments, we accept His standards in *every* thought, action, and deed.

### ***Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost***

Living the Lord's standards requires that we cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. That gift helps us understand doctrine and apply it personally. Because truth that is given by revelation can be understood only by revelation,<sup>18</sup> our studies need to be prayerful. Scriptures attest to the efficacy of prayer in daily life. One is in Proverbs: "In all thy ways acknowledge [God], and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>19</sup> Another comes from the Book of Mormon: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."<sup>20</sup>

As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart.<sup>21</sup> From events portrayed in the scriptures, new insights will come and principles relevant to your situation will distill upon your heart.

You cultivate such revelatory experiences by living according to the light already given you and by searching the scriptures with pure motives—with real intent to "come unto Christ."<sup>22</sup> As you do so, your confidence will "wax strong in the presence of God," and the Holy Ghost will be your constant companion.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Ask pertinent questions***

Achieving scriptural guidance is aided by posing pertinent questions.<sup>24</sup> You might ask, "What principle can be learned from these teachings of the Lord?" For

example, scriptures teach that the Creation was accomplished in six periods of time.<sup>25</sup> Principles learned from that study show that any great attainment requires proper planning, timing, patience, labor, and no shortcuts.

### *Choose a style of study*

Next, I suggest that you shape the style of your study to fit you.<sup>26</sup> One way is to read a book of scripture from the first page to the last. This method gives good overall perspective. But other approaches also have merit. Attention to a particular topic or a specific theme, supplemented by use of cross-referencing footnotes and study guides, can help to switch on the light of doctrinal understanding.

Guidance can come when grappling with a serious challenge in life. Years ago, in the days of my early scientific research in a field that was then new to medical practice, a scriptural standard of truth gave me the courage needed to persevere. I leaned heavily upon these verses in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"All kingdoms have a law given;

"And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space. . . .

"And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions."<sup>27</sup>

We learned laws that pertained to the "kingdom" of our concern and mastered control that had previously been relegated by ignorance to chance alone.

Motivation for scriptural guidance comes when important choices must be made—even between options that are equally right. The Brethren are often faced with these kinds of decisions. On such an occasion we turn to the scriptures. We may read all of the standard works afresh, looking for insights relative to a specific issue.

### *Establish a time for study*

Time for scripture study requires a schedule that will be honored. Otherwise, blessings that matter most will be at the mercy of things that matter least. Time for *family* scripture study may be difficult to establish. Years ago when our children were at home, they attended different grades in several schools. Their daddy had to be at the hospital no later than 7:00 in the morning. In family council we determined that our best time for scripture study was 6:00 A.M. At that hour our little ones were very sleepy but supportive. Occasionally we had to awaken one when a turn came to read. I would be less than honest with you if I conveyed the impression that our family scripture time was a howling success. Occasionally it was more howling than successful. But we did not give up.

Now, a generation later, our children are all married with families of their own. Sister Nelson and I have watched them enjoy family scripture study in their own homes. Their efforts are much more successful than were ours. We shudder to think what might have happened if we had quit trying.<sup>28</sup>

We all *need* guidance through life. We *obtain* it best from the standard works and teachings of the prophets of God. With diligent effort, we can *achieve* that guidance and thus qualify for all of the blessings that God has in store for His faithful children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Gørding, Vejrup, and Vester Nebel, in Ribe County.
2. Mølholm, Støre Brøndum, in Ålborg County.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
7. Exodus 20:3.



8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
10. Psalm 119:105.
11. Ezekiel 14:6.
12. 2 Nephi 31:18; see also Matthew 7:14; Jacob 6:11; 3 Nephi 14:14; 27:33; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
13. Matthew 4:4.
14. 1 Nephi 19:23.
15. 2 Nephi 31:20.
16. Scriptures give encouragement to live in accord with the will of our Maker, who said, "If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:13-14). Self-esteem is also earned by obedience to God's commandments regarding chastity (see Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 3 Nephi 12:28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6).
17. 2 Corinthians 3:3.
18. See 1 Corinthians 2:11-14.
19. Proverbs 3:6.
20. Alma 37:37.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
22. Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45; see also verse 46.
24. As any good thing can be misused, a word of warning may be appropriate. The scriptures don't have the answers to every question. Many important truths have yet to be revealed. Preoccupation with the so-called "mysteries" should be avoided. Beware also of private interpretation. Look to the living prophets and official policies for interpretation. Don't judge others whose circumstances are not yours to judge. We are reassured, however, that they who "diligently [seek] shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19). Keep in mind too that many revelations have

been given in response to prophetic inquiry.

It is interesting to note that the first and last books of the Old Testament pose important questions: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) and "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8).

25. See Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Mosiah 13:19; Doctrine and Covenants 77:12; Abraham 4:31.
26. In your personal scripture study, you may wish to correlate your reading with a Church-outlined course of study, such as the Gospel Doctrine curriculum. Some like to prepare memorization cards that they can use while waiting for appointments or meetings.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36-38.
28. Personal and family scripture study can employ books, recordings, or other material. Those who will establish a time for scripture study and endure in that endeavor will maintain a positive spirit throughout their days.

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The choir sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

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### President Hinckley

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, has just spoken to us and I think has reminded all of us of the tremendous strength we have in the great women of this Church. She was followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

Now, brothers and sisters, there are very many of us here this morning, more than 20,000 in this great hall. Please, when you leave, be careful. Obey traffic rules. Be cautious. Be courteous in your driving. We don't wish any sad event to mar the spirit of this beautiful gathering.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will

then be offered by Elder Earl M. Monson of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## Elder David B. Haight

When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced that I would be the concluding speaker, I'm sure he was wondering if I could make it to the pulpit all right. He knows that I've just had my 94th birthday. So I'm in my 95th year, and he would be wondering.

He also knows that my eyesight isn't very good, but as my eyesight dims somewhat, I think my vision improves—my vision of the long road, my vision of what lies ahead. And so with all of you here this morning, I am sure you would join with me in saying what a marvelous time to be alive and what a marvelous time to be a member of this Church and how wonderful it is to have the freedoms that we have—the freedom of assembly and of religious gathering.

### **The gospel makes a difference**

When Ruby and I knelt in the Salt Lake Temple at the altar on September 4, 1930, holding hands and looking at one another, little did we realize what was ahead for us. We were two young people. I had come out of the country in southern Idaho, and Ruby had come out of Sanpete County, Utah. Our fathers were dead, but we had two wonderful widowed mothers, and they were with us in the temple. As we knelt and made covenants and promises, I knew that that was for real.

Now, after we have been married 70 years, I can say to all of you that it gets better, that it gets better year after year, with the preciousness and the tenderness and the realization of some of the eter-

nal blessings that lie ahead for us. And so to all of you I would say, and Ruby would join with me if she could be standing here, that life can be wonderful and so meaningful, but we have to live it in a simple way. We must live the principles of the gospel. For it is the gospel in our lives that makes the difference as we wend our way through life.

I have moved our family all over the country. Our children have grown up being in school when they were the only members of the Church in their class. We've done that many times, but that added to their development and their understanding and helped in the development of their testimonies to see the world in action but also to see the blessings of the gospel in our lives.

### **Blessing of a precious little baby**

Last Sunday, Ruby and I attended a sacrament meeting of a ward here in central Salt Lake. The meeting was most interesting because in that ward there is some affluence as well as people who are living in halfway houses. Just before the testimony meeting, a young lady walked up to the bishop on the stand, holding a little baby in her arms, wanting the baby to receive a blessing. The bishop stepped down and took the little baby, and the baby was blessed.

Later on during the testimony meeting, a little seven-year-old boy, with his five-year-old sister by the hand, walked up to the pulpit. He helped fix a little stool there for her to stand on, his five-year-old sister, and he helped her as she

bore her testimony. And as she would falter just a little, he would lean over and whisper in her ear, this little loving seven-year-old brother.

After she finished, he stood on the stool, and she stood watching him, and he bore his testimony. She had that sweet expression on her face as she watched him. He was her older brother, but you could see that family love and relationship with those two little children. He stepped down from the stool, took her by the hand, and they walked back down to take their seat.

Near the end of the testimony meeting, when there were a few moments for me to speak, I asked the young lady who had brought her child up to be blessed if she would come up and stand by me, which she did. In the meantime, while the meeting was going on, I asked the bishop, whispering into his ear, "Where is her husband?"

The bishop said, "He's in jail."

I asked, "What is her name?" and he told me her name.

She came up and stood by my side, carrying the little baby. As we were standing at the pulpit, I looked down at this little precious baby, only a few days old, and this mother—the mother of that little daughter, who had brought her to receive a blessing at the hands of the priesthood. As I looked at the mother and looked at that precious little child, I wondered what she might become or what she could be.

### **Family proclamation guides us**

I spoke to the audience and to this young mother about the proclamation that was issued five years ago by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve—a proclamation on the family—and of our responsibility to our children, and the children's responsibility to their parents, and the parents' responsibility to each other. That marvelous document brings

together the scriptural direction that we have received that has guided the lives of God's children from the time of Adam and Eve and will continue to guide us until the final winding-up scene.

As we talked about it and as I looked at that beautiful little baby, I thought of last summer. Ruby and I were up in Idaho for a short visit, and we met some people from Mountain Home, Idaho—the Goodrich family. Sister Goodrich had come to see us and had brought her daughter Chelsea with her. In part of the conversation that we were having, Sister Goodrich said Chelsea had memorized the proclamation on the family.

To Chelsea, who is now 15 years old, I said, "Chelsea, is that right?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "How long did it take you to do that?"

She said, "When we were young, my mother started a program in our house to help us memorize. We would memorize scripture passages and sacrament meeting songs and other types of things that would be helpful to us. So we learned how to memorize, and it became easier for us."

I said, "Then you can give it all?"

She said, "Yes, I can give it all."

I said, "You learned that when you were 12 years old; you're now 15. Pretty soon you'll start dating. Tell me about it. What has it done for you?"

Chelsea said, "As I think of the statements in that proclamation, and as I understand more of our responsibility as a family and our responsibility for the way we live and the way we should conduct our lives, the proclamation becomes a new guideline for me. As I associate with other people and when I start dating, I can think of those phrases and those sentences in the proclamation on the family. It will give me a yardstick which will help guide me. It will give me the strength that I need."

## Be a strong link

A short time ago President Hinckley was speaking to the students at the Brigham Young University. He made the statement that life is a great chain of generations, link following link, until the end of time. In talking to the students, he encouraged them not to be a weak link but to be a strong link in their family.

We've heard a lot of instruction here this morning in the conference regarding family history and families, the reason for linkage, and the responsibility that we have to do temple work for tens of thousands of people who could be a part of our own families waiting on the other side to receive the ordinances that must be done on this side of the veil so that they can carry on with what needs to be done on the other side. This we all understand so well.

So I would say to all of you here this morning, I hope you could develop a strong feeling in your own families—and with you personally—about not wanting to become a weak link in the chain of your family and of your ancestors. I encourage you also to be a strong link for your posterity. Do not be the weak link. Wouldn't that be a terrible thing to do? To think of that long chain and of all the precious work that needs to be done in the saving of souls, wouldn't it be sad if you were the one who was the weak link that caused your descendants not to be able to be part of that strong linkage.

## Anxiety to do temple work in Nauvoo

When the Saints were preparing to leave Nauvoo, and with the Nauvoo Temple unfinished, it was possible for them to endow only a few people. President Brigham Young, as President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was the senior Apostle at that time. He wrote in his journal about the anxiety that the people felt when they were trying to get their wagons equipped to start the trek west into that new area

they knew nothing of. They were following their leaders, getting ready the few possessions they could take with them on the wagons.

Amidst all these preparations, there was an opportunity for some of them to be endowed, and the people were anxious to be endowed. Brigham Young stopped doing all of the regular, routine work he was doing. He put that to one side so that he could stay in the temple and conduct the endowment work that was so necessary. In commenting about the experience, he said he was anxious to do what the Saints were anxious to have done. That word, *anxiety*, is interesting as it appears in his account. He writes of the anxiety that they had, hoping that the important endowment work could be accomplished before the people left on the trek west.

## Strengthen family links

I leave you my love and my witness and the knowledge that I have that this work is true. I know that God lives. I know that He loves us. He loves us, just as we love our children and our posterity. We now have 65 great-grandchildren, and of course we'll have more on their way. We love them all, and we hope that the chains and the links in our family will be strong and that our children will be blessed. We're proud of all of them and pray that they will grow up with the strong knowledge and the feeling that I have regarding God—that He lives, that He's our Father, and that all of this work is under His direction, that of His Son, who is our Savior, Jesus the Christ. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth in these latter days. I know it is true.

## Marvelous happenings in the Church

I know that we have a living prophet upon the earth today, and you can see the marvelous things that are happening

in the Church now with 100 operating temples. Some of you here will live to see the day when there are 200 operating temples and then 300 operating temples, and whatever the number might eventually become.

Well, we're living at this time and this day and age when marvelous things are happening. When we talk about a living prophet who receives revelations from on high in directing this work, I testify to you that those of us who work and associate with him can testify that he is God's prophet here upon the earth,

leading us in doing what is right and what is proper.

May your links be strong. May you personally find the great joy and happiness that can be ours through living the principles of the gospel. I leave you my love and this witness that the Church is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Earl M. Monson offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined Missionary Training Center choir. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir. Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined Missionary Train-

ing Center choir, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "We Will Sing of Zion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "We Will Sing of Zion."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Following President Faust, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Loren C. Dunn, F. Enzo Busche, and Alexander B. Morrison and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Eran A. Call, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, and Richard E. Turley

Sr. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder Harold G. Hillam as a President of the Quorums of the Seventy and Elders Harold G. Hillam, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to all for their services, please make it known.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Hugo A. Catrón, Ambrosio C. Collado, Gordon G. Conger, Cláudio Cuéllar, Paul L. Diehl, Donald B. Doty, Alvie R. Evans Sr., Eduardo Gavarret, Salomón Jaar, W. E. Barry Mayo, Mitchell V. Myers, Stein Pedersen, Gustavo Ramos, Eugene E. Reid, Alejandro M. Robles, Servando Rojas, Lynn A. Rosenvall, L. Douglas Smoot, Brian A. Watling, and Carlos D. Vargas as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Tsung Ting Yang and Aleksandr N. Manzhos as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Marlin K. Jensen, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Importance of individual testimonies

Once again we gather in this wondrous Conference Center and in many other places throughout the world. During this conference we will hear and have heard the testimonies of many servants of the Lord. Concerning testimony, the Psalmist wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure."<sup>1</sup>

For Latter-day Saints, a testimony is "the assurance of the reality, truth, and goodness of God, of the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the divine calling of latter-day prophets. . . . It is knowledge buttressed by divine personal confirmation by the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup>

Expressions of solemn testimony have long been important to the children of God upon the earth. Individual testimonies have strengthened this Church from its earliest days.

### Story of John Taylor's conversion

One evening in April 1836, for example, Elder Parley P. Pratt had retired early with pressing worries and a heavy heart. He didn't know how he was going to meet his financial obligations. His wife had been seriously ill, and his aged mother had come to live with him. A year earlier the house he had been building had gone up in flames.

While he was deep in thought, a knock came at the door. Elder Heber C. Kimball entered and, filled with the spirit of prophecy, told Elder Pratt that he should travel to Toronto, Canada, where he would "find a people prepared for the fulness of the gospel" and that "many [would] be brought to the knowledge of the truth."<sup>3</sup>

Despite his worries, Elder Pratt departed. When he arrived in Toronto, at

first no one seemed interested in hearing what he had to say.

Among those he met was John Taylor, who had been a Methodist preacher. John received Elder Pratt courteously but coolly. John Taylor had heard distorted rumors about a new sect, their "golden bible," and stories of angels appearing to an "unlearned youth, reared in the backwoods of New York."<sup>4</sup>

A wise man, John Taylor had been seeking the truth all his life. He listened to what Elder Pratt had to say. Among other things, the stranger from America promised that anyone who investigated the gospel could know for himself, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, that it was true. At one point John Taylor asked: "What do you mean by this Holy Ghost? . . . [Will it give] a certain knowledge of the principles that you believe in?"

The Apostle replied, "Yes, . . . and if it will not, then I am an impostor."<sup>5</sup>

Hearing this, John Taylor took up the challenge, saying, "If I find his religion true, I shall accept it, no matter what the consequences may be; and if false, then I shall expose it."<sup>6</sup>

Not only did he accept the challenge, but he "received that Spirit through obedience to the Gospel."<sup>7</sup> Soon he knew for himself what millions of others have since known—that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth.

Eventually this man who had devoted his entire life to seeking the truth became the third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### The Holy Ghost will confirm truth to all

Over time, much in the world has changed. One thing, however, remains the same: the promise Elder Parley P. Pratt made to John Taylor 164 years ago is just as valid today as it was then—the

Holy Ghost will confirm the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Logic itself affirms that a loving Heavenly Father would not abandon His children without providing a way for them to learn of Him. One of the great messages of the Restoration is that the windows of heaven are open. All who seek to know the truth may, through revelations of the Spirit, know for themselves.

We are blessed to live in an age when apostles and prophets walk the earth bearing solemn and certain testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Many members—millions strong—add their voices to the growing chorus testifying that God once again has spoken to man.

President Joseph F. Smith declared: "Every person should know that the gospel is true, as this is everyone's privilege who is baptized and receives the Holy Ghost. . . . I know that the gospel is true, and that God is with his people; and that if I will do my duty and keep his commandments, the clouds will roll by, and the mists will disappear."<sup>8</sup>

### How to acquire a testimony

How does one acquire a personal testimony?

Study the words of Moroni. He lived more than 1,500 years ago. This prophet had watched as his people were slaughtered and utterly devastated by civil war—his nation in ruins; his friends and loved ones slain; his own father, a great general and a righteous man, killed.

This great prophet, Moroni, having lost all that he loved, stood alone. The last of his people, he was the lone witness to the desolation and heartbreak that result from hatred and rage.

He had precious little time and space on his plates to write a few final words. His own people destroyed, Moroni wrote for our day. To us he inscribed his precious words of farewell—his final words of counsel:

"Behold, I would exhort you," he wrote, "that when ye shall read these things, . . . ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men. . . . Ponder it in your hearts.

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."<sup>9</sup>

Would that every ear could hear the last testimony of Moroni, this giant among men, this humble servant of God.

Do you want to know the truth of the holy scriptures? Do you wish to break the barriers that separate mortals from the knowledge of eternal verities? Do you wish to know—really know—the truth? Then follow Moroni's counsel and you will surely find what you seek.

Be sincere. Study. Ponder. Pray sincerely, having faith.

If you do these things, you too will be able to stand with the millions who testify that God once again speaks to man on earth.

### Continue until you receive a testimony

A testimony of the truth of the gospel does not come the same way to all people. Some receive it in a unique, life-changing experience. Others gain a testimony slowly, almost imperceptibly, until one day they simply know.

Study the words of President David O. McKay, who tells of how, in his youth, he knelt and "prayed fervently and sincerely and with as much faith as a young boy could muster" that "God would declare to [him] the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith."

President McKay related that when he arose from his knees, he had to admit that "no spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say



I am just the same [boy] that I was before I prayed.”<sup>10</sup>

I don’t know how young David felt in his heart at that time, but I’m sure he must have been disappointed—perhaps frustrated that he didn’t receive the spiritual experience that he had hoped for. But that didn’t discourage him from continuing his search for that knowledge.

The answer to his prayers did come, but not until years later when he was serving as a missionary. Why was the answer to his prayer so long delayed? President McKay believed that this spiritual manifestation “came as a natural sequence to the performance of duty.”<sup>11</sup>

The Savior taught a similar principle. When the truth of His message was challenged, He declared, “If any man will *do* [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>12</sup>

Don’t be discouraged if the answer to your prayer does not come immediately. Study, ponder, and pray, sincerely having faith, and live the commandments.

“Dispute not because ye see not,” Moroni taught, “for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”<sup>13</sup>

### Importance of bearing our testimonies

I remember as a child listening to the testimonies given by adults in my ward. Those testimonies entered my heart and inspired my soul. Wherever I go throughout the world—no matter the language, no matter the culture—I thrill to hear the testimonies of the Saints.

Recently I received a letter from our grandson who is a missionary. He wrote that members “who are reading scriptures and praying are more willing to share the gospel.”<sup>14</sup>

I believe he’s right. The more we study the scriptures and pray, the more likely we can enthusiastically share our testimonies of the gospel with others.

Remember, Church members who receive a testimony of the gospel are under covenant “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”<sup>15</sup> It is clear that we have a sacred obligation to obtain referrals for our missionaries. Witnesses have a special knowledge and are to bear testimony of “that which they have seen and heard and most assuredly believe.”<sup>16</sup>

We make simple, clear, direct statements that we know with certainty and surety that the gospel is true because it has been “made known unto [us] by the Holy Spirit of God.”<sup>17</sup> In bearing such a testimony, speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost, we are promised that “the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever [we] shall say.”<sup>18</sup> We are blessed personally when we so testify.

President Boyd K. Packer said:

“A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it. Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that ‘leap of faith,’ as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and step into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two.”<sup>19</sup>

Making a determined and confident public statement of your belief is such a step into the unknown. It has a powerful effect in strengthening your own convictions. Bearing testimony drives your faith deeper into your soul, and you believe more fervently than before.

To those who faithfully bear testimony, the Lord said, “Ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you.”<sup>20</sup> I have tried to follow this counsel to bear testimony.

### How I gained a testimony

May I tell you how I gained a testimony of the truth and divine nature of

this great latter-day work? I'm afraid my experience isn't very dramatic. It is not a story of heavenly hosannas or thundering shouts. It is not a story of lightning, fire, or flood.

But I have always known the reality and goodness of God.

From my earliest memories it was there—a sure and abiding testimony of this great work. Sometimes that assurance comes when we feel the love of the Savior when we meet His servants. I remember when I was just five years old and my family moved into a new ward. That first Sunday, Bishop Charles E. Forsberg, who was born in Sweden, came up to me and called me by name. I knew then.

During the cold and gray days of the Great Depression, I remember a wonderful servant of the Savior by the name of C. Perry Erickson. Brother Erickson, a contractor, had a difficult time finding work. He could have shut himself up. He could have become bitter and angry. He could have given up. Instead, when I was 12 he was my Scoutmaster. He spent countless hours helping me and others my age to learn, to grow, and to approach every difficulty with confidence and optimism. Without exception, every one of C. Perry Erickson's Scouts received an Eagle award. I knew then.

Yes, the testimonies of priesthood leaders and faithful ward members helped me to know.

I remember the words of my mother and father. I remember their expressions of faith and love for their Heavenly Father. I knew then.

I knew the reality of the Savior's compassion when, at the request of my father, the bishop of the ward, I delivered food and clothing to the widows and poor of the ward.

I knew when, as young parents, my wife and I gathered our children around us and expressed our gratitude to our Heavenly Father for our many blessings.

I knew last April, when I heard from this pulpit the words of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who called Jesus his friend, exemplar, leader, Savior, and King.

President Hinckley said:

"Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty."<sup>21</sup>

### **If you seek the Lord, you will find Him**

Now I would like to bear my testimony. I know that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw, that the heavens opened and God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to an unlearned youth reared in the backwoods of New York.

As a special witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, I promise you that if you seek the Lord, you will find Him. Ask, and you shall receive.

I pray that you may do so and testify to the ends of the earth that the gospel of our Lord and Savior is restored to man! In the name of my friend, my exemplar, my Savior and King, Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Psalm 19:7.
2. In Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 4:1470.
3. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 110.
4. B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (1963), 34.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1882.
6. *The Life of John Taylor*, 38.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1882.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 43.
9. Moroni 10:3–4.

10. *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. Clare Middlemiss (1955), 16.
11. *Cherished Experiences*, 16.
12. John 7:17; italics added.
13. Ether 12:6.
14. Letter from Elder Andrew Cannon, 30 Aug. 2000.
15. Mosiah 18:9.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 52:36.
17. Alma 5:46.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 100:8.
19. "That All May Be Edified" (1982), 340.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 62:3.
21. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 71.

### President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Repentance—the path to peace and joy

There is an essential aspect of the plan of happiness of our Father in Heaven that is often ignored even though it invariably yields peace and joy. The Savior gave His life that it might be used to bless every child of Father in Heaven. This subject is widely misunderstood and often feared. Some feel that it is to be employed only by those in serious transgression, while the Lord intended that it be consistently used by every one of His children. He has repeatedly commanded His prophets and leaders to proclaim it and to speak of little else.<sup>1</sup> I refer to the blessing of true, sincere, continuing repentance, the path to peace and joy. It is a conduit to the reforming power of the Lord and, when understood and used, a dear and precious friend.

### We are commanded to repent

Repentance is not optional. An angel commanded Adam to "repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."<sup>2</sup> Each one of us is commanded both to repent and to call upon God continually throughout life. That pattern allows each day to be an unspoiled page in the book of life—a new,

fresh opportunity. We are given the rejuvenating privilege of overcoming mistakes of commission or omission, be they small or profoundly serious. Full repentance results in forgiveness with spiritual renewal. One can feel the cleansing, the purity, the freshness that accompanies sincere repentance at any time in life.

The Savior has made the requirement clear: "I command you to repent, and keep the commandments . . . lest I humble you with my almighty power."<sup>3</sup>

Likewise Jacob taught with crystal clarity:

"[The Holy One of Israel] cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; . . .

"And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup>

### The redeeming power of repentance

Why have our Father and His Son commanded us to repent? Because they love us. They know all of us will violate eternal laws. Whether they be small or large, justice requires that every broken law be satisfied to retain the promise of joy in this life and the privilege of re-

turning to Father in Heaven. If not satisfied, in the Day of Judgment justice will cause that we be cast out of the presence of God to be under the control of Satan.<sup>5</sup>

It is our Master and His redeeming act that make it possible for us to avoid such condemnation. It is done through faith in Jesus Christ, obedience to His commandments, and enduring in righteousness to the end.

Are you taking full advantage of the redeeming power of repentance in your life so that you can have greater peace and joy? Feelings of turmoil and despondency often signal a need for repentance. Also, the lack of the spiritual direction you seek in your life could result from broken laws. If needed, full repentance will put your life together. It will solve all of the complex spiritual pains that come from transgression. But in this life it cannot remedy some of the physical consequences that can occur from serious sin. Be wise, and consistently live well within the boundaries of righteousness defined by the Lord.

### **Vital steps to repentance**

There are several vital steps to repentance. Each is essential for complete forgiveness. President Joseph F. Smith identified some of these steps this way:

"True repentance is not only sorrow for sins, and humble penitence and contrition before God, but it involves the necessity of turning away from them, a discontinuance of all evil practices . . . a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good . . . to make restitution, so far as . . . possible, for all the wrongs we have done. . . . This is true repentance, and the exercise of the will and all the powers of [the] body and mind is demanded, to complete this glorious work of repentance."<sup>6</sup>

To the vital steps of recognition, sorrow, abandonment, confession, and restitution where possible, it is also essential

to add the requirement to diligently keep all of the commandments of God.<sup>7</sup> For the Lord has declared:

"I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven."<sup>8</sup>

Great reinforcement and a sustaining power to succeed come when there is a determination to keep all of the commandments. The Lord expects a lifelong commitment to obey the plan of happiness, including continuing repentance as needed. He has said, "He only is saved who endureth unto the end."<sup>9</sup>

### **Repentance is centered in the Atonement**

Formulas have been crafted to help us remember some of the essential actions required for full repentance. While these can be helpful, generally they ignore the most fundamental aspect of repentance—that it is centered in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, that it has efficacy because He willingly paid the full price through His redeeming sacrifice, motivated by a perfect love of His Father and of each of us. Alma declared:

"I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

" . . . I have told you this that you may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ."<sup>10</sup>

Peace is the precious fruit of a righteous life. It is possible because of the Atonement of the Savior. It is earned through full repentance, for that leads to refreshing forgiveness. Repentance opens the doors of enlightenment and aids inspiration.<sup>11</sup> Repentance brings salvation through forgiveness,<sup>12</sup> but it does

not come automatically. Each step of repentance must be fulfilled.

### **A broken heart and a contrite spirit**

To feel sorrow and be motivated to confess is a proper beginning, but it is not sufficient. When confession is voluntary, the action required for repentance is greatly simplified. It does no good for an individual to stonewall efforts of a judge in Israel to encourage repentance by denying that a real transgression has occurred or by being otherwise unyielding. Lehi taught, "He offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a *broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."<sup>13</sup> There must be humility<sup>14</sup> and sorrow.<sup>15</sup>

I suggest that you read President Spencer W. Kimball's inspired book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. It continues to help the faithful avoid the pitfalls of serious transgression. It likewise is an excellent handbook for those who have committed serious errors and want to find their way back. Read the last two chapters first to appreciate the full miracle of forgiveness before reading anything else.

### **Full repentance brings forgiveness**

If you have repented from serious transgression and mistakenly believe that you will always be a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God, learn that is not true. The Savior said:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them."<sup>16</sup>

Find encouragement in the lives of Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah. They were tragically wicked. Yet

their full repentance and service qualified them to be considered as noble as righteous Captain Moroni.<sup>17</sup>

### **Guilt need not persist after repentance**

To you who have sincerely repented yet continue to feel the burden of guilt, realize that to continue to suffer for sins when there has been proper repentance and forgiveness of the Lord is prompted by the master of deceit. Lucifer will encourage you to continue to relive the details of past mistakes, knowing that such thoughts can hamper your progress. Thus he attempts to tie strings to the mind and body so that he can manipulate you like a puppet to discourage personal achievement.

I testify that Jesus Christ paid the price and will satisfy the demands of justice for all who are obedient to His teachings. Thus, full forgiveness is granted, and the distressing effects of sin need no longer persist in one's life. Indeed, they cannot persist if one truly understands the meaning of Christ's Atonement. Ammon conquered thoughts of past unworthiness by remembering the mercy of the Redeemer. He marveled, "Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us . . . the salvation of our souls."<sup>18</sup>

When memory of past mistakes encroaches upon your mind, turn your thoughts to the Redeemer and to the miracle of forgiveness, with the renewal that comes through Him. Your depression and suffering will be replaced by peace, joy, and gratitude for His love.

How difficult it must be for Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, to see so many needlessly suffer because His gift of repentance is ignored. It must pain Him deeply to see the pointless agony, both in this life and beyond the veil, that accompany the unrepentant sinner after all He did so that we need not suffer.

### Sexual intimacy outside marriage is sin

Many youth have been led to believe that sexual intimacy is “not that bad” as long as it does not involve the act that could cause pregnancy. That is false. Sexual intimacy in any of its forms, outside the covenant of marriage, is serious sin. Serious sin is addictive. It forges binding habits that are difficult to sever. If you have broken such laws, seek help from your bishop or stake president, since such transgression requires a confession both to the Lord and to such a judge as a necessary step toward forgiveness. These sins can be avoided by not permitting anyone to touch the private, sacred parts of your body and by refusing to do that with anyone else.

### Invitation to repent and come back

Have you wandered from the path of joy and now find yourself where you do not want to be, with feelings you do not want to have? Is there a yearning to return to the peace and joy of a worthy life? I invite you with all the love of my heart to repent and come back. Decide to do it now. That journey is not as difficult as it seems. You can cast out guilt, overcome depression, receive the blessing of peace of mind, and find enduring joy. Pray for help and guidance, and you will be led to

find it. Go to where you know the light of truth shines—to a worthy friend, a loving bishop or stake president, an understanding parent. Please come back. We love you. We need you. Follow the path to peace and joy through complete repentance. The Savior will help you obtain forgiveness as you sincerely follow all of the steps to repentance. He is the Redeemer. He loves you. He wants you to have peace and joy in your life. Now I testify that He lives. He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:9.
2. Moses 5:8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 19:13, 20.
4. 2 Nephi 9:21, 23.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:8–10; 2:5.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 100–101.
7. See Enos 1:10.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 53:7.
10. Alma 38:8–9.
11. See Alma 26:22.
12. See Alma 32:13.
13. 2 Nephi 2:7; italics added.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 61:2.
15. See 2 Corinthians 7:9–10.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
17. See Alma 48:17–18.
18. Alma 26:20.

## Elder Donald L. Hallstrom

### The influence of culture and tradition

I will ever be grateful for having been born and nurtured in Hawaii, part of what the scriptures often refer to as “the isles of the sea.” Called a melting pot because of its multiethnic composition, Hawaii has more accurately been referred to as a “delicious stew,” with each culture maintaining an identity but blending together in a harmonious societal broth which can be savored by all.

Having additionally served a mission in England, spending significant time on the United States mainland, and now living and serving in Asia, I have long been interested in culture and tradition and their influence on how we look, think, and act. *Culture* is defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and . . . traits of a . . . group” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], 282). Traditions, established patterns of behavior transmitted from generation to generation, are an

inherent part of culture. Our culture and its related traditions help establish our sense of identity and fill the vital human need to belong.

### **Uplifting traditions**

Of traditions which are complementary to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul admonished the Thessalonians, "Therefore, . . . stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). In the Church, powerful traditions remind us of the strength and sacrifice of our ancestors and inspire our efforts. Among them are industry, frugality, and complete devotion to a righteous cause. Others are based on doctrine and standards which may seem peculiar to the world but are consistent with God's pattern. These include chaste behavior, modesty of dress, unpolluted language, Sabbath observance, adherence to the Word of Wisdom, and the payment of tithes.

Even in ethnic culture, many traditions can reinforce gospel standards and principles. For example, anciently, Hawaiians had a practice, the spirit of which is still exhibited today by many in the islands. When greeting another person, one would come face-to-face and offer an expression of "ha," even expelling their breath for another to feel. The literal translation of *ha* is "the breath of life." It was a way to give of oneself and show another a deep sense of brotherly love and caring. When foreigners first came to Hawaii, they did not exhibit this same respect for others. They were called *haole*, *ha-ole*, meaning "without ha."

If there is a people who should have "ha"—an intense feeling of charity and compassion toward others—it is members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A true Latter-day Saint possesses a love for others that is consistent with the belief that everyone is a brother or a sister.

Uplifting traditions play a significant role in leading us toward the things of the Spirit. Those that promote love for Deity and unity in families and among people are especially important.

### **Unwanted traditions**

The power of tradition, however, poses a significant danger. It can cause us to forget our heavenly heritage. To achieve eternal goals, we must reconcile our earthly culture with the doctrine of the everlasting gospel. This process involves embracing all that is spiritually elevating in our family and societal traditions and discarding that which is a barrier to our eternal view and achievement. We must transform ourselves from being "natural" men and women, as defined by King Benjamin, and become Saints by yielding "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19).

Also warning of this peril and its gravity, the Prophet Joseph Smith was inspired to clarify one of Paul's epistles to the people of Corinth by stating:

"And it came to pass that the children, being brought up in subjection to the law of Moses, gave heed to the traditions of their fathers and believed not the gospel of Christ, wherein they became unholy" (D&C 74:4).

Please be not dismissive and think this principle applies only to others and their culture; know that it is valid for you and for me, wherever on earth we may live or whatever our family circumstances may be.

Unwanted traditions are those which lead us away from performing holy ordinances and keeping sacred covenants. Our guide should be the doctrine taught by the scriptures and the prophets. Traditions which devalue marriage and family, abase women or do not recognize the majesty of their God-given roles, honor temporal success more than spiritual, or teach that reliance upon God is a weak-

ness of character all lead us away from eternal truths.

### **Cultivate a tradition of righteousness**

Of all the traditions we should cultivate within ourselves and our families, a "tradition of righteousness" should be preeminent. Hallmarks of this tradition are an unwavering love for God and His Only Begotten Son, respect for prophets and priesthood power, a constant seeking of the Holy Spirit, and the discipline of discipleship, which transforms believing into doing. A tradition of righteousness sets a pattern for living which draws children closer to parents, and both closer to God, and elevates obedience from a burden to a blessing.

In a world where traditions often confuse right and wrong:

- We are inspired by the courage of each young person who has honored the Sabbath day, kept the Word of Wisdom, and remained chaste when popular culture has established the opposite as not only acceptable but expected.

- We are inspired by the wisdom of each man who has molded a career which properly supports his premier responsibility to spiritually lead his family when wealth and power are more highly valued by the world.

- We are inspired by the nobility of each husband and wife who have established a relationship of equality and kindness when one of selfishness and indifference is so common.

As the supernal nature of our life begins to be understood and experienced, we desire nothing temporal to impede our celestial journey.

Humbled by the responsibility but joyous in the opportunity to preach the gospel and bear witness in all the world, I affirm my knowledge of eternal truths and everlasting culture. I testify of 15 men with prophetic calling and apostolic authority and one among them, even President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides with dignity, vision, and a clear sense of righteous tradition. Of most significance, I testify of the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, of His Church, and of His atoning love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elders Ronald A. Rasband and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## **Elder Ronald A. Rasband**

### **Gratitude for calling and family**

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel it a great privilege and honor to stand here at this pulpit today. I pray for the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that what I say may add to the spiritual feelings we all experience at conference time.

I would be very ungrateful if I did not take this opportunity to thank the Lord in all sincerity for my calling as a Seventy. I would also like to thank our dear prophet, President Hinckley, and his fellow leaders of the Church for their confidence in me. I pledge to them and



all of you my best efforts in the years of service that lie before me.

Through many hours of reflection, I have been drawn back to my pioneer ancestors in deep appreciation. All eight of my great-grandparents came into the Church as early converts. Six of the eight immigrated to the United States from Europe, where I am now serving. I feel a deep sense of love and connection to the European Saints and commit myself to do all that I possibly can to strengthen the Church and build up the kingdom of God there or wherever I may be assigned.

I express my love and gratitude to my dear eternal companion and choice family for their devoted support and love. I wish to convey my love to our friends and dear missionaries whom we recently served with in the New York New York North Mission. One of the great blessings of my life is that of treasured friends and close associates whom I have had the privilege to know and learn from.

### **Jesus loves us all one by one**

Throughout my life, I have come to know through my own experiences that Heavenly Father hears and answers our personal prayers. I know that Jesus is the living Christ and that He knows each of us individually, or, as the scriptures express it, “one by one.”

This sacred assurance was taught compassionately by the Savior Himself in His appearance to the people of Nephi. We read of this in 3 Nephi, chapter 11, verse 15:

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth *one by one* until they had all gone forth” (italics added).

Further illustrating the “one by one” nature of our Savior’s ministry is the account in 3 Nephi, chapter 17, verse 9:

“And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them *every one* as they were brought forth unto him” (italics added).

We then read of the special blessing given to the precious children in verse 21:

“And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (italics added).

This was not a small gathering. In verse 25 we read:

“And they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.”

Certainly there is a very profound and tender personal message here. Jesus Christ ministers to, and loves us all, one by one.

### **We should serve others one by one**

As we reflect on our Savior’s way of loving, we sustain you dedicated stake and ward leaders—men and women of great faith. We gratefully recognize the many efforts of those of you working with the youth. And we express great appreciation to our caring Primary leaders and teachers for your Christlike service. We consider each of your one-by-one ministries and say thank you and please, please continue. Perhaps never in the history of mankind do we need to be serving on a one-by-one basis more than we do now.

### **Inspiration to invite an elder to pray**

During the final months of our mission last year, we experienced an event that taught once again this profound prin-

ciple that each of us is known and loved by God.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell was coming to New York City for some Church business, and we were informed that he would also like to have a mission conference. We were so pleased to have this opportunity to hear from one of the Lord's chosen servants. I was asked to select one of our missionaries to provide the opening prayer for the meeting. I might have randomly picked one of the missionaries to pray, but felt to ponder and prayerfully select one whom the Lord would have me ask. In going through the missionary roster, a name boldly stood out to me: Elder Joseph Appiah of Accra, Ghana. He was the one I felt the Lord wanted to pray at the meeting.

Prior to the mission conference, I was having a regularly scheduled interview with Elder Appiah and told him of the prompting that I had received for him to pray. With amazement and humility in his eyes, he began to weep deeply. Somewhat surprised by his reaction, I started to tell him that it was all right and he wouldn't have to pray, when he informed me he would love to offer the prayer, that his emotion was caused by the love he has for Elder Maxwell. He told me that this Apostle is very special to the Saints in

Ghana and to his own family. Elder Maxwell had called his father to be the district president in Accra and had sealed his mother and father in the Salt Lake Temple.

Now, I didn't know any of what I just related about this missionary or his family, but the Lord did and inspired a mission president on behalf of *one* missionary to provide a lifelong memory and testimony-building experience.

At the meeting, Elder Appiah offered a wonderful prayer and made a humble contribution to a meeting where Elder Maxwell taught the missionaries of the attributes of Jesus Christ. All who were there will never forget the feelings of love they experienced for their Savior.

### **Come to the Savior one by one**

I have a testimony in my heart, brothers and sisters, that God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ know and love us individually. I'm not sure I fully understand how; I just know and have experienced that They do. I urge all of us in our own ministries—to our families and to our fellowman—to embrace the Savior's warm invitation to come unto Him, one by one, and be perfected in Him.

I share this witness and hope, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Douglas L. Callister**

### **Seeking the Spirit—an urgent quest**

In Italy there is a majestic sculpture of Moses with a crack on one of the knees. A tour guide may say that Michelangelo, viewing the masterpiece, hurled a chisel at the sculpture and exclaimed in disdain, "Why doesn't it speak?"

Unlike the inanimate stone, the true Church of Jesus Christ is filled with life.

The voice, Spirit, and power of God are found in our worship services or whenever the ordinances of the holy priesthood are administered.

Elijah inquired of Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee." Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."<sup>1</sup> He could not have asked for anything greater.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "The Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth. . . . Through the Holy Ghost the truth is woven into the very fibre and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten."<sup>2</sup>

With our confirmation as Church members, the door is opened for us to pursue this heavenly endowment. This should be an urgent and lifelong quest.

### **Spirit makes us more observant of beauty**

As we become more conversant with the Holy Spirit, our lives become refined. The sordid and base have no attraction. It is developed spirituality which separates us from the secular world.

A spiritual-minded man is observant of the beauty in the world around him. As the earth was organized, the Lord saw that "it was good." Then "it was very good."<sup>3</sup> It pleases our Father in Heaven when we, also, pause to note the beauty of our environment, which we will naturally do as we become more spiritually sensitive. Our awareness of grand music, literature, and sublime art is often a natural product of spiritual maturity. In poetic allusion to the theophany of Moses and the burning bush, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "Earth's crammed with heaven, / And every common bush afire with God; / And only he who sees takes off his shoes."<sup>4</sup>

### **Spirit enhances our scripture reading**

As we seek the Spirit, our scripture reading becomes more reflective. We rediscover the virtue of slow reading. There is more reading aloud, as perhaps the scriptures were meant to be read. Brigham Young said: "All I have to do is . . . keep my spirit, feelings and conscience like a sheet of blank paper, and let the spirit and power of God write upon it what he pleases. When he writes, I will read; but if I read before he writes, I am very likely to be wrong."<sup>5</sup>

As an evidence of increased spirituality, we become more selective in what we read. J. Reuben Clark said, "My rule now is, never read anything that is not worth remembering."<sup>6</sup> Thomas Jefferson always read something ennobling just before he retired, "whereon to ruminate in the intervals of sleep."<sup>7</sup>

### **Spirit helps us have improved prayer**

Another fruit of spiritual maturity is improved prayer. More than 30 years ago, President Kimball called me to serve as a stake president. At the conclusion of a long conference weekend, I inquired if he had counsel for me. He replied, "Go teach the Latter-day Saints how to pray. As a people we must not forget how to commune with our Heavenly Father. That is all." Most of the profound and important teachings in the Church are simple.

### **Become supremely spiritual beings**

Those who have made it their quest to realize the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit will awaken in the next life as spiritual giants, in contrast to the infancy of others who have lived without God in this world.

One of the spiritually advanced was President Joseph F. Smith. A member of the Twelve said of him: "Spiritually, he was the most high-minded of any man I ever met. I visited the Tabernacle where President Smith blessed the Latter-day Saints. For 20 minutes he blessed them. For 20 minutes there was not a dry eye in the Tabernacle."<sup>8</sup>

Bishop Charles W. Nibley said at the passing of Joseph F. Smith:

"Never was man more moral and chaste and virtuous to the last fiber of his being than he. Against all forms or thoughts of licentiousness, he was set, and as immovable as a mountain."<sup>9</sup>

"As a preacher of righteousness, who could compare with him? He was the greatest that I ever heard—strong, pow-

erful, clear, appealing. It was marvelous how the words of living light and fire flowed from him. . . . [When] the heart of President Smith was attuned to the Celestial melodies—he could hear, and [he] did hear.”<sup>10</sup>

Another who developed this great talent of spirituality was President David O. McKay, causing Elder Bryant S. Hinckley to write, “David O. McKay has done many good things and said many beautiful things but somehow he is finer than anything he has ever said or done.”<sup>11</sup>

The great battle of our premortal estate was a struggle for individual souls. It is the same battle we wage here, which is to become supremely spiritual beings. President McKay said, “Spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self.”<sup>12</sup> It is the sure knowledge that we are winning the struggle for the soul. Sensuality is the realm of self-indulgence. Spirituality is the realm of self-victory.

### Keep covenants and seek the Spirit

I attended a Church class in which the instructor asked what counsel we would give our children in the closing moments of life. I answered, “First, keep your covenants. God keeps His. It will mean much to stand before your Father in Heaven and report: ‘I am home. I am clean. I have done all I covenanted to do.’”

Second, seek the Spirit of God. The scriptures plead: “Quench not the Spirit.”<sup>13</sup> “Grieve not the . . . Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> It will not come to impure hearts or minds. It comes quietly and without drama. A listening ear can hear the faint rustle of a wing. If we do not listen, it will leave.

I testify that the workings of the Spirit are real and are found in this Church. I also testify of Christ, the Redeemer, and the work He has instituted in this dispensation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 2 Kings 2:9.
2. “The Sin against the Holy Ghost,” *Instructor*, Oct. 1935, 431.
3. Genesis 1:4, 31.
4. *Aurora Leigh*, 7:821–23.
5. *Deseret News Weekly*, 19 Apr. 1871, 125.
6. Quoted by Joseph L. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Apr. 1947, 85.
7. *The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, sel. J. G. de Rouilhac Hamilton (1926), 227.
8. Personal conversation with Elder LeGrand Richards on 1 July 1978.
9. Quoted in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 524–25.
10. *Gospel Doctrine*, 522.
11. “Greatness in Men—David O. McKay,” *Improvement Era*, May 1932, 446.
12. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 390.
13. 1 Thessalonians 5:19.
14. Ephesians 4:30.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### The challenge to become

The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord’s teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). This process requires far more

than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something.

Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the *condition* we have achieved.

The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs *be* filthy; and if they *be* filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" (1 Nephi 15:33; italics added). Moroni declares, "He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still" (Mormon 9:14; italics added; see also Revelation 22:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14).

### Becoming what our Father desires

From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would

probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

"All that I have I desire to give you—not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."

This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.

### Conversion requires us to *do* and *become*

We qualify for eternal life through a process of *conversion*. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when He taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:15–17).

Peter had a *testimony*. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To *testify* is to know and to declare.

Later on, Jesus taught these same men about *conversion*, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked

who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4; italics added).

Later the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

In order to strengthen his brethren—to nourish and lead the flock of God—this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be "converted."

Jesus' challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be "converted," which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be "converted." We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?

## Gospel is the plan by which we become

The needed conversion *by* the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being "born again" (see Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual "sons and daughters" of Jesus Christ, "new creatures" who can "inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25-26).

In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, "that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20). He concluded: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

## Conversion and family relationships

Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships—even more than our Church callings—are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience,

and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.

### Focus on what others are becoming

The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2; see also Moroni 7:48).

I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters *are* and what they are striving to *become*.

### Adversity can help us become converted

Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquility, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would "consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain" (2 Nephi 2:2). The Prophet Joseph was promised, "Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7-8).

Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call "the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10; 1 Nephi 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.

### Do things for the right reason: charity

We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Corinthians 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47), is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, "except men shall *have* charity they cannot inherit" the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; italics added).

### Parable of the laborers in the vineyard

All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them "whatsoever is right" (Matthew 20:7).

At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, "they murmured against the goodman of the house" (Matthew 20:11). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he

had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.

Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master's reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to *become* something. For some of us this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors.

Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to "add water"—the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition—even in the eleventh hour—these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.

### Never give up hope

This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see Moroni 7:5–14) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

### Ways to measure our progress

How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

After King Benjamin's great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord "has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father, under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elders Ronald A. Rasband and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will commence here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

Prior to the nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning, there will be a brief cornerstone ceremony for



the Conference Center at 9:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. *Music and the Spoken Word* will follow from 9:30 to 10:00. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

In preparation for the special dedicatory session which will take place tomorrow morning in the opening session, we invite those in attendance and participating everywhere to have available a white handkerchief.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined Missionary Training Center choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing "Called to Serve," after which Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Called to Serve."

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## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### The tugs and pulls of the world

For true believers, the tugs and pulls of the world—including its pleasures, power, praise, money, and preeminence—have always been there. Now, however, many once-helpful support systems are bent or broken. Furthermore, the harmful things of the world are marketed by pervasive technology and hyped by a media barrage, potentially reaching almost every home and hamlet. All this when many are already tuned out of spiritual things, saying, "I am rich, . . . increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

Contrastingly, the perks of discipleship are such that if we see a stretch limousine pulling up, we know it is not calling for us. God's plan is not the plan of pleasure; it is the "plan of happiness."

The tugs and pulls of the world are powerful. Worldly lifestyles are cleverly reinforced by the rationalization "everybody is doing it," thus fanning or feigning a majority. Products are promoted

and attitudes engendered by clever niche marketing.

Peter counseled, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). Brothers and sisters, there are so many personalized prisons!

Scoffers display the shoulder-shrugging attitude foretold by Peter: "Where is the promise of [Christ's] coming? for . . . all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Such cynicism mistakes the successive casts on the mortal stage for the absence of a Director or a script.

Like goldfish in a bowl, some are mindless of who changes the water and puts in the pellets (see Jacob 4:13–14), or, like a kindergarten child whose retrieving parent seems a little late, concluding, "Man is alone in the universe."

Granted, some sincerely wish for more power in order to do good, but only a few individuals are good enough to be powerful. But craving power and

the spotlight sucks out the spiritual oxygen, leaving some “past feeling” (Ephesians 4:19; 1 Nephi 17:45; Moroni 9:20). Strangely, though desensitized, some are still able to hear the beckoning click of a TV camera at a hundred yards. Doesn’t the churning over the places of mortal power remind us of the childhood game of musical chairs?

Actually, discipleship may keep the honors of the world from us. As Balak told Balaam, “I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour” (Numbers 24:11–12).

The rouge of recognition is so easily smeared anyway. We wince as we watch those once flattered by the world, like Judas, being used, despised, and discarded (see Matthew 27:3–5; D&C 121:20). Nevertheless, when some of these are ready, even their hands need to be lifted up (see Hebrews 12:12; D&C 81:5).

Thus, while granting the deserved role of commendation and praise, we must not forget the words of Jesus about the recipients of mortal honors: “They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2, 5).

There is an underlying reason, brothers and sisters, for all this fleetingness: those who bestow the transitory things of the world are themselves transients. They cannot confer that which is lasting because they do not possess it! Some, so sensing and seeing so little, want to have it all now!

### **Suggestions for overcoming the world**

Such lamentations as the foregoing lead to several specific suggestions.

#### *Access the gifts of the Holy Ghost*

To begin with, no remedy is more powerful than accessing—more than we do—the gifts of the Holy Ghost!

#### *Honor the place of the family*

Let us likewise honor the special place of the family. As James Q. Wilson wrote:

“We learn to cope with the people of this world because we learn to cope with the members of our family. Those who flee the family flee the world; bereft of the [family’s] affection, tutelage, and challenges, they are unprepared for the [world’s] tests, judgments, and demands” (*The Moral Sense* [1993], 163).

How ironical that some go “into a far country” (Luke 15:13), leaving the nourishing family garden—in which there may be some weeds—and go into a desert with its tumbling sagebrush.

#### *Develop personal righteousness*

Personal righteousness, worship, prayer, and scripture study are so crucial in order to “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). Be wary, therefore, when some demand public tolerance for whatever their private indulgences are!

#### *Choose good friends*

Whether young or old, we need to be good friends, but also to pick our friends carefully. By choosing the Lord *first*, choosing one’s friends becomes easier and much safer. Consider the contrasting friendships in the city of Enoch compared to peers in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah! The citizens of the city of Enoch chose Jesus and a way of life, then became everlasting friends. So much depends on whom and what we seek *first*.

#### *Flee from threatening situations*

We can also emulate the spiritual reflexes of Joseph in Egypt: when he was tempted, “he . . . fled” (Genesis 39:12), showing both courage and good legs!

Youth and adults must get out of circumstances and situations which threaten.

The returning prodigals are never numerous enough, but regularly some come back from "a far country" (Luke 15:13). Of course, it is better if we are humbled "because of the word" rather than being compelled by circumstances, yet the latter may do! (see Alma 32:13-14). Famine can induce spiritual hunger.

Like the prodigal son, we too can go to "a far country," which may be no further away than a vile rock concert. The distance to "a far country" is not to be measured by miles but by how far our hearts and minds are from Jesus! (see Mosiah 5:13). Fidelity, not geography, really determines the distance!

Even with all of the world's powerful tugs and pulls, spiritual feelings can and do assert themselves anyway. Doubts of doubt can intrude. All the quick fixes do not really cure the emptiness and boredom of secularism.

Further, some who laboriously scale the secular heights find, after all, that they are only squatting atop a small mound of sand! They have worked so hard to get there!

But why covet wealth anyway, if we only "spend money for that which is of no worth . . . [and] which cannot satisfy"? (2 Nephi 9:51).

### *Be loving and patient*

Like Jesus, we can decide, daily or instantly, to give no heed to temptation (see D&C 20:22). We can respond to irritation with a smile instead of a scowl, or by giving warm praise instead of icy indifference. By our being understanding instead of abrupt, others, in turn, may decide to hold on a little longer rather than to give way. Love, patience, and meekness can be just as contagious as rudeness and crudeness.

We can also allow for redemptive turbulence, individually and generally (see 2 Nephi 28:19). Hearts set so much upon the things of the world may have to be broken (see D&C 121:35). Preoccupied minds far from Him may be jolted by a "heads up" (see Mosiah 5:13).

### *Tell the world to "stand aside"*

Many individuals preoccupied by the cares of the world are not necessarily in *transgression*. But they certainly are in *diversion* and thus waste "the days of [their] probation" (2 Nephi 9:27). Yet some proudly live "without God in the world" (Alma 41:11), with gates and doors locked from the inside!

Mark it down, brothers and sisters: people too caught up in themselves will inevitably let other people down!

Let us adopt the attitude recommended by President Brigham Young: "Say to the fields, . . . flocks, . . . herds, . . . gold, . . . silver, . . . goods, . . . chattels, . . . tenements, . . . possessions, and to all the world, stand aside; get away from my thoughts, for I am going up to worship the Lord" (*Deseret News*, 5 Jan. 1854, 2). There are so many ways to say to the world, "Stand aside."

### *Make even small decisions well*

Periodically, husbands and wives can reason together, taking inventory. Minor corrections may be needed, and besides, such conversations can be more precious than we know. Alas, so many couples are too busy.

Moments are the molecules that make up eternity! Years ago, President Hinckley counseled:

"It is not so much the major events as the small day-to-day decisions that map the course of our living. . . . Our lives are, in reality, the sum total of our seem-

ingly unimportant decisions and of our capacity to live by those decisions" (*Caesar, Circus, or Christ?* Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [26 Oct. 1965], 3).

### *Repent of errors and try again*

Mercifully, our errors can soon be swallowed up by resilient repentance, showing the faith to try again—whether in a task or in a relationship. Such resilience is really an affirmation of our true identities! Spirit sons and daughters of God need not be permanently put down when lifted up by Jesus' Atonement. Christ's infinite Atonement thus applies to our finite failures! Hence, the pleading of that special hymn:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
Seal it for thy courts above.  
["Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70]

It also helps in resisting the tugs and pulls of the world if we, though imperfect, know that currently the course of our life is generally acceptable to the Lord (see *Lectures on Faith* [1985], 67). With sufficient dedication, those quiet assurances can come!

### *Focus on who we are, not just on what we do*

The validation of our worth really comes from knowing *who we are*, not solely from *what we do*. Jesus' searching words remain: "What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27; see also Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48).

Of course, worthwhile doing enhances our character and capacity, but mortal circumstances and opportunities differ so greatly. But amid these differences, we can still become more like Christ in our capacity *to be*—more loving, meek, patient, and submissive.

By paying more attention to what *we are* rather than exclusively to what *we do*, our public and our private persons will be the same—the man or the woman of Christ. Our intrinsic value is *not dependent* upon mortal acclaim anyway; in fact, the world may actually see us as weak and foolish (see 1 Corinthians 1:27). Countering, however, are divine affirmations, including this one: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

God is infinitely more interested in our having a place in His kingdom than with our spot on a mortal organizational chart. We may brood over our personal span of control, but He is concerned with our capacity for self-control. Father wants us to come home, bringing our real résumés—ourselves!

Even so, our mortal jealousies still occur regularly over money, turf, a slight, or the "robes" and the "fatted calf" given to others (see Luke 15:22–23).

True belonging occurs when we know who we are and to whom we really belong! Remember the popular lines in *Fiddler on the Roof* about Anatevka? There, "everyone knows *who* he is and *what* God expects him to *do*" (Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* [1964], 3; italics added), to which might be added "and what God expects him to *be*."

### *See things as they really are*

Yes, we are free to choose the mortal perks with their short shelf life. However, ahead lies that great moment when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ! (see Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104). Then the galleries and the mortal thrones will be empty. Even the great and spacious building will fall—and resoundingly! (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28). Then too, those who have lived without God in the world will confess that God is God! (see Mosiah 27:31). Meanwhile, His character and attributes should evoke adoration and emulation from us.

Isn't it marvelous, brothers and sisters, that God, *who knows everything*, still spends time listening to our prayers? Compared to that cosmic fact, what does the world really have to offer us? One round of applause, one fleeting moment of adulation, or an approving glance from a phantom Caesar?

May God bless us to see things as they really are and as they really will be

(see Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24), and may we give the glory and honor and praise unto God, which I now do. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

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The choir sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

Elder Merrill C. Oaks offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 7, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kanesville, and Riverdale, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir. Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I don't suppose there has ever been a gathering

of priesthood such as that which we have tonight.

The singing for this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kanesville, and Riverdale, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder David E. Sorensen offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will sing "My Redeemer Lives," following which Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."

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## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### **“Sanctify yourselves”**

Thank you, President Hinckley, for penning the lyrics to that hymn.

Brethren, I love and revere the priesthood of God, and I am honored to stand with those of you who bear it. My message tonight is intended for all of us, whatever our age or years of service, but I do wish to speak specifically to the deacons, teachers, and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood and the young, newly ordained elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood—you of the rising generation, you who must be ready to use your priesthood, often at times and in ways you did not anticipate.

In that spirit my call to you tonight is something of the call Joshua gave to an earlier generation of priesthood bearers, young men and those not so young, who needed to perform a miracle in their time. To these who would need to complete ancient Israel's most formidable task—recapturing and repossessing their promised land of old—Joshua said, “Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Recovery of a young football player**

Let me share a story with you suggesting how soon and how unexpectedly those tomorrows can come and in some cases how little time you may have to make hasty, belated preparation.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, September 30, 1998, just two years ago last week, a Little League football team in Inkom, Idaho, was out on the field for its midweek practice. They had completed their warm-ups and were starting to run a few plays from scrimmage. Dark clouds were gathering, as they sometimes do in the fall, and it began to rain lightly, but that was of no concern to a group of boys who loved playing football.

Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, an absolutely deafening crack of thunder

split the air, inseparable from the flash of lightning that illuminated, literally electrified, the entire scene.

At that very moment a young friend of mine, A. J. Edwards, then a deacon in the Portneuf Ward of the McCammon Idaho Stake, was ready for the ball on a handoff that was sure to be a touchdown in this little intersquad bit of horseplay. But the lightning that had illuminated earth and sky struck A. J. Edwards from the crown of his football helmet to the soles of his shoes.

The impact of the strike stunned all the players, knocking a few to the ground, leaving one player temporarily without his sight and virtually all the rest of the players dazed and shaken. Instinctively they started running for the concrete pavilion adjacent to the park. Some of the boys began to cry. Many of them fell to their knees and began to pray. Through it all, A. J. Edwards lay motionless on the field.

Brother David Johnson of the Rapid Creek Ward, McCammon Idaho Stake, rushed to the player's side. He shouted to coach and fellow ward member Rex Shaffer, “I can't get a pulse. He's in cardiac arrest.” These two men, rather miraculously both trained emergency medical technicians, started a life-against-death effort in CPR.

Cradling A. J.'s head as the men worked was the young defensive coach of the team, 18-year-old Bryce Reynolds, a member of the Mountain View Ward, McCammon Idaho Stake. As he watched Brother Johnson and Brother Shaffer urgently applying CPR, he had an impression. I am confident it was a revelation from heaven in every sense of the word. He remembered vividly a priesthood blessing that the bishop had once given his grandfather following an equally tragic and equally life-threatening accident years earlier. Now, as he held this

young deacon in his arms, he realized that for the first time in his life he needed to use his newly conferred Melchizedek Priesthood in a similar way. In anticipation of his 19th birthday and forthcoming call to serve a mission, young Bryce Reynolds had been ordained an elder just 39 days earlier.

Whether he audibly spoke the words or only uttered them under his breath, Elder Reynolds said, "A. J. Edwards, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood which I hold, I bless you that you will be OK. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." As Bryce Reynolds closed that brief but fervent blessing offered in the language of an 18-year-old, A. J. Edwards drew his first renewed breath.

The ongoing prayers, miracles, and additional priesthood blessings of that entire experience—including a high-speed ambulance drive to Pocatello and a near-hopeless LifeFlight to the burn center at the University of Utah—all of that the Edwards family can share with us at a later time. It is sufficient to say that a very healthy and very robust A. J. Edwards is in the audience tonight with his father as my special guests. I also recently talked on the telephone with Elder Bryce Reynolds, who has been serving faithfully in the Texas Dallas Mission for the past 17 months. I love these two wonderful young men.

### **Be ready and worthy to use priesthood**

Now, my young friends of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, not every prayer is answered so immediately, and not every priesthood declaration can command the renewal or the sustaining of life. Sometimes the will of God is otherwise. But, young men, you will learn, if you have not already, that in frightening, even perilous moments, your faith and your priesthood will demand the very best of you and the best you can call down from heaven. You Aaronic Priesthood

boys will not use your priesthood in exactly the same way an ordained elder uses the Melchizedek, but all priesthood bearers must be instruments in the hand of God, and to be so, you must, as Joshua said, "sanctify yourselves." You must be ready and worthy to act.

### **"Be ye clean"**

That is why the Lord repeatedly says in the scriptures, "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Let me tell you what that phrase "bear the vessels of the Lord" means. Anciently it had at least two meanings, both related to the work of the priesthood.

The first refers to the recovery and return to Jerusalem of various temple implements that had been carried into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. In physically handling the return of these items, those early brethren were reminded by the Lord of the sanctity of anything related to the temple. Therefore, as they carried back to their homeland these various bowls, basins, cups, and other vessels, they themselves were to be as clean as the ceremonial instruments they bore.<sup>3</sup>

The second meaning is related to the first. Similar bowls and implements were used for ritual purification in the home. The Apostle Paul, writing to his young friend Timothy, said of these, "In a great house there are . . . vessels of gold and of silver, . . . of wood and of earth"—these means of washing and cleansing common in the time of the Savior. But Paul goes on to say, "If a man . . . purge himself [of unworthiness], *he shall be a vessel . . . sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*" Therefore, Paul says, "Flee . . . youthful lusts: . . . follow righteousness, . . . call on the Lord out of a pure heart."<sup>4</sup>

In both of these biblical accounts the message is that as priesthood bearers, not only are we to *handle* sacred vessels and emblems of God's power—think of preparing, blessing, and passing the sacra-

ment, for example—but we are also to *be* a sanctified instrument. Partly because of what we are to *do* but more importantly because of what we are to *be*, the prophets and apostles tell us to “flee . . . youthful lusts” and “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” They tell us to be clean.

### **Danger of today's amusements**

Now, we live in an age when that cleanliness is more and more difficult to preserve. With modern technology, even your youngest brothers and sisters can be carried virtually around the world before they are old enough to ride a tricycle safely across the street. What were in my generation carefree moments of moviegoing, TV watching, and magazine reading have now, with the additional availability of VCRs, the Internet, and personal computers, become *amusements* fraught with genuine moral danger. I put the word *amusements* in italics. Did you know that the original Latin meaning of the word *amusement* is “a diversion of the mind intended to deceive”? Unfortunately that is largely what “amusements” in our day have again become in the hands of the arch deceiver.

Recently I read an author who said: “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. [That is because] there is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”<sup>5</sup> I believe that to be absolutely true, and no such claiming and counterclaiming anywhere is more crucial and conspicuous than that being waged for the minds and morals, the personal purity of the young.

### **Self-control—our only *real* control**

Brethren, part of my warning voice tonight is that this will only get worse. It seems that the door to permissiveness, the door to lewdness and vulgarity and obscenity swings only one way. It only

opens farther and farther; it never seems to swing back. Individuals can choose to close it, but it is certain, historically speaking, that public appetite and public policy will not close it. No, in the moral realm the only real control you have is self-control.

Brethren, if you are struggling with self-control in what you look at or listen to, in what you say or what you do, I ask you to pray to your Father in Heaven for help. Pray to Him as Enos did, who wrestled before God and struggled mightily in the spirit.<sup>6</sup> Wrestle like Jacob did with the angel, refusing to let go until a blessing had come.<sup>7</sup> Talk to your mom and dad. Talk to your bishop. Get the best help you can from all the good people who surround you. Avoid at all costs others who would tempt you, weaken your will, or perpetuate the problem. If anyone does not feel fully worthy tonight, he can become worthy through repentance and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior wept and bled and died for you. He has given everything for your happiness and salvation. He certainly is not going to withhold help from you now!

Then you can help others to whom you are sent, now and in the future, as one holding the priesthood of God. You can then, as a missionary, be what the Lord described as “a physician [to] the church.”<sup>8</sup>

### **“The world is too much with us”**

Young men, we love you. We worry about you and want to help you every way we can. Nearly 200 years ago William Wordsworth wrote that “the world is too much with us.”<sup>9</sup> What on earth would he say about the encroachments pressing in on your souls and sensibilities today? In addressing some of these problems facing you, we are mindful that an absolute multitude of young men is faithfully living the gospel and standing resolutely before the Lord. I am sure that multitude includes the overwhelming majority of all



who are listening here tonight. But the cautions we give to the few are important reminders even to the faithful.

### Be ready in time of critical need

In the most difficult and discouraging days of World War II, Winston Churchill said to the people of England:

"To every man there comes . . . that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a special thing unique to him and fitted to his talent. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for the work which would be his finest hour."

In an even more serious kind of spiritual warfare, brethren, the day may come—indeed, I am certain *will* come—when in an unexpected circumstance or a time of critical need, lightning will strike, so to speak, and the future will be in your hands. Be ready when that day comes. Be strong. Always be clean. Respect and revere the priesthood that you hold, tonight and forever.

I bear witness of this work, of the power we have been given to direct it,

and of the need to be worthy in administering it. Brethren, I testify that the call in every age—and especially in our age—is Joshua's call: "Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Joshua 3:5.
2. Isaiah 52:11; see also 3 Nephi 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 38:42; 133:5.
3. See 2 Kings 25:14–15; Ezra 1:5–11.
4. 2 Timothy 2:20–22; italics added.
5. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (1967), 33.
6. See Enos 1:2–10.
7. See Genesis 32:24–26.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 31:10.
9. "The World Is Too Much with Us," line 1.

### President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Our next speaker will be Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

## Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

### Sustaining the prophet

Brethren, this evening I would like to share an experience that has great meaning to me. During the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, April 6, 1986, a solemn assembly took place, the purpose of which was to sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and 13th President of the Church. All Church members were invited to participate either by being in the Tabernacle or by means of radio or TV. As a family, we

accepted the invitation to participate in our home. Except for one son then serving a mission, all were present—one high priest, one priest, one deacon, an 11-year-old son, and my wife, LeAnn. By direction and in turn, each of us who held the priesthood stood; then all of us together as a family stood to sustain President Benson.

Why does the Lord call prophets, seers, and revelators? And how do we sustain them?

## Prophets bear testimony of Christ

The fundamental responsibility of prophets, seers, and revelators, all of whom bear apostolic authority, is to bear certain testimony of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world. This basic call to be a special witness of His name has remained constant whenever Apostles have been on the earth. This testimony, borne of the Holy Ghost through revelation, was the heart of the New Testament Church and is the heart of the Church today.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter bore pure testimony that Jesus of Nazareth was “taken, . . . crucified and slain” and that He was “raised up, having loosed the pains of death,” of which the Apostles were all witnesses.<sup>1</sup> So powerful was this testimony of Jesus Christ, spoken by a living Apostle, that hearts were changed and about 3,000 people were baptized for the remission of their sins. We read that these new converts “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”<sup>2</sup>

This account in the book of Acts gives deep spiritual meaning to the words that Paul later wrote to the Ephesians—that those who embrace the gospel become “the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>3</sup>

In this dispensation of restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with this divinely mandated responsibility to bear certain witness of the name of Jesus Christ to all the world, the living Apostles of our day have given their testimony. In the proclamation “The Living Christ,” they de-

clare the restoration of His priesthood and Church, testify of His Second Coming, and “bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Ancient as well as modern Apostles bear witness of the name of Jesus Christ because “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>6</sup>

## Prophets teach the word of God

Secondly, prophets, seers, and revelators teach the word of God in clarity that all His children may benefit and be blessed through obedience to their teachings. Of Joseph Fielding Smith, President Hinckley wrote: “He did speak straightforwardly and without equivocation. Such is the mission of a prophet.”<sup>7</sup>

The need for prophetic teachers who know the revealed word of God and who speak it directly and without apology is as important in our day as it has ever been. In a confusing world of conflicting ideas, shifting values, and selfish desire for power, well might we study carefully the conversation between Philip and the man from Ethiopia. As this man was reading the scriptures, Philip ran to him and asked: “Understandest thou what thou readeest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?”<sup>8</sup>

To the people of the Lord, Alma taught:

“Trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments. . . .

“ . . . And none were consecrated except they were just men.

“Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness.”<sup>9</sup>

These words describe perfectly the prophets, seers, and revelators who lead this Church. They speak the words of

God with clarity, authority, and understanding.

### **Prophets see beyond the present**

Thirdly, we sustain 15 men not only as prophets and revelators but as seers also. The presence of seers among us is not much spoken of, yet the ability to see beyond the present lends power and authority to apostolic testimony and teaching. I refer to two scriptures that speak of this important and unique calling. Ammon teaches King Limhi in the Book of Mormon that "a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, . . . and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known."<sup>10</sup>

In the Pearl of Great Price we read that the Lord instructed Enoch to anoint his eyes with clay and wash them, that he could see. Enoch did so. "And he beheld . . . things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people."<sup>11</sup>

To the question of what our modern seers are making known that otherwise could not be known and what they are seeing that is not visible to the natural eye, I make a very simple response. Listen, ponder, and prayerfully consider what they are teaching and what they are doing. As you do so, a pattern emerges that reveals much, and therein will the answer to this question be found.

### **Sustain prophets by heeding them**

Now returning to my family's experience with the solemn assembly. At the completion of the voting, President Hinkle, who was conducting, said: "Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote. We feel that you have sustained us not only with your hands but also with your hearts and your faith and prayers,

which we so urgently need, and pray that you will continue to do so."<sup>12</sup> Brethren, our sustaining support of prophets, seers, and revelators is not in the upraised hand alone, but more so in our courage, testimony, and faith to listen to, heed, and follow them.

But I ask myself, if this is so clear, why is it so difficult? There may seem to be many answers to this, but I think, in reality, there is only one. Most of the difficulty can be traced to our desire to be more acceptable to the world than to God.

The teachings of a living prophet are often contrary to the trends of the world. We, as Latter-day Saints and the holders of the priesthood of God, must understand that there is an expanding gulf between the standards of the world and those of the gospel and kingdom of God, and that living prophets will always teach the standards of God. As much as we may want the gospel to accommodate to the world, it can't, it won't, it never has, and it never will.

So much of our modern world is based on self-indulgence, immediate gain and satisfaction, and social acceptance at all cost. The gospel and kingdom of God are so much more than this. Among the characteristics God prizes are patience, long-suffering, endurance, kindness, and brotherly love, none of which is short-term or developed in a moment.

Brethren, to have living prophets, seers, and revelators among us and not listen to them is no better than not having them at all. The prophet Jacob hoped that the words written with so much difficulty on the plates by righteous men would be received by their children with thankful hearts and that they might learn from them "with joy and not with sorrow."<sup>13</sup> May we be wise enough to do likewise with the words of the living prophets, seers, and revelators of our time.

I bear witness of the saving power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I also bear witness of living apostles, prophets,

seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Acts 2:23–24; see also verse 32.
2. Acts 2:42.
3. Ephesians 2:20.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 121.
5. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.
6. Mosiah 3:17.
7. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 525.
8. Acts 8:30–31.
9. Mosiah 23:14, 17–18.
10. Mosiah 8:17.
11. Moses 6:36; see also verse 35.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 75.
13. Jacob 4:3.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### A summer snipe hunt

As a young man having just finished my first year of college and needing to earn money for a desired mission, I spent the summer working at the new Jackson Lake Lodge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Many college-age youths came to work in that pristine, beautiful area.

One such person was Jill, a young woman from San Francisco, California. Feeling that a young woman from a big city might be a little bit naive about her new environment, I and a few friends felt it our obligation to teach her about the ways of the real West. We decided to take her on a "snipe hunt." For those of you who may not be familiar with a snipe hunt, it is a practical joke, as there is no such thing as a snipe, at least not in the western United States. The tools necessary for a snipe hunt are a stick and a cloth bag. The "hunter" is told to go through the brush, beating the bushes with a stick while calling the snipe in a high-pitched, ridiculous voice. The non-existent snipes are thus to be driven into the cloth bag.

We gave Jill her cloth bag and a stick and an area to hunt across the hill. The plan was to return to our starting point in about 15 minutes, at which time we would supposedly count our snipes.

When she did not return at the appointed time, we gloated and took delight in the seriousness with which she took her hunt. After about 30 minutes, we felt it was time to rescue her, explain the joke, have a good laugh, and all go to dinner. However, it became apparent that she had taken her snipe hunt more seriously than we had expected—she was not to be found in her assigned area. After searching rather extensively and still finding no evidence of her, we began moving into the woods, calling for her at the top of our voices, but to no avail.

Hoping she might have gone back to her dormitory, we returned and asked some young women to search for her there, but this also was to no avail. It was now turning dark, and our concern heightened. We enlisted all the young men we could from the boys' dormitory and with flashlights continued the search deep into the woods.

Well into the darkness of night—frightened, concerned, and hoarse from calling—we decided it was now time to report our ridiculous deed to the park rangers. While we were standing in front of the dorms, trying to determine which brave soul would have the privilege of reporting her disappearance, Jill suddenly appeared—not from her dormitory, but rather from that of a friend with whom

she had enjoyed dinner (which we incidentally missed) and a comfortable evening with her friends. Her first words to us as she approached said it all: "How do you fellows like hunting *snipe hunters*?" Well, so much for big city naïveté, and so much for the ways of the real West. The joke was on us, and I have never had a desire for any more snipe hunting.

### Satan's snipe hunt

But there is another "snipe hunt" going on all around us, and we may be the naive victims. It is not a practical joke, and it will not end with a good laugh and a little warm fellowship. Satan is the great deceiver, liar, and enemy to all that is good, including our happiness and our well-being. His great desire is to thwart our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness and make us "miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Being the very author and perpetrator of deceit, he in effect would invite us to join him in his snipe hunt, to fill our bags with excitement, fun, popularity, and the so-called good life. But his promises are as illusionary as the nonexistent snipe. What he really offers are lies, misery, spiritual degradation, and loss of self-worth.

Satan's sales pitch as he sends us off to fill our bags is, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). His invitation may seem enticing and convincing. Nephi describes his sales techniques as pacifying, flattering, and lulling as he declares, "All is well" (2 Nephi 28:21–22). Among other things Satan would have us put in our bags is immorality in all its forms, including pornography, language, dress, and behavior. But such evil deeds bring emotional distress, loss of spirituality, loss of self-respect, lost opportunity for a mission or temple marriage, and sometimes even unwanted pregnancy. Satan would enslave us by having us put drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive behaviors into our bags.

### How to recognize Satan's deceptions

Satan will tell us that these things are OK and that "everybody is doing it." He will tell us that they bring popularity and acceptance. Satan's lies can be very enticing, especially at that critical time in life when young people are craving acceptance and popularity.

However, there are certain clues to guide us as to what to avoid putting in our bags. You would recognize these clues because they are common and they are familiar—clues such as:

- "Everybody is doing it."
- "Nobody will know."
- "It is not really hurting anyone."
- "It won't hurt just this once."
- "So what?"
- "You can repent later and still go on a mission and be married in the temple."
- "Christ atoned for your sins; He will forgive you."

When such justifications are given either outright by others or subtly by the whisperings of the tempter, you are warned. Don't listen. Don't experiment. Just don't do it.

### God's warnings about Satan's deceit

God, our loving Father, the source of all truth, has warned us of Satan's deceit. Listen to what the Lord has said through His prophets:

• Paul taught the Saints in Corinth: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

• Jacob warned the Nephites of old: "But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God" (Jacob 3:3).

• Alma reminded his wayward son, Corianton, regarding sexual impurity: "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord?" (Alma 39:5). And then further to Corianton, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Lest we think these warnings were for biblical times only, listen to what our modern-day prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said:

"Notwithstanding the so-called 'new morality,' notwithstanding the much-discussed changes in moral standards, there is no adequate substitute for virtue. God's standards may be challenged everywhere throughout the world, *but God has not abrogated his commandments*" ("With All Thy Getting Get Understanding," *Ensign*, Aug. 1988, 4; italics added).

### Discern and resist Satan's snipes

So we ask ourselves, "Who are we going to believe in our search for happiness and well-being?" Will it be Satan, the author of all lies and deceit, whose single objective is to destroy us? Or are we going to believe a loving Heavenly Father, who is the source of all truth and happiness, whose sole objective is rewarding us with His eternal love and joy?

We may come from humble circumstances, have limited education, and even have what we consider unimpressive worldly accomplishments. And because

of Satan's deceit, we may at times feel unimportant, insignificant, or incapable. But let us never forget—we are the ones chosen to hold the priesthood of God; we are His called, ordained representatives, and that makes us somebody.

Because of His priesthood, we are empowered. We are royalty. And we have the power to discern between Satan's snipes and God's true principles of happiness. Because we know who we are and because we are endowed with the Holy Spirit and empowered with His priesthood, we have the power to just say no: "No, Satan, I will not be a victim of your deceitful, vicious, and often deadly snipe hunt."

I testify that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10) and wickedness never will be happiness. I further testify that happiness and self-worth will come only from living the principles of Him who created the plan of happiness. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Faust's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Hope of Israel."

## President James E. Faust

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I express my love and appreciation for each of you. We are grateful for all you do to move this holy work forward in all of the world. I am humbled and honored to be one of you.

### Prepare to fight against evil

Even before the world began, a great war in heaven commenced between the forces of good and evil.<sup>1</sup> That war rages today ever more fiercely. Satan is still the

captain of the hosts of evil. He is still tempting us just as he did Moses, saying, "Son of man, worship me."<sup>2</sup> As priesthood holders we are marshaled into the great army of righteousness to combat the forces of Lucifer. Each of us needs to train ourselves to be bold, disciplined, and loyal men of the priesthood who are prepared with the proper weapons to fight against evil and to win. Paul said these weapons are "the breastplate of righteousness," "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."<sup>3</sup>

### **The enemy within ourselves**

Tonight I should like to speak about the battle that each of us has to wage within ourselves. President Joseph F. Smith taught us: "Our first enemy we will find within ourselves. It is a good thing to overcome that enemy first and bring ourselves into subjection to the will of the Father, and into strict obedience to the principles of life and salvation which he has given to the world for the salvation of men."<sup>4</sup>

In simple terms, this means that we need to strengthen the good within us and to overcome the temptations of Satan. The direction finder is sure. Alma tells us, "Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil."<sup>5</sup>

### **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde**

Robert Louis Stevenson captured this constant struggle between good and evil in the classic novel about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The story tells us that in the beginning "Dr. Jekyll is a highly respected London physician, a good and kindly man, who in his youth had showed inclinations toward evil which, however, he succeeded in suppressing. Interested in drugs, the doctor now chances upon one which enables him to change his external form to that of a repulsive dwarf,

the very embodiment of evil, whom he calls Mr. Hyde. A similar dose permits him to return to the form and personality of the benevolent doctor. Many times the doctor becomes Mr. Hyde, thereby giving this side of his nature more and more power. Jekyll finds it increasingly difficult to regain his virtuous entity and also finds himself occasionally becoming Hyde without the use of the drug."<sup>6</sup> In the character of Mr. Hyde, he commits murder, and when the drug will no longer restore him to the kindly Dr. Jekyll, the truth is discovered and Hyde kills himself. The misuse of drugs destroyed his life. So it can be in real life.

### **Do not use addictive substances**

Now, the key to never turning into an evil, wicked Mr. Hyde is to determine not to yield to destroying temptations. Never, never experiment with any addictive substance. Do not ever use tobacco in any form or take any other enslaving substances. Stay away from intoxicating liquor. Addictions bring tragic consequences that are hard to overcome.

### **Creed Haymond obeys the Word of Wisdom**

Blessings come from holding true to our principles. When I was the president of the Cottonwood stake, one of our stake patriarchs was Dr. Creed Haymond. He would occasionally bear strong testimony of the Word of Wisdom. As a young man he was the captain of the University of Pennsylvania track team. In 1919 Brother Haymond and his team were invited to participate in the annual Inter-Collegiate Association track meet. The night before the track meet, his coach, Lawson Robertson, who later coached several Olympic teams, instructed his team members to drink some sherry wine. In those days, coaches wrongly felt that wine was a tonic for muscles hardened through rigorous training. All the other team members

took the sherry, but Brother Haymond refused because his parents had taught him the Word of Wisdom. Brother Haymond became very anxious because he did not like to be disobedient to his coach. He was to compete against the fastest men in the world. What if he made a poor showing the next day? How could he face his coach?

The next day at the track meet the rest of the team members were very ill and performed poorly or were even too sick to run. Brother Haymond, however, felt well and won the 100- and 220-yard dashes. His coach told him, "You just ran the two hundred and twenty yards in the fastest time it has ever been run by any human being." That night and for the rest of his life, Creed Haymond was grateful for his simple faith in keeping the Word of Wisdom.<sup>7</sup>

### **Stay on the Lord's side of the line**

In the military service during World War II, I associated with some fine young men of great promise. But little by little, I saw some of them turn from the decent, God-fearing qualities of Dr. Jekyll and revert to the baseness of a Mr. Hyde. For some it began by drinking coffee because the water was foul, and the water decontamination pills had such an unpleasant taste. The coffee led some to take an occasional drink of beer. Every soldier serving overseas was allocated a ration of cigarettes and an occasional bottle of whiskey, which were worth considerable money.

President George Albert Smith once gave this advice: "If you cross to the devil's side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter's power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord."<sup>8</sup>

Some soldiers stayed on the safe side of the line and never experimented with nor trafficked in these addicting substances, even though they were given to

us free. But others would sample the cigarettes or alcohol as a diversion to the challenges of the war. A few were even drawn away into immorality, believing that the stress of war justified lowering their standards and letting the Mr. Hyde side of their personalities take over.

After the war, those who had become addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and immorality found that they could not readily shake off these bad habits. The young men who had started out with such potential crossed that line inch by inch, robbing themselves and their families of the promised happiness and experiencing instead divorce, broken families, and heartaches.

Those who never lowered their standards did not succumb to these addictions. They came through that stressful period of their lives stronger and more prepared to lead productive, exemplary, and happy lives as faithful fathers and grandfathers of righteous families. They have also served as honored and respected leaders in the Church and in the community.

### **Pornography is addictive and destructive**

Another false philosophy that appeals to the Mr. Hyde side of our natures is that peeking into pornography is harmless. This is a terrible deception. Pornography is as addictive as cocaine or any illegal drug. I recently received a heart-breaking letter from an excommunicated man whose soul is filled with sorrow and regret. With his permission I quote the following from his letter:

"I hope that this letter will confirm to any who have doubt that the path of destruction only reaps sorrow and grief, and no sin is worth this price."

He goes on to state: "I have brought grief and sorrow upon myself. Only now do I fully realize the great destruction that I have brought upon myself. No selfish or lustful desire is worth losing your Church membership for. I have brought



terrible grief to my wife and two wonderful children. I am grateful for my wife's great efforts to help me overcome my sins. My wife has been a victim of my sins and had to endure great sorrow and suffering. I long for the day that I can again be a member of the Lord's Church and for our family to be an eternal family."

The letter goes on to admit: "My sins are a direct result of my early childhood addiction to pornography. Without a doubt, pornography is addictive and is poison. Had I learned early in my life to apply the power of self-mastery, I would be a member of the Church today."

### **Deception of "premeditated repentance"**

One of Mr. Hyde's deceptions is what some erroneously call "premeditated repentance." There is no such doctrine in this Church. This may sound subtly appealing, but it is in fact pernicious and a false concept. Its objective is to persuade us that we can consciously and deliberately transgress with the forethought that quick repentance will permit us to enjoy the full blessings of the gospel, such as temple blessings or a mission. True repentance can be a long, painful process. This foolish doctrine was foreseen by Nephi:

"And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God."<sup>9</sup>

Of all those who teach this doctrine, the Lord says, "The blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them."<sup>10</sup> This is because all of our covenants must not only be received through ordinances but, to be eternal, must also be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.<sup>11</sup> This divine

stamp of approval is placed upon our ordinances and covenants only through faithfulness. The false idea of so-called premeditated repentance involves an element of deception, but the Holy Spirit of Promise cannot be deceived.

### **Shun hypocrisy**

Some people wear masks of decency and outward righteousness but live lives of deception, believing that, like Dr. Jekyll, they can live a double life and never be found out. James said, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."<sup>12</sup> In the Book of Mormon we read the account of Corianton, who went on a mission to the Zoramites with his father and brother. His double life caused him to forsake his ministry and his father to lament, "O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words."<sup>13</sup>

Hypocrites are those who outwardly wear masks that portray goodness but inwardly practice evil and deceit. Such were the scribes and Pharisees who came to the Savior pretending to be troubled in conscience and to be seeking His wise counsel. "Master," they said in flattering tone, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men."

With this devious approach they hoped to catch Him off guard as they asked: "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

Their question was loaded with wicked intent because one of the most offensive of the Roman laws was the poll tax. If He had answered, "Yes," the Pharisees could have painted Him as disloyal to the Jews. If His answer had been "No," He could have been denounced for sedition. "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?"

He asked them to show Him a penny and then asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They answered, "Caesar's," and He silenced the hypocritical Pharisees with that classic reply, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."<sup>14</sup> We are in the world, but we should not be overcome by the hypocrisy and deceit that are in it.

The truth about who we are and what we do will ultimately become known. The Lord has given us this sober reminder: "For their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed."<sup>15</sup> Because we live in a morally desensitized environment, we find it hard to say to ourselves and to others that our actions are not right.

### Put the power of the priesthood to work

Brethren, we can shield ourselves against the enemy within each of us by using the protective mantle of the priesthood of God. Individually we need to put the great powers of the holy priesthood to work in our lives. This means using this divine agency daily to bless the lives of others as we do our home teaching, perform ordinances, or hold family home evening.

Collectively, we have the mission to bring the message of salvation to the world, which mission we carry out under the direction of our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, who holds all of the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time. But we cannot fulfill this mission unless each of us wins the battle within ourselves. In so doing we will be able to put on the whole armor of God and receive the blessings contained in the oath and covenant of the priesthood. The Lord has promised:

"All they who receive this priesthood receive me, . . .

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him."<sup>16</sup>

Exaltation in the Father's kingdom includes kingdoms, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers which increase forever.<sup>17</sup> That we may all strive to overcome the enemy within so that we can receive these blessings, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Revelation 12:4-9; Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 3:24-28; Doctrine and Covenants 29:36-38; Isaiah 14:12-20; Luke 10:18.
2. Moses 1:12.
3. Ephesians 6:14, 16-17.
4. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 253.
5. Alma 5:40.
6. In Hiram Haydn and Edmund Fuller, comps., *Thesaurus of Book Digests* (1949), 206.
7. See Joseph J. Cannon, "Speed and the Spirit," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1928, 1001-7.
8. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 43.
9. 2 Nephi 28:8.
10. 2 Nephi 28:10.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
12. James 1:8.
13. Alma 39:11.
14. Matthew 22:16-21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 1:3.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:35, 37-38.
17. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 63.

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The choir and congregation sang "Hope of Israel."

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### President Hinckley

President Faust has just spoken to us. We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### **"Let every man learn his duty"**

What a privilege is mine to stand before you tonight in this magnificent Conference Center and in assemblies throughout the world. What a mighty body of priesthood!

For a text, I turn to the words spoken through the Prophet Joseph Smith and found in the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. They apply to all of us, whether bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>1</sup>

President Wilford Woodruff declared: "All the organizations of the priesthood have power. The deacon has power, through the priesthood which he holds. So has the teacher. They have power to go before the Lord and have their prayers heard and answered, as well as the prophet, the seer, or the revelator has. . . . It is by this priesthood that men have ordinances conferred upon them, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are redeemed. For this purpose has it been revealed and sealed upon our heads."<sup>2</sup>

### **Magnifying the priesthood as a deacon**

Those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood should be given opportunities to magnify their callings in that priesthood.

For example, when I was ordained a deacon, our bishopric stressed the sacred responsibility which was ours to pass the sacrament. Emphasized was proper dress, a dignified bearing, and the importance of being clean inside and out.

As we were taught the procedure in passing the sacrament, we were told that we were assisting every member in a renewal of the covenant of baptism, with its responsibilities and blessings. We were also told how we should assist a particular brother—Louis—who had a palsied

condition, that he might have the opportunity to partake of the sacred emblems.

How I remember being assigned to pass the sacrament to the row where Louis sat. I was hesitant as I approached this wonderful brother, and then I saw his smile and the eager expression of gratitude that showed his desire to partake. Holding the tray in my left hand, I took a piece of bread and pressed it to his open lips. The water was later served in the same way. I felt I was on holy ground. And indeed I was. The privilege to pass the sacrament to Louis made better deacons of us all.

### **Need for commitment and devotion**

Noble leaders of young men, you stand at the crossroads in the lives of those whom you teach. Inscribed on the wall of Stanford University Memorial Church is this truth: that we must teach our youth that all that is not eternal is too short, and all that is not infinite is too small.<sup>3</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley emphasized our responsibilities when he declared:

"In this work there must be commitment. There must be devotion. We are engaged in a great eternal struggle that concerns the very souls of the sons and daughters of God. We are not losing. We are winning. We will continue to win if we will be faithful and true. . . . There is nothing the Lord has asked of us that in faith we cannot accomplish."<sup>4</sup>

Brethren, is every ordained teacher given the assignment to home teach? What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A boy will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teach-

ing duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

We can strengthen one another; we have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When we have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that know and feel, we can reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility.

From Proverbs comes the counsel, and I love it, "Ponder the path of thy feet."<sup>5</sup>

I revere the priesthood of Almighty God. I have witnessed its power. I have seen its strength. I have marveled at the miracles it has wrought.

### **A priest performs a baptism with power**

Fifty years ago I knew a young man—even a priest—who held the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. Robert stuttered and stammered, void of control. He was self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and all others, and this impediment was devastating to him. Never did he fulfill an assignment; never would he look another in the eye; always he would gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the priestly responsibility to baptize another.

I sat next to Robert in the baptistry of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I leaned over and asked him how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost uncontrollably that he felt terrible, terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. Suddenly the clerk said, "Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest."

Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He spoke the words, "Nancy Ann

McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Not once did he stutter! Not once did he falter! A modern miracle had been witnessed. Robert then performed the baptismal ordinance for two or three other children in the same fashion.

In the dressing room, as I congratulated Robert, I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

To each of you brethren this evening, I testify that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

### **Help young men serve and build faith**

We must provide for our young men of the Aaronic Priesthood faith-building experiences. They seek to have the opportunity we have had to feel the Spirit of the Lord helping them.

I remember when I was assigned to give my first talk in church. I was given the liberty to choose my subject. I've always liked birds, so I thought of the Seagull Monument. In preparation, I went to Temple Square and looked at the monument. First I was attracted to all the coins in the water surrounding the monument. I wondered how they would be retrieved and who would retrieve them. I shall not confess any thought of taking them.

Then I looked upward at the seagulls atop that monument. I tried in my boyish mind to imagine what it would be like to be a pioneer watching the first year's growth of precious grain being devoured by crickets and then seeing those seagulls, with their lofty wings, descending upon the fields and eating the crickets. I loved the account. I sat down with a pencil in hand and wrote out a two-and-one-half-minute talk. I've never forgotten the sea-

gulls. I've never forgotten the crickets. I've never forgotten my knees knocking together as I gave that talk. I've never forgotten the experience of letting some of my innermost feelings be expressed verbally at the pulpit. I would urge that we give the Aaronic Priesthood an opportunity to think, to reason, and to serve.

President David O. McKay remarked: "God help us all to be true to the ideals of the priesthood—Aaronic and Melchizedek. May he help us to magnify our callings and to inspire men by our actions—not only members of the Church, but all men everywhere—to live higher and better lives, to help them all to be better husbands, better neighbors, better leaders, under all conditions."<sup>6</sup>

### **Look to the lighthouse of the Lord**

The world seems to have slipped from the moorings of safety and drifted from the harbor of peace. Permissiveness, immorality, pornography, and the power of peer pressure cause many to be tossed about on a sea of sin and crushed on the jagged reefs of lost opportunities, forfeited blessings, and shattered dreams.

Anxiously some may ask, "Is there a way to safety?" "Can someone guide me?" "Is there an escape from threatened destruction?" The answer, brethren, is a resounding "Yes!" Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what its beacon light can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. The lighthouse of the Lord sends forth signals readily recognized and never failing.

There are many such signals. I name but three. Note them carefully; exaltation may depend upon them—yours and mine:

First: Prayer provides peace.

Second: Faith precedes the miracle.

And third: Honesty is the best policy.

### **God hears our prayers**

First, concerning prayer—Adam prayed; Jesus prayed; Joseph prayed. We know the outcome of their prayers. He who notes the fall of a sparrow surely hears the pleadings of our hearts. Remember the promise:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."<sup>7</sup>

### **Cultivate faith**

Next, faith precedes the miracle. It has ever been so and shall ever be. It was not raining when Noah was commanded to build an ark. There was no visible ram in the thicket when Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Two heavenly personages were not yet seen when Joseph knelt and prayed. First came the test of faith—and then the miracle.

Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. Cast out doubt. Cultivate faith.

### **Learning about honesty in boot camp**

Finally, honesty is the best policy. I learned this truth in a dramatic manner during boot camp when I served in the navy 55 years ago. After those first three weeks of isolated training, the good news came that we would have our first liberty and could visit the city of San Diego. All of the men were most eager for this change of pace. As we prepared to board the buses to town, the petty officer commanded, "Now all of you men who know how to swim, you stand over here. You will go into San Diego for liberty. Those of you who don't know how to swim, you line up over there. You will go to the swimming pool and have a lesson on how to swim. Only when you learn to swim will you be permitted liberty."

I had been a swimmer most of my life, so I prepared to get on the bus to town; but then that petty officer said to our group, "One more thing before we board the buses. Follow me. Forward, march!" He marched us right to the swimming pool and had us take our clothing off and stand at the edge of the deep end of the pool. Then he directed, "Jump in and swim the length of the pool."

In that group, all of whom could supposedly swim (at least they had so declared) were about 10 who had thought they could fool somebody. They did not really know how to swim. In the water they went, voluntarily or otherwise. Catastrophe was at the door. The petty officers let them go under once or twice before they extended the bamboo pole to pull them to safety. With a few choice words, which I shall not repeat, they then said, "That will teach you to tell the truth!"

How grateful I was that I had told the truth, that I knew how to swim and made it easily to the other end of the pool. Such lessons teach us to be true—true to the faith, true to the Lord, true to our companions, true to all that is sacred and dear to us. That lesson has never left me.

The lighthouse of the Lord beckons us to safety and eternal joy as we are guided by its never-failing signals:

Prayer provides peace.

Faith precedes the miracle.

Honesty is the best policy.

I testify to you this night that Jesus is indeed the Christ, our beloved Redeemer and Savior. We are led by a prophet of almighty God—even President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know you share this same conviction.

#### **A priesthood holder sustains the prophet**

I close by reading a simple yet profound letter that reflects our love for our prophet and his leadership:

"Dear President Monson,

"Five years ago, President Hinckley was sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator. For me that was an extraordinary occasion which had to do with your calling for the sustaining vote of the Church.

"On that particular morning, I needed to haul hay for my livestock. I was enjoying conference on my truck radio. I had picked up the hay, backed into the barn, and was throwing down hay bales from the back of the truck. When you called for the brethren of the priesthood, 'wherever you are,' to prepare to sustain the prophet, I wondered if you meant me. I wondered if the Lord would be offended because I was sweaty and covered with dust. But I took you at your word and climbed down from the truck.

"I shall never forget standing alone in the barn, hat in hand, with sweat running down my face, with arm to the square to sustain President Hinckley. Tears mixed with sweat as I sat for several minutes contemplating this sacred occasion."

He continued:

"In our lives, we place ourselves at particular places when events of large consequence occur. That has happened to me, but none more spiritual or tender or memorable than that morning in the barn with only cows and a roan horse looking on.

"Sincerely,

"Clark Cederlof"

President Hinckley, we the priesthood brethren of the Church do love and sustain you. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. *Millennial Star*, 22 Sept. 1890, 595–96; capitalization modernized.
3. See Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 17.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 44.
5. Proverbs 4:26.

6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 97; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, 89.
7. James 1:5.

### President Hinckley

Our beloved friend President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us.

Prior to the Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning, there will be a brief cornerstone ceremony for the Conference Center at 9:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. *Music and the Spoken Word* will follow from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow that.

In preparation for the special dedicatory session, which will take place tomorrow morning in the opening session, we invite those in attendance and participating everywhere to have available a white handkerchief.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, please drive carefully and go with caution. There are so very many of us.

We express gratitude to this great chorus of young men and to those who have led them.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the chorus singing "Carry On." The benediction will then be offered by Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Counsel to fathers

It now becomes my pleasure to speak to you, and I hope I get through on time. I haven't timed this. The young men here tonight have received some wonderful counsel. I hope they have listened well and that their lives will be touched for good as a result.

I have chosen to speak to the fathers. You already know what I am going to talk about. Your wives have reminded you that this will be my subject tonight. I told them so at the Relief Society conference two weeks ago. I may say some of the same things to you that I said to them. I remind you that repetition is a law of learning.

Now, this is a subject which I take very seriously. It is a matter with which I am deeply concerned. I hope you will not take it lightly. It concerns the most precious asset you have. In terms of your happiness, in terms of the matters that make you proud or sad, nothing—I repeat, nothing—will have so profound an

effect on you as the way your children turn out.

You will either rejoice and boast of their accomplishments, or you will weep, head in hands, bereft and forlorn, if they become a disappointment or an embarrassment to you.

Many of you are in this meeting with your sons. I compliment you most warmly. I also compliment them. Both of you are in the very best of company. I am so proud of so many of our youth—both boys and girls. They are bright. They are self-disciplined. They take the long view. They have their heads on straight. Tonight they are in the place where they ought to be. Some are singing in this choir. They are seated in congregations across the world. They are serving missions. They are struggling through school, forgoing present pleasures for future opportunities. I admire them. I love them. And so do you. They are our sons and daughters.

I hope, I pray, I plead that they will continue on the path they are now following.

But sad to say, I am confident there are some of our young men who have slipped and are slipping into the foggy swamp of immorality, drugs, pornography, and failure. I hope they are a minority among their peers, but even the loss of one is too many.

### **"Bad things happen after 11:00"**

Fathers, you and their mothers have a responsibility you cannot escape. You are the fathers of your children. Your genetic pattern is forever etched in their genetic code.

While we are in this meeting, some of them, I am satisfied, are out cruising the town. They or their friends have cars to drive. In many cases their fathers bought them. They have handed them the keys and told them to have a good time.

They want to do something exciting. They think that wish is not satisfied with wholesome entertainment. They are drifters, looking to do something that will make them feel macho.

My officer friend told me recently of two young men in the backseat of a police car, handcuffs about their wrists. They had started out innocently enough that evening. Four of them in a car went about looking for excitement. They found it. Soon there was a fight. Then the police cars converged. The boys were detained and handcuffed.

These were good young men. They were not of the kind that go to the jail-house periodically. The mother of one of them had said to him before he left home, "Bad things happen after 11:00."

He had quickly learned the meaning of that statement. He was embarrassed. He was ashamed to face his mother.

### **Dangerous practices**

I told the Relief Society of secret underground drug parties that go by the name of Rave. Here, with flashing lights

and noisy music, if it can be called that, young men and women dance and sway. They sell and buy drugs. The drugs are called Ecstasy. They are a derivative of methamphetamine. The dancers suck on babies' pacifiers because the drug makes them grind their teeth. The hot music and the sultry dancing go on until 7:30 of a Sunday morning. What does it all lead to? Nowhere. It is a dead end.

Now there has developed another practice in this search for something new and different and riskier. They choke one another. Boys choke girls until they pass out. At a local school the other day a girl with a health problem was choked until she was unconscious. Only the speedy action of paramedics saved her life.

Are boys involved in such ridiculous practices aware of the fact that their prank may lead to a charge of manslaughter? If that should happen, their lives would be ruined forever.

### **Stay away from pornography**

If they want to get involved in pornography, they can do so very easily. They can pick up the phone and dial a number with which they are familiar. They can sit at a computer and revel in cyberspace filth.

I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit forming. It will take a young man or woman down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished.

I regret to say that many fathers themselves like to hear the siren song of those who peddle filth. Some of them also work the Internet for that which is lewd and lascivious. If there be any man within the sound of my voice who is involved in this or who is moving in this direction, I plead with you to get it out of your life. Get away from it. Stay away



from it. Otherwise it will become an obsession. It will destroy your home life. It will destroy your marriage. It will take the good and beautiful out of your family relationships and replace these with ugliness and suspicion.

To you young men, and to the young women who are your associates, I plead with you not to befoul your minds with this ugly and vicious stuff. It is designed to titillate you, to absorb you into its net. It will take the beautiful out of your life. It will lead you into the dark and ugly.

A recent magazine article contains the story of a 12-year-old girl who got hooked on the Internet. In a chat room she met an admirer. One thing led to another until the discussion became sexually explicit. As she conversed with him, she thought he was a boy of about her own age.

When she met him, she found "a tall, overweight gray-haired man." He was a vicious predator, a scheming pedophile. Her mother, with the help of the FBI, saved her from what might have been a tragedy of the worst kind (see Stephanie Mansfield, "The Avengers Online," *Reader's Digest*, Jan. 2000, 100–104).

### **Youth need help in resisting temptation**

Our youth find this tempting stuff all about them. They need the help of their parents in resisting it. They need a tremendous amount of self-control. They need the strength of good friends. They need prayer to fortify them against this flood tide of filth.

The problem of parental direction of sons and daughters is not new. It is perhaps more acute than it has ever been, but every generation has faced some aspect of it.

### **The Lord's rebuke of Joseph Smith**

In 1833 the Lord Himself rebuked Joseph Smith and his counselors and the Presiding Bishop. To the Prophet Joseph

He said in language clear and unmistakable, as He had said to others:

"You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;

"Your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place" (D&C 93:47–48).

Specifically what brought about these rebukes, I do not know. But I do know that the situation was serious enough and its future fraught with sufficient danger for the Lord Himself to speak with clarity and warning.

### **Listen, be patient, and be prayerful**

I think He likewise speaks to us with clarity and warning. My heart reaches out to our youth, who in many cases must walk a very lonely road. They find themselves in the midst of these evils. I hope they can share their burden with you, their fathers and mothers. I hope that you will listen, that you will be patient and understanding, that you will draw them to you and comfort and sustain them in their loneliness. Pray for direction. Pray for patience. Pray for the strength to love even though the offense may have been serious. Pray for understanding and kindness and, above all, for wisdom and inspiration.

### **Teach children the ways of the Lord**

I believe this to be the most marvelous age in all the history of the world. For some reason you and I have been permitted to come on the scene at this time when there is such a great flowering of knowledge. What a tragedy it is, what a bleak and terrible thing to witness a son or daughter on whom you counted so much walk the tortuous path that leads down to hell. On the other hand, what a glorious and beautiful thing it is to see the child of your dreams walk with head

up, standing tall, unafraid, and with confidence, taking advantage of the tremendous opportunities that open around him or her. Isaiah said, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

So lead your sons and daughters, so guide and direct them from the time they are very small, so teach them in the ways of the Lord, that peace will be their companion throughout life.

### **What to teach sons and daughters**

I mentioned to the Relief Society women several specific things that they ought to teach their sons and daughters. I repeat them briefly, perhaps in different language.

*The first is to encourage them to develop good friendships.* Every boy or girl longs for friends. No one wishes to walk alone. The warmth, the comfort, the camaraderie of a friend mean everything to a boy or girl. That friend can be either an influence for good or an influence for evil. The street gangs which are so vicious are an example of friendships gone awry. Conversely, the association of young people in church and their mingling in school with those of their own kind will lead them to do well and to excel in their endeavors. Open your homes to the friends of your children. If you find they have big appetites, close your eyes and let them eat. Make your children's friends your friends.

*Teach them the importance of education.* The Lord has enjoined upon this people the responsibility to train their minds that they may be equipped to serve in the society of which they will become a part. The Church will be blessed by reason of their excellence. Furthermore, they will be amply rewarded for the effort they make.

I read from a clipping I made the other day:

"The latest Census information . . . indicated the annual wage for someone

without a degree and no high school diploma stood at little more than \$16,000 nationally [in 1997]. The jump wasn't much higher for a high school diploma—\$22,895 annual average income. As the level of education increases, however, so does the span. The holder of a bachelor's degree earned, on average, \$40,478 that year. Finally, the holder of an advanced degree typically bumped up their annual earnings by more than \$20,000 to a nationwide average of \$63,229, according to [these] Census figures" (Nicole A. Bonham, "Does an Advanced Degree Pay Off?" *Utah Business*, Sept. 2000, 37).

*Teach your children self-respect.* Teach them that their bodies are the creation of the Almighty. What a miraculous, wonderful, and beautiful thing is the human body.

As has been said here tonight, Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, declared:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Now comes the craze of tattooing one's body. I cannot understand why any young man—or young woman, for that matter—would wish to undergo the painful process of disfiguring the skin with various multicolored representations of people, animals, and various symbols. With tattoos, the process is permanent unless there is another painful and costly undertaking to remove it. Fathers, caution your sons against having their bodies tattooed. They may resist your talk now, but the time will come when they will thank you. A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body.

Likewise the piercing of the body for multiple rings in the ears, in the nose, even in the tongue. Can they possibly think that is beautiful? It is a passing fancy, but its effects can be permanent.

Some have gone to such extremes that the ring had to be removed by surgery. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also "the piercing of the body for other than medical purposes." We do not, however, take any position "on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings"—one pair.

*Teach them to stay away from drugs.* That's been spoken of eloquently here. I have already spoken about Ecstasy. Do you wish your children to have the peace of which Isaiah spoke? They will not know peace if they get involved with drugs. These illegal substances will take away their self-control, will seize upon them to a point where they will do anything, within or outside the law, to get another dose.

*Teach them the virtue of honesty.* There is no substitute under the heavens for the man or woman, the boy or girl who is honest. No false words besmirch his or her reputation. No act of duplicity colors his or her conscience. He or she can walk with head high, standing above the crowd of lesser folk who constantly indulge in lying, cheating, and who excuse themselves with statements that a little lying hurts no one. It does hurt, because small lying leads to large lying, and the prisons of the nation are the best proof of that fact.

*Teach them to be virtuous.* There is no peace to be had through sexual impurity. Our Heavenly Father placed within us the desires that make us attractive to one another—boys and girls, men and women. But with that urge must be self-discipline, rigid and strong and unbending.

*Teach them to look forward to the time when they may be married in the house of the Lord* as those who come to the altar free from taint or evil of any kind. They will be grateful all of the days of their lives that they were married in

the temple, worthily, under the authority of the holy priesthood.

Parenthetically, a word to you men.

Watch the tides of your lives, that you do not become enmeshed in situations which lead to sorrow, regret, and, eventually, divorce. Divorce has become so common all around us. There are so many who violate the solemn covenants they have made before God in His holy house.

Brigham Young once said:

"When people are married, instead of trying to get rid of each other, reflect that you have made your choice, and strive to honor and keep it, do not manifest that you have acted unwisely and say that you have made a bad choice, nor let any body know that you think you have. You made your choice, stick to it, and strive to comfort and assist each other" (*Deseret News*, 29 May 1861, 98).

A divorce, when all is said and done, represents a failed marriage.

So many men become chronic critics. Rather, if they would look for the virtues in their wives instead of looking for their failings, love would bloom and the home would be secure.

*Teach your children to pray.* There is no other resource to compare with prayer. To think that each of us may approach our Father in Heaven, who is the great God of the universe, for individual help and guidance, for strength and faith is a miracle in and of itself. We come to Him by invitation. Let us not shun the opportunity which He has afforded us.

God bless you, dear fathers. May He bless you with wisdom and judgment, with understanding, with self-discipline and self-control, with faith and kindness and love. And may He bless the sons and daughters who have come into your homes, that yours may be a fortifying, strengthening, guiding hand as they walk the treacherous path of life. As the years pass—and they will pass ever so quickly—may you know that "peace . . . which

passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) as you look upon your sons and daughters, who likewise have known that sacred and wonderful peace. Such is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Carry On."  
Elder H. Bryan Richards offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 8, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church

who have assembled to worship together in many places.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Sabbath Day." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Sabbath Day."  
Elder James O. Mason offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

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The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

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## President James E. Faust

### Testimony—the cornerstone of my life

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I have lived a long time. As I look back over my life, I recognize one source of singular strength and blessing.

It is my testimony and knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I am profoundly grateful that all of my life I have had a simple faith that Jesus is the Christ. That witness has been confirmed to me hun-

dreds of times. It is the crowning knowledge of my soul. It is the spiritual light of my being. It is the cornerstone of my life.

As one of the least among you but in my calling as one of His Apostles, I testify of the Christ as our Savior and the Redeemer of the world. Since this testimony has been forged by a lifetime of experiences, of necessity this requires my relating experiences which are very personal in nature. But this testimony is mine, and I feel that the Savior knows that I know that He lives.

### **Early experiences confirming testimony**

The first cornerstone of my testimony was laid a long time ago. One of my early recollections was having a frightening nightmare as a small child. I still remember it vividly. I must have screamed in fright during the night. My grandmother woke me up. I was crying, and she took me in her arms, hugged me, and comforted me. She got a bowl of some of my favorite rice pudding that was left over from dinner, and I sat on her lap as she spoon-fed me. She told me that we were safe in our house because Jesus was watching over us. I felt it was true then, and I still believe it now. I was comforted in both body and soul and went peacefully back to bed, assured of the divine reality that Jesus does watch over us.

That first memorable experience led to other strong confirmations that God lives and that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Many of these came in response to earnest prayer. As a child, when I lost things such as my precious pocketknife, I learned that if I prayed hard enough, I could usually find it. I was always able to find the lost cows I was entrusted with. Sometimes I had to pray more than once, but my prayers always seemed to be answered. Sometimes the answer was no, but most often it was positive and confirming. Even when it was no, I came to know that, in the Lord's great wisdom, the answer I received was for my

best good. My faith continued to grow as building blocks were added to the cornerstone, line upon line and precept upon precept. There are far too many of these to be chronicled individually; some are too sacred to utter.

### **Effects of David Whitmer's testimony**

These early seeds of faith sprouted still further when, as a young Aaronic Priesthood boy, I received a firsthand confirmation of the remarkable testimony of the Three Witnesses concerning the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. My stake president was President Henry D. Moyle, and his father was James H. Moyle. In the summertime Brother James H. Moyle would visit his family, and he would worship with us in our little ward in the southeast of the Salt Lake Valley.

One Sunday, Brother James H. Moyle shared with us a singular experience. As a young man he went to the University of Michigan to study law. As he was finishing his studies, his father told him that David Whitmer, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was still alive. The father suggested to his son that he stop on his way back to Salt Lake City to visit with David Whitmer face-to-face. Brother Moyle's purpose was to ask him about his testimony concerning the golden plates and the Book of Mormon.

During that visit, Brother Moyle said to David Whitmer: "Sir, you are an old man, and I'm a young man. I have been studying about witnesses and testimonies. Please tell me the truth concerning your testimony as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon." David Whitmer then told this young man, "Yes, I held the golden plates in my hands, and they were shown to us by an angel. My testimony concerning the Book of Mormon is true." David Whitmer was out of the Church, but he never denied his testimony of the angel's visitation, of handling the golden plates, or of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Hearing with my own ears

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this remarkable experience directly from Brother Moyle's lips had a powerful, confirming effect upon my growing testimony. Having heard it, I felt it was binding upon me.

### **Testimony strengthened during mission**

One of the foundation stones of my testimony came when I served my first mission in Brazil as a young man. At that time our labors were unfruitful and difficult. We could not envision the great outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord that has come in that country and its neighboring countries of South America, Central America, and Mexico in the intervening years. Sixty years ago there was only one stake in all of these countries. Now there are 643 stakes in Latin America. I believe it is only the beginning. What has happened is beyond my wildest hopes and dreams. It is one of the many miracles we have seen. It is my witness that all of this could not have happened without the divine intervention of the Lord, who is watching over this holy work, not only in Latin America but in all of the countries of the world.

### **Blessings of marriage and children**

In my long life I have found peace, joy, and happiness beyond my fondest hopes and dreams. One of the supreme benedictions of my life has been my marriage to an elect daughter of God. I love her with all my heart and soul. Upon the wind of her spirit have my wings been carried.<sup>1</sup> We were married in the Salt Lake Temple 57 years ago when I was a soldier in World War II and did not know if I would come back alive. Her unwavering faith and support have strengthened my own testimony in times of challenge and difficulty. My inevitable eternal journey, if I am so favored, will be wonderful with her at my side.

Another great blessing in my life has been to have children come into our fam-

ily even though we thought we might never have any. Our joy has increased with our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Only by the power of a priesthood blessing did this come about.

### **Adversity has nurtured testimony**

Along with the blessings, however, I have known some difficult challenges and heartaches. I am grateful for the lessons learned in these adversities. As a young man, I lived through the Great Depression, when banks failed and so many lost their jobs and homes and went hungry. I was fortunate to have a job at a canning factory that paid 25 cents an hour. That may have been all I was worth! But it helped me get my education. I served three long years in the military in World War II. One time when we were in peril of our ship capsizing in a horrendous storm in the Pacific, I put myself in the Lord's hands and fervently promised Him that if I survived I would try to serve Him all of the days of my life.

At times I have stumbled and been less than I should have been. All of us experience those wrenching, defining, difficult decisions that move us to a higher level of spirituality. They are the Gethsemanes of our lives that bring with them great pain and anguish. Sometimes they are too sacred to be shared publicly. They are the watershed experiences that help purge us of our unrighteous desires for the things of the world. As the scales of worldliness are taken from our eyes, we see more clearly who we are and what our responsibilities are concerning our divine destiny.

I humbly acknowledge that these many experiences have nurtured a sure knowledge that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. I have heard His voice and felt His influence and presence. They have been as a warm, spiritual cloak. The wonder of it is that all who conscientiously strive to keep the commandments and sustain their leaders can receive this

same knowledge in some measure. The privilege of serving in the cause of the Master can bring great satisfaction and inner peace.

### **Testimonies move the work forward**

The united testimonies and faith of the early Church members brought them from Palmyra to Kirtland, and from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley. Eventually that faith will establish this work all over the world. That strength of testimony and faith moves the work of God forward in such a marvelous way. The power of the Lord is in this work, as evidenced in the wonderful happenings of our time.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presides over what is possibly the greatest number of faithful people who have ever lived upon the face of the earth. I testify that he is a truly great prophet. He needs faithful followers. The great strength of this Church comes from our collective and individual testimonies, born of our own trials and faithfulness. The faithfulness of the Saints has permitted this great Conference Center to be built and dedicated in the name of the Lord on this historic day. It is unique in all the world. So wondrous and great are the works of the Lord in our time. As a people, we are not as yet what we ought to be—far from it. However, I hope we will strive harder to become a more righteous people, worthy to continue to receive the blessings of heaven.

### **Temples are a testimony**

The acceleration of temple building in our time has been marvelous. Through the prophetic vision of President Hinckley, we now have many temples that dot many lands on the earth. This remarkable achievement has been made possible because of faithful tithe payers. This in turn has caused the Lord to redeem His promise spoken through Malachi:

“And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>2</sup> All of these exquisite holy edifices are a testimony of our belief that the Savior broke the bonds of death and opened up the way for us to enter into covenants which will be binding in another world.

### **“All things denote there is a God”**

Like Alma, I can testify, “All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.”<sup>3</sup>

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith that I know to be true, the Savior testified of Himself in these words:

“I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;

“... I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord has promised that “every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”<sup>5</sup>

### **A certain witness**

When I was called to the holy apostleship many years ago, my sure witness prompted me to testify on that occasion in these words:

“I understand that a chief requirement for the holy apostleship is to be a personal witness of Jesus as the Christ and the Divine Redeemer. Perhaps on that basis alone, I can qualify. This truth has been made known to me by the unspeakable peace and power of the Spirit of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Since accepting that call many years ago, my certain witness has been greatly magnified. This is because of my undeniable testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

My greatest desire is to be true and faithful to the end of my days on this earth. That we may all do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 4:25.
2. Malachi 3:10.
3. Alma 30:44.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2-3.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.

6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 20.

#### President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency.

### Elder L. Tom Perry

#### Cleaning the hidden corners of our lives

My mother was a great delegator. Each Saturday morning as my brothers and sisters and I were growing up, we received housecleaning assignments from her. Her instructions to us had been learned from her mother: "Be certain you clean thoroughly in the corners and along the mopboards. If you are going to miss anything, let it be in the center of the room."

She knew very well if we cleaned the corners, she would never have a problem with what was left in the center of the room. That which is visible to the eye would never be left unclean.

Over the years, my mother's counsel has had enormous application to me in many different ways. It is especially applicable to the task of spiritual housecleaning. The aspects of our lives that are on public display usually take care of themselves because we want to leave the best impression possible. But it is in the hidden corners of our lives, where there are things that only we know about, that we must be particularly thorough to ensure that we are clean.

#### Keep thoughts clean

One of those corners of our lives is in the special attention we give in the area of thoughts. We must continually look out for those idle times when our minds are allowed to wander into territory that should be avoided. In Proverbs we read, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). And Jude has written, "Filthy dreamers defile the flesh" (Jude 1:8).

Inescapably our thoughts shape our lives. James Allen has expressed it this way in his book *As a Man Thinketh*:

"As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called 'spontaneous' and 'unpremeditated' as to those which are deliberately executed. . . .

"In the armoury of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. . . . Between these two extremes are all the grades of



character, and man is their maker and master. . . . Man is the master of thought, the moulder of character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny" (*As a Man Thinketh* [1983], 7–10).

Then Mr. Allen added: "Let a man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life. Men imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance" (*As a Man Thinketh*, 33–34).

Truly one of the corners we must diligently strive to keep clean is our thoughts. The ideal is to keep our thoughts focused on spiritual things.

### Live the gospel in the home

Perhaps another corner that can accumulate dust because of neglect pertains to the earnest direction we give to our families. President Kimball highlighted his concerns in these words:

"Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home. Only as we see clearly the responsibilities of each individual and the role of families and homes can we properly understand that priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations, even wards and stakes, exist primarily to help members live the gospel in the home. Then we can understand that people are more important than programs, and that Church programs should always support and never detract from gospel-centered family activities. . . .

"All should work together to make home a place where we love to be, a place of listening and learning, a place where each member can find mutual love, support, appreciation, and encouragement.

"I repeat that our success, individually and as a Church, will largely [depend

on] how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home" ("Living the Gospel in the Home," *Ensign*, May 1978, 101).

### Becoming disciples of Christ

My general counsel to you is that we must create regimens that foster spiritual housecleaning—ongoing and continual processes that draw us closer to the Lord our Savior so that we can be numbered among His disciples.

The central purpose of our mortal probation is to prepare to meet God and inherit the blessings He has promised to His worthy children. The Savior set the pattern during His earthly ministry and encouraged those who followed Him to become His disciples.

The following has been written about discipleship:

"The word *disciple* comes from the Latin [meaning] a learner. A disciple of Christ is one who is learning to be like Christ—learning to think, to feel, and to act as he does. To be a true disciple, to fulfill that learning task, is the most demanding regimen known to man. No other discipline compares . . . in either requirements or rewards. It involves the total transformation of a person from the state of the natural man to that of [a] saint, one who loves the Lord and serves with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength" (Chauncey C. Riddle, "Becoming a Disciple," *Ensign*, Sept. 1974, 81).

The Savior instructed those who would follow Him about the essence of discipleship when He said:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

"And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:25–26; see footnote *d* for Matthew 16:24 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible).

"Break not my commandments for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come.

"And whosoever will lose his life in this world, for my sake, shall find it in the world to come.

"Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:27-29, in Bible appendix).

When the spirit conquers the flesh, the flesh becomes a servant instead of the master. When we have cleaned out the corners of worldliness and are ready to be obedient to the Lord, then we are able to receive His word and keep His commandments.

### Conversion of Alma the Younger

A dramatic change occurs in the lives of individuals when they dedicate themselves to becoming disciples of the Lord. One of the most vivid examples I can think of from the scriptures is the conversion of young Alma and the change that occurred in his very countenance as he became a disciple of the Lord. Remember, Alma and the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers. Alma was a man of many words and could speak much flattery to the people. He led the people to do all manner of iniquity. He became a great hinderment to the Church, stealing away the hearts of the people and causing much dissension among them. (See Mosiah 27:8-9.)

But due to the humble supplications of his father, an angel appeared to them as they were going about their mischief. Alma was so astonished that he fell to the earth, and the angel commanded him: "Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people" (Mosiah 27:13). He was

so weak he could not lift his limbs and had to be carried. He was also dumb. He was brought and placed before his father. His father rejoiced and called upon the people to pray for his son. (See Mosiah 27:18-22.)

"And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

"For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit" (Mosiah 27:23-24).

Then he recounted the great tribulation and suffering he went through as he realized he was cast off from the kingdom of God. He remembered the teachings of his father and cried unto the Lord that he might be spared. (See Mosiah 27:27-29; Alma 36:16-18.)

Now we see the dramatic change as he becomes a disciple of our Redeemer:

"And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them, traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation" (Mosiah 27:32).

### Ancestors show true discipleship

In my family's pioneer history there are many accounts of noble souls who demonstrated the traits of true discipleship. My children's great-grandfather was a valiant disciple of Jesus Christ. His family were wealthy landowners in Denmark. As the favored son, he was to inherit the land of his father. He fell in love with a beautiful young woman who was not of the same social standing as his family. He was encouraged not to pursue the relationship. He was not inclined to

follow his family's counsel, and on one of his visits to see her he discovered that all of her family had joined the Church. He refused to listen to the doctrine her family had embraced and forcefully told her that she had to choose between him and the Church. She boldly declared that she would not give up her religion.

With that forceful pronouncement, he decided he should listen to the teachings that were so important to her. Soon after, he was touched by the Spirit and he too became converted to the gospel. But when he informed his parents of his decision to join the Church and marry this young woman, they were angry with him and forced him to decide between his family and their wealth and the Church. He walked away from the comforts he had known all of his life, joined the Church, and married her.

Immediately, they started to prepare to leave Denmark and journey to Zion. Now without the support of his family, he had to work hard at any employment he could find to save for the journey to the new land. After a year of hard labor, he had saved enough for their passage. As soon as they were prepared to leave, their branch president came to them and said there was a family with greater need than he and his wife. He was asked to give up what he had saved so the needy family could go to Zion.

Discipleship requires sacrifice. They gave up their savings to the needy family, and then they began another year of hard labor to save to finance their journey. Eventually they arrived in Zion, but not before they had made many more sacrifices, showing true discipleship.

### **Earnestly do spiritual housecleaning**

A rich young man was given the harshest test of discipleship when he was told, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, . . . come, follow me" (Luke 18:22).

For many of us an equally challenging test is to shed our bad habits and worldly thoughts so that we are unconflicted and uncompromised in our devotion to the Lord's service.

As true disciples of Christ, may our lives reflect His example. May we take upon ourselves His name and stand as witnesses of Him at all times and in all places (see Mosiah 18:9).

Moreover, may God bless us that we will earnestly desire to do our spiritual housecleaning, getting into all the corners, cleaning out all those things that would diminish us as disciples of the Lord, so that we can move forward in our service to Him who is our King and Savior, I humbly pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Sister Virginia U. Jensen**

### **Light of Christ sustains Joshua Dennis**

When he was just 10 years old, Joshua Dennis spent five days trapped in the pitch-black darkness of an abandoned mine. When rescuers finally heard his faint cry for help and pulled him out of the horrible darkness, he was disoriented, cold, and exhausted. But much to their surprise, he wasn't afraid. Josh spent his time sleeping, yelling for help, and pray-

ing. "Someone was protecting me," he explained. "I knew people were going to find me."

Joshua's simple but profound faith had been nurtured by his parents, who taught him that he had a Heavenly Father who knew where he was at all times. They taught him he had been born with the Light of Christ within him. Truly, Josh had been brought up in light and truth (see D&C 93:40) so that when he found

himself huddled on a ledge 2,000 feet deep in a mine, he had drawn upon that light to sustain and comfort him, to give him courage and hope. Josh experienced what Abinadi taught when, speaking of Christ, he said, "He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

### **Displays of light at the Savior's birth**

How fitting that the Savior's birth in Bethlehem was accompanied by miraculous displays of light in the Western Hemisphere. At the time of His birth, "at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because . . . there was no darkness in all that night" (3 Nephi 1:15, 19). This celebration of light stood in stark contrast to that which occurred at His Crucifixion, when "there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, inasmuch that the inhabitants thereof . . . could feel the vapor of darkness" (3 Nephi 8:20; see also verses 21–23).

### **Jesus' light can quench any darkness**

There are all kinds of darkness in this world: darkness that comes from sin; darkness that comes from discouragement, disappointment, and despair; darkness that comes from loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. Just as the light that burned in Josh Dennis's heart was stronger than the suffocating darkness that engulfed him, the light of Jesus Christ is stronger than any darkness we face in this life, *if* we have faith in Him, seek after Him, and obey Him. For as the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph, "If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you" (D&C 88:67).

Christ's light and the gospel message of light and salvation can be darkened in our own lives only by our disobedience

and lack of faith. In like manner the Savior's light *increases* in our lives as we keep the commandments and strive continually to be like Him. For "that which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter" (D&C 50:24).

As the light of Jesus Christ and His gospel grows brighter within our countenances and our hearts, it becomes easier for us to discern what is truly valuable from the counterfeits the world offers. Knowledge that Christ loved us enough to willingly bear the weight of our sins removes the need for pride and an unwarranted trust in the arm of flesh. Belief that the Atonement restores to us all we lose to sin and missteps along life's path creates a hope greater than any temporal pleasure or momentary mortal thrill.

Consider the experience of King Lamoni. Though he had unfettered power, great earthly treasures, and servants to wait on him hand and foot, he lived in spiritual darkness. When he was willing to permit Ammon to teach him the gospel, a most remarkable thing occurred: Lamoni "fell unto the earth, as if he were dead" (Alma 18:42). "Ammon . . . knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, . . . was the light of the glory of God, . . . yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul" (Alma 19:6).

Only the glory of God and the light of life everlasting produce a joy profound enough to overwhelm one completely and to eliminate "the dark veil of unbelief."

### **"Lead, kindly Light"**

Throughout the scriptures, and even in the writings of thoughtful Christians through the centuries, we find examples

of how Christ's message of light and salvation can spiritually and physically sustain us. As a young priest traveling in Italy in 1833, Englishman John Henry Newman encountered emotional and physical darkness when illness detained him there for several weeks. He became deeply discouraged, and a nurse who saw his tears asked what troubled him. All he could reply was that he was sure God had work for him to do in England. Aching to return home, he finally found passage on a small boat.

Not long after the ship set sail, thick fog descended and obscured the hazardous cliffs surrounding them. Trapped for a week in the damp, gray darkness, the ship unable to travel forward or back, Newman pleaded for his Savior's help as he penned the words we now know as the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light."

Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom; . . .  
The night is dark, and I am far from home; . . .  
Keep thou my feet; . . .  
one step enough for me.  
[*Hymns*, no. 97]

This hymn echoes a truth our hearts confirm: though trials may extinguish other sources of light, Christ will illuminate our path, "keep our feet," and show us the way home. For as the Savior has promised, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

### **Embrace the Savior's light**

We can all find ourselves in places of darkness from time to time. We may wander into dark, spiritual caverns when we make foolish choices, admit harmful influences into our lives, or turn away from the light of the gospel to embrace the world just a little longer. It may seem harmless at first—just a little exploring, that's all. Before we know it, we become separated

from the light and left in darkness alone. Why do we remain in darkness when such rescuing light awaits us? Let us bask in the warm and illuminating light provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the Savior's kindly light lead us one step at a time. Let covenants and commandments keep us safe as we follow the gospel pathway to our heavenly home.

Remember little Josh Dennis? He is now Elder Dennis, serving a mission far away from the dark mine which held him captive. Now Elder Dennis finds his way along the narrow, unfamiliar paths of Honduras, sharing a message of hope, salvation, and light. What he teaches every day is the paradox he experienced as a young boy lost in a mine: that amidst encircling gloom, amidst the darkest possible circumstances, it is possible to feel hope, peace, and comfort—all because of the light which is stronger than all darkness, the light of Jesus Christ.

I know from my own experience, just as surely as Josh knows from his, of the reality of that marvelous being of light—our Savior. May we embrace His light and live so that it will illuminate our path and lead us to our heavenly home, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you very much for your inspirational remarks. Elder L. Tom Perry has spoken to us, followed by Sister Virginia U. Jensen of the Relief Society general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now stand and sing "High on the Mountain Top." Following the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Dedication day

A favorite hymn describes the tender feelings of my heart and soul this beautiful day of dedication. I think the words will describe your feelings also:

On this day of joy and gladness,  
Lord, we praise thy holy name;  
In this sacred place of worship,  
We thy glories loud proclaim!  
... Bright and clear our voices ring,  
Singing songs of exultation  
To our Maker, Lord, and King!<sup>1</sup>

Charles C. Rich, on April 7, 1863, spoke of the need for a tabernacle in which to meet. He declared:

"What shall I say in regard to the Tabernacle? We can see at once that we . . . need the blessings of such a house at the present time. If we put it off, when will it be built? When that house is built we can then enjoy the benefits and blessings which it will afford. The same principle may be applied to everything we take in hand, and with which we have to do, whether it be to build a Temple, a Tabernacle, to send teams to the frontiers to gather the poor, or to do any other work that is required of us. Nothing that is required will be performed until we go to work and do something ourselves. We have no other people to lean upon, and therefore it remains for us to go to work and perform well our part."<sup>2</sup>

They went to work!

Thanks be to God for our noble prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who, with the foresight of a seer, recognized the need for this magnificent facility and, with the help of many others, "went to work." The result is before us today and will be dedicated this morning.

### Rededicate our lives

As a symbol of our gratitude, as an expression of our love for the Lord, could

we not rededicate our lives and our homes in a like manner?

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, added an apostolic dimension to our building commitment when he declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"<sup>3</sup>

The need for personal dedication and recommitment is essential in today's society. Just a hurried glance at several newspaper stories describes our plight.

From the Associated Press came the following: "In the name of free speech, the Supreme Court struck down a federal law that shielded children from sex-oriented cable TV channels."<sup>4</sup>

From the *San Jose Mercury News* came this story: "Germany may be the economic engine of Europe, but on Sundays it stops. . . . But global market forces are beginning to disturb Germany's traditional day of rest. With . . . American-style [7-day-a-week] shopping [already being offered], and the Internet providing 24-hour access to the world's goods, such rigid store regulations 'are like a castle from the old century.' . . . To vie with other world-class cities, Berlin must be more aggressive. . . . 'We want to make more money.'"<sup>5</sup>

As we view the disillusionment that engulfs countless thousands today, we are learning the hard way what an ancient prophet wrote out for us 3,000 years ago: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."<sup>6</sup>

The revered Abraham Lincoln accurately described our plight: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power. . . . But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and

multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."<sup>7</sup>

### **The family is a refuge of safety**

When the seas of life are stormy, a wise mariner seeks a port of peace. The family, as we have traditionally known it, is such a refuge of safety. "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."<sup>8</sup> Actually, a home is much more than a house. A house is built of lumber, brick, and stone. A home is made of love, sacrifice, and respect. A house can be a home, and a home can be a heaven when it shelters a family. When true values and basic virtues undergird the families of society, hope will conquer despair, and faith will triumph over doubt.

Such values, when learned and lived in our families, will be as welcome rain to parched soil. Love will be engendered; loyalty to one's best self will be enhanced; and those virtues of character, integrity, and goodness will be fostered. The family must hold its preeminent place in our way of life because it's the only possible base upon which a society of responsible human beings has ever found it practicable to build for the future and maintain the values they cherish in the present.

Happy homes come in a variety of appearances. Some feature families with father, mother, brothers, and sisters living together in a spirit of love. Others consist of a single parent with one or two children, while other homes have but one occupant. There are, however, identifying features which are to be found in a happy home, whatever the number or

description of its family members. These identifying features are:

- A pattern of prayer.
- A library of learning.
- A legacy of love.

### **A pattern of prayer**

On the American continent, Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, "Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith."<sup>9</sup>

A prominent judge was asked what we, as citizens of the countries of the world, could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and our nations. He thoughtfully replied, "I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer."

### **A library of learning**

Concerning making our personal lives and our homes libraries of learning, the Lord counseled, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."<sup>10</sup>

The standard works offer the library of learning of which I speak. We must be careful not to underestimate the capacity of children to read and to understand the word of God.

As parents, we should remember that our lives may be the book from the family library which the children most treasure. Are our examples worthy of emulation? Do we live in such a way that a son or a daughter may say, "I want to follow my dad" or "I want to be like my mother"? Unlike the book on the library shelf, the covers of which shield its contents, our lives cannot be closed. Parents, we truly are an open book in the library of learning of our homes.

### **A legacy of love**

Next, do we exemplify the legacy of love? Do our homes? Bernadine Healy, in

a commencement address, gave this counsel: "As a physician, who has been deeply privileged to share the most profound moments of people's lives including their final moments, let me tell you a secret. People facing death don't think about what degrees they have earned, what positions they have held, or how much wealth they have accumulated. At the end, what really matters is who you loved and who loved you. That circle of love is everything, and is a good measure of a past life. It is the gift of greatest worth."<sup>11</sup>

Our Lord and Savior's message was one of love. It can be as a light to our personal pathway to exaltation.

Near the end of his life, one father looked back on how he had spent his time on earth. An acclaimed, respected author of numerous scholarly works, he said, "I wish I had written one less book and taken my children fishing more often."

Time passes quickly. Many parents say that it seems like yesterday that their children were born. Now those children are grown, perhaps with children of their own. "Where did the years go?" they ask. We cannot call back time that is past, we cannot stop time that now is, and we cannot experience the future in our present state. Time is a gift, a treasure not to be put aside for the future but to be used wisely in the present.

Have we cultivated a spirit of love in our homes? Observed President David O. McKay, "A true Mormon home is one in which if Christ should chance to enter, he would be pleased to linger and to rest."<sup>12</sup>

What are we doing to ensure that our homes meet this description? Do we ourselves meet it?

### **Come home to the gospel of Jesus Christ**

On the journey along the pathway of life, there are casualties. Some depart from the road markers which lead to life eternal, only to discover that the detour

chosen ultimately leads to a dead end. Indifference, carelessness, selfishness, and sin all take their costly toll in human lives. There are those who, for unexplained reasons, march to the sound of a different drummer, later to learn they have followed the Pied Piper of sorrow and suffering.

Today there goes forth from this pulpit an invitation to people throughout the world: Come from your wandering way, weary traveler. Come to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to that heavenly haven called home. Here you will discover the truth. Here you will learn the reality of the Godhead, the comfort of the plan of salvation, the sanctity of the marriage covenant, the power of personal prayer. Come home.

### **Sound of a bell helps a man find home**

From our youth, many of us may remember the story of a very young boy who was abducted from his parents and his home and taken to a village situated far away. Under these conditions, the small boy grew to young manhood without a knowledge of his actual parents or earthly home.

But where was home to be found? Where were his mother and father to be discovered? Oh, if only he could remember even their names, his task would be less hopeless. Desperately he sought to recall even a glimpse of his childhood.

Like a flash of inspiration, he remembered the sound of a bell which from the tower atop the village church pealed its welcome each Sabbath morning. From village to village the young man wandered, ever listening for that familiar bell to chime. Some bells were similar, others far different from the sound he remembered.

At length the weary young man stood one Sunday morning before a church of a typical town. He listened carefully as the bell began to peal. The sound was famil-



iar. It was unlike any other he had heard, save that bell which pealed in the memory of his childhood days. Yes, it was the same bell. Its ring was true. His eyes filled with tears. His heart rejoiced in gladness. His soul overflowed with gratitude. The young man dropped to his knees, looked upward beyond the bell tower—even toward heaven—and in a prayer of gratitude whispered, “Thanks be to God, I’m home.”

### The gospel rings true and leads us home

Like the peal of a remembered bell will be the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the soul of him who earnestly seeks. Many of you have traveled long in a personal quest for that which rings true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sends forth to you an earnest appeal: Open your doors to the missionaries. Open your minds to the word of God. Open your hearts—even your very souls—to the sound of that still, small voice which testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word . . . , saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”<sup>13</sup> Then, like the boy of whom I’ve spoken, you too will, on bended knee, say to your God and mine, “I’m home.”

May such be the blessing of all, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “On This Day of Joy and Gladness,” *Hymns*, no. 64.
2. *Deseret News*, 20 May 1863, 369.
3. 1 Corinthians 3:16.

4. Richard Carelli, “High Court Kills Limits on TV Sex,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 May 2000, A1.
5. Daniel Rubin, “Global Economy Erodes Ban on Sunday Shopping,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 May 2000, A1.
6. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
7. In James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 10 vols. (1896–99), 5:3366.
8. First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999, cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3.
9. Jacob 3:1.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
11. “On Light and Worth: Lessons from Medicine,” commencement address, Vassar College, 29 May 1994, 10, Special Collections.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1947, 120.
13. Isaiah 30:21.

### President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to drive with caution, obey traffic rules, and be courteous in every way. There are many of us here, and we want you to have a good experience when you leave this building.

We express our appreciation to all who have addressed us and to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music.

It will now be my opportunity to speak to you and then offer the dedicatory prayer.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, what a great inspiration you are. As I look into the faces of this vast congregation and realize that there are many more assembled across the world, I am overwhelmed with a great sense of love for each of you. What wonderful people you are. I pray that the Holy Spirit may guide me as I speak to you.

### Symbolism of the cornerstone

Before coming into the building this morning, we sealed the cover stone of the cornerstone of the structure, this great new structure. That marks the completion of this building.

We preserve the symbolism of the cornerstone in remembrance of the Son of God, upon whose life and mission this Church is established. He, and He alone, is the Chief Cornerstone. There is built upon Him a strong foundation of apostles and prophets and, above this, "all the building fitly framed together" to constitute The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Ephesians 2:21; see also verse 20).

As I reminded the group at the cornerstone this morning, let this symbol be recognized as representing the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name this Church carries.

### A remarkable year for the Church

I am so grateful that this building is now complete. We occupied it for our April conference and on one other occasion last June. It was not entirely finished then. It is now declared complete with a permanent occupancy permit.

This millennial year of 2000 has been a remarkable year for the Church. We have expanded on every front across the world. We have passed the 11 million

membership mark. What a significant thing that is.

I was around in 1947, when the Church celebrated the centennial of the arrival of the pioneers. At that time, the This Is the Place Monument was dedicated. A great celebration was held with a pageant in the Tabernacle representing the worldwide mission of the Church. The grand theme running through all of this was that the Church had reached a million members in its growth. Approximately one-half of them lived in Utah. Now only about 15 percent live here, and yet we have more members here than we have ever had. To think that today we have a membership of 11 million is a tremendous and wonderful thing that brings with it the promise of the future.

We have reached out across the world, wherever we are permitted to go. We have taught the gospel as revealed in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. We are now going into areas whose names were seldom heard back in 1947. Our missionary work has expanded in a miraculous manner.

### A vast family of brothers and sisters

I think I have been in most of the places where the Church is organized. I have found wonderful people everywhere. They are Latter-day Saints in the truest sense of the word. They are seeking to live the commandments.

As I have met with them and talked with them, I have learned the real meaning of the words of Paul:

"And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find

him, though he be not far from every one of us:

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:26-28).

We have become a great cosmopolitan society, a vast family of brothers and sisters in the Lord. In the movement of this great concourse of men and women, boys and girls, all Saints of the Most High, we sing as we march forward:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the  
coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where  
the grapes of wrath are stored.  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning  
of his terrible, swift sword;  
His truth is marching on.  
["Battle Hymn of the Republic,"  
*Hymns*, no. 60]

This work is possessed of a vitality which has never been evidenced before to such a degree.

### **Growth in education**

In the field of education, we have established the seminary and institute program wherever the Church has gone. It is touching for good the lives of students across the world. In the institutes young college-age students find happy association; they find learning, social experience, and even husbands and wives within the faith.

In the past few months we have announced that Ricks College, a great pioneer educational institution, hitherto providing a two-year degree, will be expanded to provide four years of education and will carry the name BYU—Idaho. This in no way disparages the name of the great man for whom the school was named. This will enlarge the educational opportunities for many young men and women. It will make of what has been a great school an even greater one. It is

an effort on the part of the Church to extend the opportunity of secular education within the framework of a Church school, where is taught faith in the living God and in His divine Son, our Lord.

### **Growth in temple building**

Another item of remarkable consequence, emphasized in this millennial year, is the building of temples. It has been a miracle. Last Sunday we dedicated in Boston, Massachusetts, the 100th working temple of the Church.

I came into the First Presidency in July of 1981 as a counselor to President Kimball. Since that time, 81 of these 100 temples have been dedicated. Only 19 were operating before then.

Fifty-three new temples, more than half of the 100 now in operation, have been dedicated since I was ordained President of the Church five years ago. I mention this only to remind you of the acceleration of this dramatic expansion.

When I announced in conference that I hoped we would see the dedication of the 100th operating temple before the end of the year 2000, I wondered if it were possible. I cannot say enough of thanks to the many men and women who have worked so long and so hard to bring this miracle to pass. Some of these new temples are smaller. But every ordinance that can be performed in the Salt Lake Temple, the largest in the Church, can be performed in these smaller temples. They are devoted exclusively to ordinance work. They are beautiful structures, well built in every respect. And they have made possible a much easier journey to the house of the Lord for thousands upon thousands of our people.

We shall go on building them. We will dedicate three more before the end of the year. We will continue to build in the future, perhaps not at the scale we have worked on during the past year, but there

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will be a steady construction of these sacred houses to accommodate the needs of the people.

How deeply grateful are our people. I hope and believe that the Lord is pleased.

### The Conference Center

And now today, as another significant accomplishment of this millennial year, we dedicate this great Conference Center. It is a unique and remarkable building. When it was first envisioned and planned, we were not concerned with building the largest house of worship to be found anywhere. We were concerned with a plan to accommodate the needs of our people.

The Tabernacle, which has served us so well for more than a century, simply became inadequate for our needs.

It was a great and serious thing to undertake the building of this structure. We were, of course, aware of all of the electronic means for carrying far and wide the message spoken from the pulpit. However, we were also aware of the desire of so very many to sit in the same hall with the speaker, as evidenced this morning. As I said when announcing the decision to move forward:

"The building of this structure has been a bold undertaking. We worried about it. . . . We listened for the whisperings of the Spirit [as we prayed about] it. And only when we felt the confirming voice of the Lord did we determine to go forward" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 3; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 4-5).

Announcement of our decision was made in the April 1996 general conference. I said on that occasion:

"I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many out on the grounds. . . .

"My heart reaches out to those who wish[ed] to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the

time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65).

It was a little more than a year later when ground was broken. This occurred on the 24th of July, 1997, the 150th anniversary of the arrival of our forebears in this valley.

At the conclusion of the groundbreaking services, President Packer offered the benediction. In that prayer, he asked the Lord that He might preserve my life to be present for the dedication of the new building. I am grateful for the evident answer to that request.

Today we shall dedicate it as a house in which to worship God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We hope and we pray that there will continue to go forth to the world from this pulpit declarations of testimony and doctrine, of faith in the living God, and of gratitude for the great atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer.

We will also dedicate it as a house in which artistic performances of a dignified nature will be presented.

Here this glorious Tabernacle Choir will sing anthems of praise. Here other musical groups will perform for the entertaining of large numbers of people. Here will be presented pageants depicting in a beautiful and artistic way the history of this movement, as well as many other things.

This structure has been built of the finest materials by the ablest of craftsmen. We are indebted to all who have contributed to make of this a magnificent center for conferences of the Church and other purposes.

We anticipate that there will be requests from other groups to use this hall. We will make it available under regula-

tions that will ensure that its use will be in harmony with the purposes for which it will be dedicated today.

It is not a museum piece, although the architecture is superb. It is a place to be used in honor to the Almighty and for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes.

I am so grateful that we have it. I am so grateful that it is completed. There is a little work of tuning up the organ, which will go on for some time. I commend to your attention the excellent articles appearing in the October *Ensign* dealing with this subject.

### **"All nations shall flow unto it"**

As I contemplate this marvelous structure adjacent to the temple, there comes to mind the great prophetic utterance of Isaiah:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. . . .

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:2-3, 5).

I believe that prophecy applies to the historic and wonderful Salt Lake Temple. But I believe also that it is related to this magnificent hall. For it is from this pulpit that the law of God shall go forth, together with the word and testimony of the Lord.

May God bless us as a people. We have found a new stride in this great millennial year. May we walk in the footsteps of the great Jehovah, the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. May we walk in the light of Him who was the Messiah of the world, the Son of God, who said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Instruction on the Hosanna Shout**

Now, my brothers and sisters, in a moment I shall offer the dedicatory prayer, in which all of you are invited to join. Immediately at the close of the dedicatory prayer, we invite each one of you who may wish to participate to stand and join with us in the Hosanna Shout. This sacred salute to the Father and the Son is given at the dedication of each of the temples. It has also been given on a few occasions of historic importance, such as the laying of the capstone on the Salt Lake Temple and the celebration of the centennial of the Church in the 1930 general conference. We feel it is appropriate to give the shout here, as we dedicate this great building, the likes of which we may never undertake again. Any mention of this by the media should recognize that for us this is a very sacred and personal thing. We request that it be treated with deference and respect.

I will now demonstrate the shout. Each one takes a clean white handkerchief, holding it by one corner, and waves it while saying in unison, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb," repeated three times, followed by "Amen, Amen, and Amen."

Again, those wishing to participate are invited to stand and give the Hosanna Shout immediately following the dedicatory prayer. Those desiring to remain seated are at liberty to do so. If you do not have a white handkerchief, you may simply wave your hand. Those in other areas may join in giving the shout if their circumstances are appropriate.

At the conclusion of the shout, the Tabernacle Choir, without announcement, will sing the "Hosannah Anthem," which was written by Evan Stephens for the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. On a signal from the conductor, the congregation will join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," which was written by W. W. Phelps and sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

The benediction will then be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, if you will bow your heads and close your eyes, we will join in a prayer of dedication.

### **Dedicatory prayer**

O God, our Eternal Father, with thankful hearts we approach Thee in prayer on this historic Sabbath when we dedicate this magnificent Conference Center.

It has been erected to Thine honor and Thy glory. It is another in a complex of great structures dedicated to the accomplishment of Thy purposes and the enrolling of Thy work. It is neighbor to the sacred temple which our forebears labored in building over a period of 40 years. It looks upon the historic Tabernacle, which has served Thy people so well for more than a century of time. Nearby is the Assembly Hall, whose uses are many and varied.

Not far away are the Church Office Building, the Administration Building, and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Also nearby are the Lion House and the Beehive House, both of which are historic in character. In the other direction are the Museum of Church History and Art and the Family History Library.

This great new structure overlooks them all and complements their variety,

utility, and beauty. Together they become a testimony of the strength and vitality of Thy work, the headquarters of Thy Church, and the fountain from which truth rolls forth to fill the earth.

We thank Thee for the very many dedicated and highly skilled men and women who have worked long and hard to bring it to completion. May they have a sense of pride in their accomplishment.

As we are assembled in this great general conference of Thy Church, with these services carried to people across the earth, we bow our heads in reverence before Thee.

Acting in the authority of the holy priesthood, which comes from Thee, and in the name of Thine Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we dedicate and consecrate this, the Conference Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We dedicate it unto Thee, our Father and our God, and unto Thy Beloved Son, our Redeemer, whose name Thy Church bears.

We dedicate it as a gathering place for Thy people, where they may assemble to hear the word of the Lord as it is spoken by Thy servants who stand as prophets, seers, and revelators and as witnesses unto the world of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is the only name given among men whereby they may be saved.

We dedicate it from the footings on which it rests to the top of its tower. We dedicate this magnificent hall, unique in its design and size, constructed to house the thousands who through the years will gather here to worship Thee and to be entertained in a wholesome and wonderful way.

From this pulpit may Thy name be spoken with reverence and love. May the name of Thy Son be constantly remembered with sacred declaration. May testimony of Thy divine work ring forth from here to all the world. May righteousness

be proclaimed and evil denounced. May words of faith be spoken with boldness and conviction. May proclamations and declarations of doctrine ring forth to the nations.

Though the earth tremble, may this magnificent edifice stand solid and safe under Thy watchful care. May no evil voice ever be lifted in this hall in derogation of Thee, of Thy Son, of Thy restored Church, or of its prophets and leaders who have presided through the years. Protect it from the storms of nature and the desecrating hand of the vandal and destroyer. Preserve it from conflict and acts of terrorism. May all who pass this way, whatever their religious persuasion, look upon this structure with respect and admiration.

May this great hall be a place of dignified entertainment, a home to those arts which are uplifting and which amplify the culture of the people. May there never be anything presented here which is lacking in dignity and which does not portray that beauty which is of Thy divine nature.

We dedicate the great organ, the beautiful halls and other rooms, the parking area, and all other features and facilities pertaining to this structure. May it be a thing of beauty to the beholder both inside and out. May it be a house of many uses, a house of culture, a house of art, a house of worship, a house of faith, a house of God.

May it give expression to the declaration of Thy people that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Now Father, as we dedicate this Conference Center, we also dedicate the theater which adjoins it. It is a beautiful structure, designed to serve as a meeting place, as a home for the performing arts, and for a variety of uses, all dignified and created to cultivate the beautiful and en-

nobling. Protect it and bless it as we have prayed concerning the Conference Center.

We likewise on this day dedicate the parking facility built under Main Street and all the improvements made to the area immediately in the front of the house of the Lord, the temple of our God.

May this area be looked upon as a place of peace, an oasis in the midst of this bustling city. May it be a place where the weary may sit and contemplate the things of God and the beauties of nature. It is adorned with trees and shrubs, flowers and water, all combined to create an island of quiet beauty in the midst of this great thriving community. May the desire of the people of Thy Church to improve and beautify this area be appreciated by all who pass this way.

We pray that favorable expressions may prevail and grow until there is universal acceptance and appreciation for what has been done. We invoke Thy blessings upon this community and this state. This is the area to which Thy people came seeking asylum from the oppression they had known. Now this has become a great cosmopolitan society to which people from all over the nation and the entire world have gathered. May all who live here and all who come here recognize a community environment that is unique and attractive. May we of Thy Church be hospitable and gracious. May we maintain the standards and practices for which we are known and accord to others the privilege of worshiping who, "where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11).

Bless us to reach out as good neighbors and be helpful to all. May we lift up the hands and strengthen the faltering knees of any in distress. May we all live together in peace with appreciation and respect one for another.

Almighty God, how thankful we are for Thy wondrous blessings upon us. Ac-

cept of our gratitude. Keep Thine ancient promises concerning those who contribute their tithes and offerings, which have made all of this possible. Open the windows of heaven and shower down blessings upon them.

We love Thee and Thy divine Son. We seek to do Thy will. We praise Thy holy name. We lift our voices in anthems of worship. We testify of Thee and of our Redeemer, Thy matchless Son. Majestic is Thy way, glorious the tapestry of Thine eternal plan for all who walk in obedience unto Thee.

Wilt Thou smile with favor upon us, we pray in the sacred name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The congregation participated in the Hosanna Shout. The choir then sang the "Hosannah Anthem," with the congregation joining in singing "The Spirit of God."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 8, 2000. This session was conducted by President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Gordon T. Watts of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Gordon T. Watts offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." Following the singing, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### Speaking plainly to youth

I respond to a prompting I have had for a very long time to speak to the youth of the Church, who face challenges unknown to us in our youth.

President J. Reuben Clark described our youth as "hungry for things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.

"They want to know about . . . our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth; they are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth. . . .

" . . . You do not have to sneak up behind [these] spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in [their] ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with [them] . . . ; you can bring these truths to [them] openly. . . . Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches" ("The Charted Course of the Church in Education" [address to Church educators, 8 Aug. 1938]; in Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 365, 373-74).

I agree with President Clark and will speak plainly to the youth about things I have learned and know to be true.

### Patriarchal blessing's counsel about body

When I was 18, I was called into military service. I had not received my patriarchal blessing, so the bishop recommended me to a patriarch near the air base.

Patriarch J. Roland Sandstrom of the Santa Ana California Stake gave me my blessing. In it I was told this:

"You made a free and willing decision to abide by the laws of Eternal Progress as outlined by our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. You . . . have been . . . given a physical body with which you might experience Earth Life, . . . a body of such physical proportions and fitness as to enable your spirit to function through it unhampered by physical impediments. . . .

Cherish this as a great heritage" (patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, 15 Jan. 1944, 1).

That was a great comfort to me. Because of childhood polio, I was not able to participate in sports and was left with a feeling of inferiority when compared to my friends.

My patriarchal blessing counseled: "Guard and protect [your body]—take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character."

I found in the Word of Wisdom a principle with a promise:

The principle: Care for your body; avoid habit-forming stimulants, tea, coffee, tobacco, liquor, and drugs (see D&C 89:3-9). Such addictive things do little more than relieve a craving which they caused in the first place.

The promise: Those who obey will receive better health (see D&C 89:18) and "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

### Body is the foundation of our character

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man. . . . All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 181).

Even the severe tests of health or a handicapped or disabled body can refine a soul for the glorious day of restoration and healing which surely will come.

Your body really *is* the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character.

### Importance of dress and grooming

President Harold B. Lee taught of the important symbolic and actual effect of how we dress and groom our bodies. If you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit of our Father in Heaven and exercise a wholesome influence upon those around you. To be unkempt in your appearance exposes you to influences that are degrading (see *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 220).

Avoid immodest clothing. Dress and groom to show the Lord that you know how precious your body is.

President Hinckley has warned you not to decorate your body with pictures or symbols that will never wash off or to pierce your body with rings or jewelry after the manner of the world (see "Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 99).

You would not paint a temple with dark pictures or symbols or graffiti or even initials. Do not do so with your body.

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

### Proper use of sacred procreative power

There is in your body the supernal power to create life. Boys grow up to be men and may become fathers; girls grow up to be women and may become mothers. Natural and good feelings draw men and women together.

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

"Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

You should be attracted to one another and to marry. Then, and only then, may you worthily respond to the strong and good and constant desire to express that love through which children will bless your lives. By commandment of God our Father, that must happen only between husband and wife—man and woman—committed to one another in the covenant of marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7:2; D&C 42:22). To do otherwise is forbidden and will bring sorrow.

It is about controlling these natural desires that the strictest commandments are given in the revelations (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:5; Mormon 9:28).

Young men and women, keep yourselves worthy. Stay away from those environments, the music, the films, the videos, the clubs, and the associations that draw you into immoral conduct (see 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22; D&C 9:13).

### Danger of same-gender attraction

Now, I must speak of another danger, almost unknown in our youth but now everywhere about you. Normal desires and attractions emerge in the teenage years; there is the temptation to experiment, to tamper with the sacred power of procreation. These desires can be intensified, even perverted, by pornography,

improper music, or the encouragement from unworthy associations. What would have been only a more or less normal passing phase in establishing gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed.

If you consent, the adversary can take control of your thoughts and lead you carefully toward a habit and to an addiction, convincing you that immoral, unnatural behavior is a fixed part of your nature.

With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. The scriptures plainly condemn those who "dishonour their own bodies between themselves: . . . men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:24, 27) or "women [who] change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Romans 1:26).

The gates of freedom, and the good or bad beyond, swing open or closed to the password *choice*. You are free to choose a path that may lead to despair, to disease, even to death (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27).

If you choose that course, the fountains of life may dry up. You will not experience the combination of love and struggle, the pain and pleasure, the disappointment and sacrifice, that love which, blended together in parenthood, exalts a man or a woman and leads to that fulness of joy spoken of in the scriptures (see 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; D&C 11:13; 42:61; 101:36).

Do not experiment; do not let anyone of either gender touch your body to awaken passions that can flame beyond control. It begins as an innocent curiosity; Satan influences your thoughts, and it becomes a pattern, a habit, which may imprison you in an addiction, to the sorrow and disappointment of those who love you (see John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:12–14, 18–19).

Pressure is put upon legislatures to legalize unnatural conduct. They can

never make right that which is forbidden in the laws of God (see Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:9–10).

### **We reject the sin but love the sinner**

Sometimes we are asked why we do not recognize this conduct as a diverse and acceptable lifestyle. This we cannot do. We did not make the laws; they were made in heaven "before the foundation of the world" (D&C 132:5; 124:41; see also Alma 22:13). We are servants only.

Just as with the prophets in ancient times, we have been "consecrated priests and teachers of this people, . . . [responsible to] magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence" (Jacob 1:18–19).

We understand why some feel we reject them. That is not true. We *do not* reject you, only immoral behavior. We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you (see Hebrews 12:6–9; Romans 3:19; Helaman 15:3; D&C 95:1).

You may even feel that we do not love you. That also is not true. Parents know, and one day you will know, that there are times when parents and we who lead the Church must extend *tough* love when failing to teach and to warn and to discipline is to destroy.

We did not make the rules; they were revealed as commandments. We do not cause nor can we prevent the consequences if you disobey the moral laws (see D&C 101:78). In spite of criticism or opposition, we must teach and we must warn.

### **Counsel on resisting unnatural desires**

When any unworthy desires press into your mind, fight them, resist them,

control them (see James 4:6–8; 2 Nephi 9:39; Mosiah 3:19). The Apostle Paul taught, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13; see also D&C 62:1).

That may be a struggle from which you will not be free in this life. If you do not act on temptations, you need feel no guilt. They may be extremely difficult to resist. But that is better than to yield and bring disappointment and unhappiness to you and those who love you.

Some think that God created them with overpowering, unnatural desires, that they are trapped and not responsible (see James 1:13–15). That is not true. It cannot be true. Even if they were to accept it as true, they must remember that He can cure and He can heal (see Alma 7:10–13; 15:8).

### Repenting of moral transgressions

Now, what of you who have already made mistakes or have lost yourselves to an immoral lifestyle? What hope do you have? Are you cast off and lost forever?

These are not unforgivable sins. However unworthy or unnatural or immoral these transgressions may be, they are not unforgivable (see D&C 42:25). When completely forsaken and fully repented of, there can open the purifying gift of forgiveness, and the burden of guilt will be erased. There is a way back—long, perhaps; hard, certainly; possible, of course! (see Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:7; Mosiah 4:2; 26:29; D&C 1:31–32; 58:42; 61:2).

You need not, you cannot find your way alone. You have a Redeemer. The Lord will lift your burden if you choose to repent and turn from your sins and do

them no more. That is what the Atonement of Christ was for.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

The choice rests with you; you are not cast off forever. I repeat, these transgressions are not unforgivable.

One may think, “It is too late; my life will soon be over, and I am eternally doomed.” Not so, for “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Just as the physical body can be cleansed and healed, so can the spirit be washed clean by the power of the Atonement. The Lord will lift you and carry your burden during the suffering and struggle required to make you clean. That is what the Atonement of Christ is all about. He said, “I, the Lord, [will] remember [your sins] no more” (D&C 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19).

### Stay in the Lord’s way

Our beloved, precious youth, stay in the Lord’s way. If you stumble, rise up; go on. If you have lost your way, we open our arms and await your return.

God be praised for the cleansing, purifying, forgiving power of the Atonement brought by the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I bear witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Be dedicated to building the kingdom

In March of 1839 from the bleak dungeon that was Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled the Church:

"There are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12).

Years later, at the age of 15, the Prophet's nephew Joseph F. Smith was called to serve a mission in Hawaii. You will remember that he was only five when his father, Hyrum, was martyred. His mother, Mary Fielding, died when he was just 13. Upon arriving on the island of Maui, young Joseph fell gravely ill. Despite these and other adversities, he wrote to Elder George A. Smith:

"I am ready to bear my testimony . . . at any time, or at any place, or in whatsoever circumstances I may be placed. . . . I am ready to go through thick and thin for this cause in which I am engaged" (quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith* [1938], 176).

Today we must ask ourselves: Are we ready and willing to go through thick and thin for the cause in which we are engaged? Do we reflect in our countenances the joy of living the gospel of Jesus Christ as true disciples should? If we do not understand and willingly teach others of the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who will? We cannot place the burden of taking the gospel to all people solely on the backs of the full-time missionaries. Families will not be fortified, nor will individual testimonies be strengthened; convert baptisms will not be increased, nor will the less active be welcomed back until we as members of the Church arise individually and collectively, with dedication and action, to help build the kingdom of God.

### True conversion is the key

Our duty lies in assisting others, through the power of the Spirit, to *know* and *understand* the doctrines and principles of the gospel. Everyone must come to *feel* that the doctrines of the Restoration are true and of great value. And everyone who accepts the message must strive to *live* the gospel by making and keeping sacred covenants and by participating in all the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. We often think of conversion as applying only to investigators, but there are some members who are not yet fully converted and who have yet to experience the mighty change of heart described in the scriptures (see Alma 5:12).

Brethren and sisters, true and complete conversion is the key to accelerating the work of the Church.

We know that both members and nonmembers are more likely to be thoroughly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ when they are willing to experiment upon the word (see Alma 32:27). This is an attitude of both mind and heart that includes a desire to know the truth and a willingness to act on that desire. For those investigating the Church, the experiment can be as simple as agreeing to read the Book of Mormon, to pray about it, and to earnestly seek to know if Joseph Smith was the Lord's prophet.

True conversion comes through the power of the Spirit. When the Spirit touches the heart, hearts are changed. When individuals, both members and investigators, feel the Spirit working with them, or when they see the evidence of the Lord's love and mercy in their lives, they are edified and strengthened spiritually, and their faith in Him increases. These experiences with the Spirit follow naturally when a person is willing to experiment upon the word. This is how we come to *feel* the gospel is true.

## Sharing gospel is evidence of conversion

A most significant evidence of our conversion and of how we feel about the gospel in our lives is our willingness to share it with others and help missionaries find someone to teach. The likelihood of lasting conversion greatly increases when a nonmember has a friend or a relative who radiates the joy of being a member of the Church. The influence of members of the Church is very powerful. I believe that's why President Hinckley asked us to see that everyone has a friend (see Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 65; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47).

Here, then, is an important key to our success in accelerating the Lord's work. As active members of the Church, and especially as priesthood and auxiliary leaders, we need to do more to assist in the process of conversion, retention, and activation. We know that faithful members desire to serve, but sometimes we lose sight of the essential outcomes that our faith and works ought to produce in strengthening the commitment of our Father's children to the gospel.

## Use councils to strengthen conversion

Bishops, you are the key. You give the vision and invite your ward council to help you strengthen the spiritual conversion of those investigating the Church as well as all of your members. Encourage council members to constantly think about the specific things they can do to assist you in helping your ward members and their nonmember friends to better know and understand the gospel. What can they do to help them feel it is true and to support them as they strive to live the principles? Ask yourselves what specific things we as priesthood and auxiliary leaders can do to encourage a family or an individual to experiment on the good word of God. What can the council do as leaders and teachers to ensure that every person who attends our Church

meetings feels the Spirit and is strengthened spiritually?

We are just now learning to focus on the right things in our council meetings, but too often we focus only on generalities. In one stake where they are having great success in baptizing and retaining new converts, the full-time missionaries are invited to meet with the ward council to discuss people they are teaching. The council members seek inspiration in determining which leaders and ward members can best help the missionaries fellowship specific individuals and families and bring them into the Church.

## Use councils to make best use of ward resources

Some of you bishops feel like you must be involved in every action your council members take. This is a mistake because if you do, you will never bring all the powerful resources God has given to you into full strength. At the general Relief Society meeting two weeks ago, Sister Sheri Dew said she believes the sisters are "the Lord's secret weapon" ("Stand Tall and Stand Together," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 96). I think she is right. Our sister leaders have a spiritual sensitivity that will prompt them how to best approach and nurture those whom the missionaries are teaching. The best place to begin to fully utilize the talents and wisdom of our sisters is through the established council system of the Church. You are free to be flexible in how you use the ward council.

Just last year, President Hinckley said this to the bishops of the Church:

"You are not bound by rigid rules. You have unlimited flexibility. You are entitled to answers to your prayers, to inspiration and revelation from the Lord" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 110).

Perhaps in some cases, holding council meetings only once a month will not be sufficient to focus on the spiritual con-

version of members and nonmembers alike who are under your ministering care. You are free to meet in council as often as deemed necessary.

### **Council members support a young girl**

Recently a stake president shared with me a tender story demonstrating the power of the council system in building up the Church. He said that both the Relief Society and the priesthood had been working with a family in their stake but had failed to make progress with the parents. Primary leaders found the answer. Permission was given by the parents for their young daughter to attend Primary. Their one condition was that she had to want to go badly enough to get there on her own. Rides to church could not be provided. Because she had to go through a rough part of town, the ward council saw to it that someone would drive along beside her as she rode an old bicycle to church.

Through summer heat, through rain and even snow, she persisted in going to church. One young man, who with his family was assigned to escort her on a snowy morning, was so touched as he watched the commitment of this little girl pedaling through the snow and cold that he decided to serve a full-time mission, citing this experience as the turning point in his life.

At Christmastime, a family in the ward gave this faithful little girl a new 10-speed bicycle. This so touched the parents that they too began attending church. In May 1999 this young girl was baptized. What made the baptism even more special was that it was performed by the newest priest in the ward, her recently activated father.

### **Help council members work together**

Bishops, for you to accomplish what the First Presidency and the Quorum of

the Twelve are asking, your ward council needs to capture this vision and work more closely together in doing God's great work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of all of His children. Imagine the power that would come if every member of the Church would reach out to help all members and investigators enjoy the companionship of the Spirit. Let all of us work harder to see that the presence of the Spirit is in all of our meetings to bring about deeper spiritual conversion. This will especially require ward councils to assist the bishops in improving reverence in our sacrament meetings and in better teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all of our Church meetings.

### **Now is the time to be bold in reaching out**

All of us should constantly think about the Savior giving His life for us. We must never forget that He suffered rejection, humiliation, unspeakable agony, and eventually death in order to save you and me and the whole world from sin. Can any one of us go before Him in some future day and say that we didn't share the gospel with others and help others come to the missionaries because we were too busy or too shy, or for any other reason?

This is God's work. He wants us to participate with Him and His Beloved Son in bringing the gospel into the lives of all of His children. The Lord has promised us that our joy will be great if we bring just one soul unto Him (see D&C 18:15-16). Let us exercise greater faith and work together, members and missionaries, to bring many more souls unto Him. Let every family in the Church include as part of their daily family prayers a plea with the Lord to go before your family members and help them to find someone prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now is the time for members of the Church to be more bold in reaching out

to others, helping them to know the Church is true. Now is the time to sustain by our actions what President Gordon B. Hinckley is asking us to do.

### **Marshal all resources in the Lord's work**

Lucifer is unleashing vulgar, revolting, violent, and sleazy filth with the design to destroy the spiritual sensitivity of our Father's children. We truly are at war with those who mock God and shun the truth, so let us keep our covenants and heed our call to service. Let us marshal all of the Lord's resources, including the power of our own testimonies. Let them be heard by many more people. Let the spirit of President Joseph F. Smith be in our hearts. Let us say, "I am ready to bear my testimony . . . at any time, or at any place, or in whatsoever circumstances I may be placed." It will help us

to do this by reading often the Prophet Joseph Smith's own story and then sharing with others our own sure knowledge that the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored once again to the earth.

We must move forward with the promise that the Spirit will bless us to know what to do and what to say as we assist those who are seeking to know the truth. Let us go forward with more faith, never forgetting that the Lord will help us as we turn to Him in mighty prayer. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. The Lord Jesus Christ lives. The most important work we can do is to help God's children come to a full understanding of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This I know to be true and so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Keith Crockett**

### **Retaining a remission of sin**

It was in his final address to his people that King Benjamin gave them a formula for retaining a remission of their sins. He had seen their willingness to enter into a covenant with God to do His will and to be obedient to His commandments in all things. Would it not be beneficial for us to review that formula so that we too might enjoy this great blessing?

After having received the great joy that comes from knowing the goodness of God and having tasted of His love, King Benjamin taught his people three basic principles that would help them retain a remission of their sins: first, to remain humble; second, to call upon the Lord daily; and third, to stand steadfast in the faith of that which was to come (see Mosiah 4:11).

Let us review each of these so that we may also be strengthened in our resolves to retain a remission of our sins.

### **Remain humble**

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught us that "all progress in spiritual things is conditioned upon the prior attainment of *humility*."<sup>1</sup> Humility has been described as having the "desire to submit to the Lord," the "desire to seek the Lord's will and glory," and the "desire to remove pride."<sup>2</sup>

King Benjamin told his people that they should "always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility" (Mosiah 4:11). The Lord counseled in the Doctrine and Covenants that "inasmuch as they were



humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time" (D&C 1:28).

May we each develop our humility by submitting to the will of the Lord in all things so that we may retain a remission of our sins.

### Call upon the Lord daily

Prayer is one of the greatest blessings we have while here on earth. Through prayer we can communicate with our Heavenly Father and seek His guidance daily. Jesus taught, "Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi 18:19). We should pray each day that we will have the power to resist temptation. Amulek teaches us that we should pray "morning, mid-day, and evening" and that our hearts should "be full, drawn out in prayer unto [God] continually" (Alma 34:21, 27). Our daily prayers influence our thoughts, our words, and our actions. In order to retain a remission of our sins, it is essential that we ask our Heavenly Father each day for strength to stay in the straight and narrow way.

In the general conference of last April, President James E. Faust taught that "to sustain faith, each of us must be humble and compassionate, kind and generous to the poor and the needy. Faith is further sustained by daily doses of spirituality that come to us as we kneel in prayer."<sup>3</sup>

A beautiful portrayal of prayer was given by President Gordon B. Hinckley in his opening remarks of the October 1996 general conference:

"You have prayed that you might hear things that will help you with your problems and add strength to your faith. I assure you that we have prayed also. We have prayed for inspiration and direction. There is a constant prayer in our hearts that we will not fail in the great trust the Lord has placed in us and the trust . . . you have placed in us. We have prayed that we might be prompted to say those

words which will build faith and testimony and which will become answered prayers for those who will hear."<sup>4</sup>

I testify that those who call upon the Lord daily will have greater power to retain a remission of their sins.

### Stand steadfast

Recently I stood with the missionaries of the Montevideo Uruguay West Mission as they quoted aloud the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (D&C 4:2).

I felt the Spirit of their callings as they stood steadfast in their stewardships of bringing souls to Christ. Latter-day Saints are commanded to "lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand" (D&C 27:15).

King Benjamin taught his people to stand steadfast "in the faith of that which [was] to come" (Mosiah 4:11). They had "cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . who shall come down among the children of men.

". . . The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of [their] exceeding faith . . . in Jesus Christ who should come" (Mosiah 4:2-3).

Today we can stand steadfast in the testimony of "The Living Christ," given by living Apostles: "We testify that He will someday return to earth. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together' (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of

Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts."<sup>5</sup>

Brothers and sisters, these blessings can be ours if we will apply these same three principles in our lives. Those Saints in King Benjamin's day were promised that if they would do this, they would always rejoice and be filled with the love of God. This gave them power in retaining a remission of their sins. They were promised that they would grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in the knowledge of that which was just and true. They would have no mind to injure one another but would live at peace with one another. They would discipline their children with love and teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness. They would love one another and serve one another. They would impart of their substance to care for the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to take care of the sick. They would administer relief to their fellowmen both spiritually and temporally. What greater blessing could we ask for?

May God grant that we too may retain a remission of our sins. I testify that God lives and that His Only Begotten Son is indeed our Savior and our Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 370.
2. *Gospel Principles* (1997), 4.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 21; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 18.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 4.
5. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.

#### President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, Elders H. Aldridge Gillespie and Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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## Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie

### Bind ourselves to act in all holiness

To all you beautiful, faithful Sunday afternoon Saints, we commend you for the respect of the Sabbath day which you show by attending conference this afternoon, wherever you may be.

We have been instructed, edified, and spiritually nourished through the five sessions of this magnificent general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have been taught "how to act upon the points of [the Lord's] law and commandments,"<sup>1</sup> and have been "sanctified by that which [we] have received."<sup>2</sup>

Now it is time to "bind [ourselves] to act in all holiness before [the Lord]."<sup>3</sup> In other words, based on this conference, we need to decide on specific actions to bring about needed changes in our lives. This action is called faith, and the changes are repentance. Blessings always follow these two principles. If we do not take action quickly, then the very thing which could have sanctified us may turn to our condemnation.

### Keeping the Sabbath day holy

Today is the Sabbath. It does not end when we leave this session; it does not end

if someone calls on the phone or knocks at our door inviting us to come out and play, go for a ride, go to a ball game, or go shopping; it does not end because we are on vacation or someone is visiting us, whether member or nonmember.

The Lord commanded: "Go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."<sup>4</sup> A critical element in observing this commandment is to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."<sup>5</sup>

The Sabbath lasts all day! In a revelation "especially applicable to the saints in Zion,"<sup>6</sup> the Lord states that the Sabbath was given that we might keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."<sup>7</sup> It is a day to partake of the sacrament, a day "to pay [our] devotions unto the Most High,"<sup>8</sup> a day of "fasting and prayer,"<sup>9</sup> a day to offer our time, talent, and means in service to our God and our fellowmen,<sup>10</sup> a day to "[confess our] sins [to our] brethren, and before the Lord."<sup>11</sup> It is also a good day to pay our tithes and fast offerings, a day to be marked by sincere sacrifice of the pursuits and pleasures of the world. It is a day to keep the Sabbath covenant,<sup>12</sup> a day of "rejoicing and prayer,"<sup>13</sup> a day of "cheerful hearts and countenances."<sup>14</sup>

Isaiah promised, "If thou turn away thy foot . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, . . . and . . . honour him, not . . . finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."<sup>15</sup>

### **Not a day for recreation or loafing**

Obviously our attention is on doing the Lord's will and not on continuing to work or on indulging our carnal appetites for recreation and loafing.

The prophet Spencer W. Kimball counseled:

"The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one

merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. [Failure] to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side."<sup>16</sup>

Our beloved prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, has promised:

"If you have any doubt about the wisdom, the divinity of observing the Sabbath Day, . . . stay home and gather your family about you, teach them the gospel, enjoy yourselves together on the Sabbath Day, come to your meetings, participate. You will know that the principle of the Sabbath is a true principle which brings with it great blessings."<sup>17</sup>

### **The Sabbath is "a perpetual covenant"**

Jesus taught that "the sabbath was made for man."<sup>18</sup> What does that mean? It means that for us to have the joy and happiness which the gospel promises, on this day we must sacrifice the world, set aside our employment as possible, and keep the eternal covenant of the Sabbath day. The Lord commanded: "Wherefore the children of Israel [which includes all Latter-day Saints] shall keep the sabbath . . . throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever."<sup>19</sup>

Of all people on the earth, Latter-day Saints must lead out in sanctifying this appointed day each week. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," said the Lord, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>20</sup>

To this very day, "the matter of Sabbath observance remains . . . as one of the great tests which divides the righteous from the worldly and wicked," said Elder Bruce R. McConkie.<sup>21</sup>

### Promises for keeping the Sabbath holy

The Lord's promises to those who keep the Sabbath day holy are so wonderfully clear in the scriptures that they leave one asking, "Why would anyone throw away such blessings for the tawdry, temporary pleasures of the world?" Hear again the words of Jehovah as they roll down from Mount Sinai:

"Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase. . . .

" . . . And ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give peace in the land, . . . neither shall the sword go through your land. . . .

"For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, . . . and establish my covenant with you. . . .

"And I will set my tabernacle [that is, my temple] among you. . . .

"And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."<sup>22</sup>

I love the Sabbath day! It has blessed my family in countless ways. I bear a testimony born of personal experience that the commandments of the Lord are "true and faithful."<sup>23</sup>

I know that you will be happier, enjoy greater peace, and find your lives made glad as you witness the miracles that come to each person and family who make the sacrifice of keeping this eternal covenant.

I love our Lord and Savior. I know He lives and that this is His Church and kingdom on earth. I know He is at once a just and merciful God, who loves His children with all the tenderness of a kind and loving Father. May we, in turn, "offer a sacrifice unto the Lord [our] God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit,"<sup>24</sup> I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42.
5. Exodus 20:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59 section heading.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 59:10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12 reads, "Thou shalt offer thine oblations," meaning to offer one's time, talents, or means (see footnote b).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:15.
15. Isaiah 58:13-14.
16. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 96-97.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 559.
18. Mark 2:27.
19. Exodus 31:16-17.
20. Matthew 5:20.
21. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658.
22. Leviticus 26:2-12.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 71:11.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 59:8.

## Elder Robert C. Oaks

### Importance of missionary work

I thrill to hear the prophet stand at this pulpit and declare how he sees the

work of the Lord rolling forth to fill the earth like that stone, cut without hands, that Daniel saw in his vision (see Daniel 2:34-35).

This work is driven by the Spirit of the Lord and through the operation of priesthood authority given to man. But it moves forward on the wheels of missionary work by those who have responded to the Lord's call to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

### **Increase the number of converts**

The gospel of Jesus Christ with all of its purity, beauty, and simplicity has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith.

We who have tasted the sweet fruits of the gospel know it as a fountain of faith, hope, and peace—a constant source of joy. Indeed, it is a rare jewel to be treasured and a rare jewel to be shared. There are 60,000 full-time missionaries engaged in the sharing process. Their efforts, coupled with those of stake missionaries and members, yielded some 300,000 new converts last year.

But this is not enough. Given the importance of the message, the help offered by the Spirit, the number of missionaries, and the size of the field that is ready to harvest, 300,000 new converts per year are not nearly enough. In fact, last year President Hinckley challenged Church members to significantly increase the number of converts. We are not yet on that prophetically prompted track.

This is what prophets do; they help us reach up to new heights.

President David O. McKay advised, "Every member a missionary";<sup>1</sup>

President Kimball: "Lengthen your stride"<sup>2</sup> and "Do it now";<sup>3</sup>

President Benson: "Flood the earth with the Book of Mormon";<sup>4</sup>

And now President Hinckley: Increase the number of converts and retain them.

Do we need more specific instructions?

### **Guidelines for member-missionary work**

Let me review the four-step instructions we have received regarding member-missionary work:

1. Identify prayerfully your friends and neighbors who would be the most receptive to the gospel message.

2. Introduce the identified individuals to the missionaries.

3. Involve yourself in the teaching of the gospel, preferably in your home.

4. Integrate your friends and any other new members into the Church by being attentive and helpful.

Through this simple, compact process we *can* increase the number of converts, and, more importantly, we can help the new converts achieve full fellowship. Increased member involvement is the only way to increase our current conversion rate.

### **Do not fear rejection**

We have heard all of this many times. Why don't we do better in providing referrals? It is not laziness, because Latter-day Saints are not lazy people. I believe that the fear of rejection or the fear of hurting a friendship are the more common restraints to sharing the gospel.

But are these fears valid? When you extend to a friend an invitation to meet with the missionaries, you are offering to share something that is most valuable and cherished. Is that offensive? Sister Oaks and I have not found this to be the case. In fact, we have found that when we offer to share the gospel, friendships are strengthened, even though the friends may not embrace the gospel message.

Consider that you are invited to a friend's house for breakfast. On the table you see a large pitcher of freshly squeezed orange juice from which your host fills his glass. But he offers you none. Finally you ask, "Could I have a glass of orange juice?"

He replies, "Oh, I am sorry. I was afraid you might not like orange juice, and I didn't want to offend you by offering you something you didn't desire."

Now, that sounds absurd, but it is not too different from the way we hesitate to offer up something far sweeter than orange juice. I have often worried how I would answer some friend about my hesitancy when I meet him beyond the veil.

### **"Why have you kept it a secret?"**

A story related by Elder Christoffel Golden of South Africa refreshed my concerns. He was recently in Lusaka, Zambia, attending a meeting of new converts. A well-spoken, well-dressed stranger with a Book of Mormon in hand walked in. He stated he had driven past the chapel many times and had wondered what church met there and what they taught for doctrine.

At the conclusion of the meeting, this gentleman stood up, raised his copy of the Book of Mormon high in the air, and asked, "Why have you kept this book hidden from the people of Lusaka? Why have you kept it a secret?"

As I heard this story, I flinched that one day some friend might ask me, "Why have you kept this Book of Mormon, with its message of truth and salvation, a secret?"

My reply, "I was afraid I would damage our friendship," will not be very satisfying to either me or my friend.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that we may put our fears and our hesitancy behind us and no more keep secret the great treasure that is ours.

### **Senior couple missionaries**

One last thought regarding missionary work: During my short time in south-east Africa, I have been overwhelmed by the remarkable service rendered by se-

nior couple missionaries. Daily they make significant contributions to the strengthening of the members and to rolling that stone, cut without hands, forward on its eternal course. What a mighty team for righteousness they make when joined with the younger missionaries and the local members.

Whether in leadership, proselyting, temple, humanitarian, welfare, or Church education service, the contribution of these experienced, testimony-bearing souls is beyond measure. And without exception I see them deriving great personal satisfaction from their service.

If you are retired, or retirement eligible, and wondering what useful things you might do with the rest of your life, contact your bishop. Let him share with you his exciting list of missionary opportunities.

Today, take your spouse by the hand and see if you don't agree that the best thing for all concerned, including your grandchildren, would be for you to accept an assignment to serve the Lord as missionaries. This is His work, and He beckons us to join Him in it.

I testify that God, our Eternal Father, and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, live. Christ came to earth and fulfilled His calling as the Redeemer of all mankind. I testify that His gospel has been restored in its fulness and that there is a living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, guiding this work under the direction of the Father and of the Son. And I so do in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 4; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 4.
3. "Always a Convert Church," *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 3.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 5.

### President Faust

Elders H. Aldridge Gillespie and Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy, who yesterday received emeritus status. He will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder F. Enzo Busche

### Feelings of awe for the Restoration

If I would be asked what, in my understanding, is the most important event to have happened on earth in the last 200 years, I would answer without any hesitation: it is the consequence of the prayer of a young boy who, in the early years of the 19th century, in upstate New York, knelt before God and asked questions of eternal truth.

This young man with the name Joseph Smith became, in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the instrument to restore to mankind the knowledge of the long-lost and nearly forgotten truth: the knowledge about us human beings—who we are, where we came from, what the meaning and purpose of our earthly existence is, and why mankind has experienced so much misery and injustice. Eventually answers were also given to mankind's questions of life after death and our final destiny.

Even to this day, more than 42 years after I accepted, by my own choice, the Lord's sacred covenant of baptism, I am still in a state of awe at all of the marvelous and miraculous happenings of the Restoration. Not only were we permitted to learn all about the essential meaning of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the important meaning of the priesthood of God was revealed, and it was restored for us to act in caring love and patience to bring about the choice of salvation to all.

### A friend refuses alcoholic drinks

Time will not allow me to talk more about the details of this marvelous work in our time, but I feel to talk about one key aspect in the Lord's kingdom that, if not understood, may result in the fact that the whole picture may never be quite in focus.

In order to come to the point, I want to tell you of a faithful brother who was a member of the same branch in my home country of Germany in the early years of my membership.

He was living in humble circumstances and felt very blessed to have recently begun a job in a small, privately owned company. He told me about an upcoming event where all of the employed people were invited to participate in a traditional company dinner party. He was concerned because he knew that there would be a big beer party at the end of this meeting, with the boss being probably the heaviest beer drinker of them all. But he also knew that it would be considered very impolite if he did not attend the dinner at all.

When I saw him again after that dinner event occurred, I saw him with a most happy, deep inner glow, and he could not wait to tell me what had happened. Because he was new in the company, the boss had sat right next to him, wanting to get to know him better. As the evening progressed, the brother saw his wildest fears confirmed because the boss would

not tolerate that he would not drink beer with him, and he said, "What kind of church is that that would not permit you to drink even a glass of beer with me?"

The fear of my friend did not grow into panic as he was able to calmly answer his boss that the reason he was not drinking had nothing to do with the church that he belonged to, but that *he* himself had made a sacred covenant with God that he would not drink. If he would ever break this covenant, how could he continue to stay true to that which he would ever promise, and how could he be trusted, even by his employer, that he would not lie or steal or cheat?

According to my friend, the owner was deeply touched by this statement, and he hugged him, speaking words of profound admiration and confidence.

### **Freedom from or freedom to**

My dear brothers and sisters, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many new members, specifically when they come from countries other than the United States, learn for the first time the true dimension of the word *freedom*. Freedom for most people of the world means "freedom from"—the absence of malice or pain or suppression. But the freedom that God means when He deals with us goes one step further. He means "freedom to"—the freedom to act in the dignity of our own choice.

What, then, does it mean to be free? Freedom means to have matured to the full knowledge of our dangerously many responsibilities as human beings. We have learned that everything we do, and even say or think, has consequences. We realize that too long we have believed that we were victims of circumstances. In the Gospel of John 8:32, we read the following: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

As we open our hearts to the message of God's truth as it was restored in our time, we begin to understand why

there was, and still is, so much misery, pain, suffering, and even starvation. In the same dimension, as we are learning to accept the revealed truth in our own life, our faith in the living Son of God will grow, and therefore we will receive spiritual gifts of heretofore unknown capacity. We will learn that nothing is impossible for those who believe in Jesus Christ. False bondages will be loosened. Narrow thinking born in tragedies of false traditions will disappear.

### **Freedom to make and keep covenants**

The more our understanding of the vastness and the completeness of the plan of salvation is developing, the more we see ourselves in our smallness, in our incompleteness. And seeing ourselves in that humility, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, will let us understand and finally accept this most sacred covenant with our Heavenly Father in the form of baptism.

We gladly will submit ourselves to this covenant, knowing that there is a big difference between mere desire and covenant. When we just desire something, we will work toward achieving it only when convenient. But when we are bound by a sacred covenant, like baptism, we learn to overcome all obstacles through obedience, and in so doing we are blessed with the presence of the Spirit and therefore eventually with achievement. We are beginning to become alive as we take, knowingly, full responsibility for our own life and as we stop blaming circumstances.

### **Freedom to make wrong choices**

One thing, of course, we know: having "freedom to" means that we have the potential of making wrong choices. Wrong choices have their merciless consequences. When they are not stopped and corrected, they lead to misery and pain. Wrong choices, if not corrected, will lead us to the ultimate possible disas-



ter in each person's life: to become separated from our Heavenly Father in the world to come.

### **Jesus wants to empower our lives**

When we have received this life-enabling message, we begin to understand that in our earlier life we were like a football player standing in the middle of the field, totally depressed because we did not know the purpose and the rules of the game. We did not know which team we belonged to and didn't even know who was our coach. Only in the awareness of the restored gospel, our game plan becomes clear and we comprehend that Jesus Christ and His restored Church and priesthood are the only way for us to succeed in our earthly experience.

Jesus Christ wants to empower our lives, according to our own righteous choices, to that dimension that, through our faith and our doings, the circum-

stances whose prisoners we were in the past will eventually change. In the Book of Mormon we learn that the Redeemer monitors our lives, together with a multitude of holy angels. We read:

"Have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

"For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith" (Moroni 7:29-30).

In this freedom that we have received in our time, through our understanding of His divine plan for us, we stand in our full responsibility. Let us always stay close to the loving, caring hand of our Savior and our Redeemer to find safety and joy. I say this in deep humility. And I bear you my testimony as your brother and servant that I know that Jesus lives and that He is the head of this work. I say this in Jesus' name, amen.

## **Elder Henry B. Eyring**

### **Importance of teaching children to pray**

Parents should teach their children to pray. The child learns both from what the parents do and what they say. The child who sees a mother or a father pass through the trials of life with fervent prayer to God and then hears a sincere testimony that God answered in kindness will remember what they saw and heard. When their trials come, they will be prepared.

In time, when the child is away from home and family, prayer can provide the shield of protection the parent will want so much for them to have. Parting can be hard, particularly when the parent and the child know that they may not see each other for a long time. I had that experience with my father. We parted on a street corner in New York City. He had

come there for his work. I was there on my way to another place. We both knew that I probably would never return to live with my parents under the same roof again.

It was a sunny day, around noon-time, the streets crowded with cars and pedestrians. On that particular corner there was a traffic light which stopped the cars and the people in all directions for a few minutes. The light changed to red; the cars stopped. The crowd of pedestrians hurried off the curbs, moving every way, including diagonally, across the intersection.

The time had come for parting, and I started across the street. I stopped almost in the center, with people rushing by me. I turned to look back. Instead of moving off in the crowd, my father was still standing on the corner looking at

me. To me he seemed lonely and perhaps a little sad. I wanted to go back to him, but I realized the light would change and so I turned and hurried on.

Years later I talked to him about that moment. He told me that I had misread his face. He said he was not sad; he was concerned. He had seen me look back, as if I were a little boy, uncertain and looking for assurance. He told me in those later years that the thought in his mind had been, "Will he be all right? Have I taught him enough? Is he prepared for whatever may lie ahead?"

There were more than thoughts in his mind. I knew from having watched him that he had feelings in his heart. He yearned for me to be protected, to be safe. I had heard and felt that yearning in his prayers, and even more in the prayers of my mother, for all the years I had lived with them. I had learned from that, and I remembered.

### Parents' teachings about prayer

#### *Use the sacred language of prayer*

Prayer is a matter of the heart. I had been taught far more than the rules of prayer. I had learned from my parents and from the Savior's teachings that we must address our Heavenly Father in the reverent language of prayer. "Our Father . . . in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). I knew that we never profane His sacred name—never. Can you imagine how the prayers of a child are harmed by hearing a parent profane the name of God? There will be terrible consequences for such an offense to the little ones.

#### *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness*

I had learned that it was important to give thanks for blessings and to ask for forgiveness. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

### *Be submissive to God's will*

I had been taught that we ask for what we need and pray for others to be blessed. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). I knew that we must surrender our will. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). I had been taught and found it true that we can be warned of danger and shown early what we have done which displeased God. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

#### *Pray in the name of Jesus Christ*

I had learned that we must always pray in the name of Jesus Christ. But something I had seen and heard had taught me those words were more than a formality. There was a picture of the Savior on the bedroom wall where my mother was bedridden in the years before she died. She had put it there because of something her cousin Samuel O. Bennion had told her. He had traveled with an Apostle who described seeing the Savior in a vision. Elder Bennion gave her that print, saying that it was the best portrayal he had ever seen of the Master's strength of character. So she framed it and placed it on the wall where she could see it from her bed.

She knew the Savior, and she loved Him. I had learned from her that we do not close in the name of a stranger when we approach our Father in prayer. I knew from what I had seen of her life that her heart was drawn to the Savior from years of determined and consistent effort to serve Him and to please Him. I knew the scripture was true which warns, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Years after my mother and father are gone, the words "in the name of Je-

sus Christ" are not casual for me, either when I say them or when I hear others say them. We must serve Him to know the Master's heart. But we also must pray that Heavenly Father will answer our prayers in our hearts as well as in our minds (see Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3).

### **Ask God to write His will in our hearts**

President George Q. Cannon described the blessing of people coming together having prayed for such answers. He was speaking of going to a priesthood meeting, yet many of you have come to this meeting with hearts prepared in the way he described in these words:

"I should enter that assembly with my mind entirely free from all influence that would prevent the operation of the Spirit of God upon me. I should go in a prayerful spirit, asking God to *write upon my heart* His will; not with my own will already prepared, and determined to carry out my will . . . , regardless of everyone else's views. If I were to go, and all the rest were to go, with this spirit, then the Spirit of God would be felt in our midst, and that which we would decide upon would be the mind and will of God, because God would reveal it to us. We would see light in the direction where we should go, and we would behold darkness in the direction we should not go" (*Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 30 Sept. 1890, 2; italics added).

### **Teach children to be submissive in prayer**

Our goal when we teach our children to pray is for them to want God to write upon their hearts and be willing then to go and do what God asks of them. It is possible for our children to have faith enough, from what they see us do and what we teach, that they can feel at least part of what the Savior felt as He prayed to have the strength to make His infinite sacrifice for us: "And he went a little fur-

ther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

I have had prayers answered. Those answers were most clear when what I wanted was silenced by an overpowering need to know what God wanted. It is then that the answer from a loving Heavenly Father can be spoken to the mind by the still, small voice and can be written on the heart.

### **Teaching children who have strayed**

Some parents are listening with this question: "But how can I soften the heart of my child now grown older and convinced he or she doesn't need God? How can I soften a heart enough to allow God to write His will upon it?" Sometimes tragedy will soften a heart. But for some, even tragedy is not enough.

There is one need even the hardened and proud persons cannot believe they can meet for themselves. They cannot lift the weight of sin from their own shoulders. And even the most hardened may at times feel the prick of conscience and thus the need for forgiveness from God. A loving father, Alma, taught that need to his son Corianton this way:

"And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15).

And then, after bearing testimony of the Savior and His Atonement, the father made this plea for a softened heart: "O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart;

and let it bring you down to the dust in humility" (Alma 42:30).

Alma knew what we can know: that testifying of Jesus Christ and Him crucified had the greatest possibility of his son coming to sense his need for the help only God could give. And prayers are answered to those whose hearts are softened by that overwhelming feeling of the need for cleansing.

### **Children must ask for themselves**

When we teach those we love that we are spirit children temporarily away from a loving Heavenly Father, we open the door of prayer to them.

We lived in His presence before we came here to be tested. We knew His face, and He knew ours. Just as my earthly father watched me go away from him, our Father in Heaven watched us go into mortality.

His Beloved Son, Jehovah, left those glorious courts to come down into the world to suffer what we would suffer and to pay the price of all the sins we would commit. He provided for us the only way to go home again to our Heavenly Father and to Him. If the Holy Ghost can tell us just that much about who we are, we and our children might feel what Enos felt. He prayed this way:

"And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed" (Enos 1:4-5).

I can promise you that no joy will exceed what you would feel if a child of yours prays in the hour of need and receives such an answer. You will someday be separated from them, with a longing in your heart to be reunited. A loving Heavenly Father knows that longing would last

forever unless we are reunited as families with Him and His Beloved Son. He put in place all His children will need to have that blessing. To find it, they must ask of God for themselves, nothing doubting, as the boy Joseph Smith did.

### **Father's prayer after Mother's death**

My dad was concerned that day in New York because he knew, as my mother knew, that the only real tragedy would be if we were apart forever. That is why they taught me to pray. They knew we could be together forever only with God's help and with His assurances. As you will do, they taught prayer best by example.

The afternoon my mother died, we went to the family home from the hospital. We sat quietly in the darkened living room for a while. Dad excused himself and went to his bedroom. He was gone for a few minutes. When he walked back into the living room, there was a smile on his face. He said that he'd been concerned for Mother. During the time that he had gathered her things from her hospital room and thanked the staff for being so kind to her, he thought of her going into the spirit world just minutes after her death. He was afraid she would be lonely if there was no one to meet her.

He had gone to his bedroom to ask his Heavenly Father to have someone greet Mildred—his wife and my mother. He said that he had been told in answer to his prayer that his mother had met his sweetheart. I smiled at that too. Grandma Eyring was not very tall. I had a clear picture of her rushing through the crowd, her short legs moving rapidly on her mission to meet my mother.

Dad surely didn't intend at that moment to teach me about prayer, but he did. I can't remember a sermon from my mother or my father about prayer. They prayed when times were hard and when they were good. And they reported in matter-of-fact ways how kind God was, how powerful and how close. The prayers

I heard most were about what it would take for us to be together forever. And the answers which will remain written on my heart seem most often to be the assurances that we were on the path.

When I saw in my mind my grandmother rushing to my mother, I felt joy for them and a longing to bring my sweetheart and our children to such a reunion. That longing is why we must teach our children to pray.

I testify that our Heavenly Father answers the pleadings of faithful parents to know how to teach their children to pray. I testify that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can have eternal life in families if we honor the covenants offered in this, His true Church. I so testify as His servant in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **President Faust**

Elder F. Enzo Busche has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the great Tabernacle Choir, the wonderful combined Missionary Training Center choir, the special Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kaneshville, and Riverdale, Utah, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you leave this conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

The choir will now sing "Be Thou Humble." President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will then be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

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The choir sang "Be Thou Humble."

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## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

#### **"An humble and a contrite heart"**

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart.  
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget, lest we forget.  
["God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,"  
*Hymns*, no. 80]

These immortal words of Rudyard Kipling express my feelings as we bring to a conclusion this wonderful conference of the Church.

Following the benediction we shall depart this great hall, turn off the lights, and lock the doors. You who are listening across the world will switch off your television set or the radio or shut down the Internet. As we do so, I would hope that

we will remember that when all is over, "Still stands thine ancient sacrifice, An humble and a contrite heart" (*Hymns*, no. 80).

I hope that we shall ponder with subdued feelings the talks to which we have listened. I hope that we will quietly reflect on the wonderful things we have heard. I hope that we will feel a little more contrite and humble.

### **Apply the teachings from this conference**

All of us have been edified. The test will come in the application of the teachings given. If, hereafter, we are a little more kind, if we are a little more neighborly, if we have drawn nearer to the Savior, with a more firm resolution to follow His teachings and His example, then this conference will have been a wonderful success. If, on the other hand, there is no improvement in our lives, then those who have spoken will have in large measure failed.

Those changes may not be measurable in a day or a week or a month. Resolutions are quickly made and quickly forgotten. But in a year from now, if we are doing better than we have done in the past, then the efforts of these days will not have been in vain.

We will not remember all that has been said, but there will arise from all of this a spiritual uplift. It may be indefinable, but it will be real. As the Lord said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

So it will be with the experience we have enjoyed. And perhaps out of all we have heard, there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives.

### **Continue to discuss and study truths**

In our family home evenings I hope we will discuss with our children these things and let them taste the sweetness of the truths we have enjoyed. And when the *Ensign* magazine comes out in November, with all of the conference messages, please don't just throw it aside with the comment that you have heard it all, but read and ponder the various messages. You will find many things that you missed when you listened to the speakers.

I have only one regret concerning the conference. That is that so few of the Brethren and sisters have opportunity to speak. It is simply a matter of the constraints of time.

### **Memories of conference sustain us**

Tomorrow morning we will be back at our jobs, back to our studies, back to whatever constitutes the busy regimen of our lives. But we can have the memories of this great occasion to sustain us.

We can draw nearer to the Lord in our prayers. These can become conversations of thanksgiving. I can never fully understand how the Great God of the Universe, the Almighty, invites us as His children to speak with Him individually. How precious an opportunity is this. How wonderful that it actually happens. I testify that our prayers, offered in humility and sincerity, are heard and answered. It is a miraculous thing, but it is real.

Let us lower our voices in our homes. Let love abound and find expression in our actions. May we walk the quiet ways of the Lord, and may prosperity crown our labors.

The great "Hosanna" salutation in which we participated this morning should remain an unforgettable experience. From time to time, we can repeat quietly in our minds, when we are alone, those beautiful words of worship.

I bear witness of the truth of this work and of the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and of His Only Begotten Son, whose Church this is. I extend my love to every one of you. God be with you, my dear, dear friends. I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you as we bid you good-bye for a season, in the name of Him who

is our Master, our Redeemer, and our King, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing."

Elder Darwin B. Christenson offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a combined Missionary Training Center choir. The choir was directed by Douglas Brenchley. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the general priesthood session was provided by an Aaronic Priest-

hood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kaneshville, and Riverdale, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference





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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-first  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

31 March–1 April, 2001



Official Report  
of the  
One Hundred Seventy-first  
Annual General Conference

of  
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of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
March 31 and April 1, 2001

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# Report of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 2001. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, March 31, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the general priesthood, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Bal-

lard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christoferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B.

Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

#### **Other authorities present**

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## **SATURDAY MORNING SESSION**

The first session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 10:00 A.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." President Faust then made the following remarks.

#### **President James E. Faust**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge all of the General Authorities present in the Conference Center and seated on the stand at overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall, and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us. We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many parts of the world. We are pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org and also express appreciation to the other Internet service providers who have given of their time in providing access to the conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord" and will now favor us with "For the Beauty of the Earth." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy. It will then be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

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The choir sang "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Elder W. Craig Zwick offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Expressions of gratitude

My brothers and sisters, my heart is filled with gratitude this morning as we gather in this great conference. I am grateful that the Lord has spared my life to see this day. As I reminded the young women to whom I spoke a week ago, someone recently gave me a copy of my old high school yearbook. It was the year of my graduation. It was 73 years ago. I was part of the class of 1928. It was an intriguing experience to thumb through it. Most of those who were so young and energetic at that time have passed on. A few are left, but they are wrinkled and somewhat feeble in their movements. Now and again when I complain of some little ailment, my wife will say, "It's your age, boy."

I repeat, I am deeply grateful to be alive. I am excited with this wonderful age in which we live. I thank the Lord for men and women of great dedication and great capacity who are doing so much to extend human life and to make it more comfortable and pleasant. I am grateful for good doctors who help us with our infirmities.

I am thankful for wonderful friends, among whom I include the great and faithful Saints across the world whom I have come to know. Thank you for all that you do for me, for the letters you send, for flowers and books and various expressions of your thoughtfulness and love. I am thankful for generous friends through whose kindness it has been possible for me to get out among the Saints in the nations of the earth, to meet with them, to share testimony and love with them.

I am grateful for my dear wife, with whom I have shared these nearly 64 years of companionship. I feel grateful for a faithful posterity. The Lord has blessed me in a marvelous way.

I am thankful for my Brethren of the General Authorities, who are so kind and deferential toward me. I am thankful for every one of you in this great family, more than 11 million strong, which constitutes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### The strength and growth of the Church

In opening the conference I simply want to very briefly give a report on the Church.

It is stronger than it has ever been. It is not only larger in numbers, but I believe there is greater faithfulness among the Saints generally. During the past six months we have had the opportunity of dedicating temples scattered over the earth, far and wide. We have heard testimony of the truth of this work spoken in various languages. We have seen the overwhelming faith of our people who have traveled long distances to get to these dedications. We have witnessed a marvelous increase in the growth of temple activity. We are experiencing slow but steady improvement in most of our fields of activity.

I am so grateful that we live in an era of comparative peace. There are no great wars raging across the world. There is trouble here and there but not a great worldwide conflict. We are able to carry the gospel to so many nations of the earth and bless the lives of the people wherever it goes.

We are well on our way to enlarging the educational opportunity for our youth. We have announced that Ricks College will become a four-year school to be known as BYU—Idaho. We are grateful to learn that the school has now received an endorsement from the accrediting body. It is remarkable to have this in so short a time.

We are constructing new buildings on a scale of which we never have dreamed before. We must do so if we are to accommodate the growth of the Church.

The welfare program moves forward. We are particularly grateful that we have been able to extend humanitarian aid of a very substantial volume in many parts of the earth. We have distributed food, medicine, clothing, bedding, and other necessities to assist those who have suddenly found themselves victims of catastrophe.

I will speak this evening to the priesthood brethren concerning another program which I think will be of great interest to all of you.

### **Exceeding temple construction goals**

One of the bellwether marks of the growth and vitality of the Church is the construction of temples. I have spoken of this before, but I am so deeply grateful that since we last met in general conference we were able to reach our goal of 100 operating temples by the end of the year 2000; in fact, we exceeded it. We have just come from dedicating a temple in Uruguay, the 103rd working temple of the Church.

The great work of temple building goes on throughout the world. I looked the other day at a list of all the temples which are now in operation or have been announced—121 of them. I was amazed at the length of the list and the incredible diversity of the areas in which they are located. It is wonderful, but we are not satisfied. We will keep on working to bring the temples to the people, making it more convenient for Latter-day Saints everywhere to receive the blessings which can be had only in these holy houses.

I have said before that the blessings of the temple represent that fulness of the priesthood of which the Lord spoke when He revealed His will unto the Prophet Joseph Smith. With the location of temples much nearer to the homes of

our people, there is made more available to them all of the ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

Temples will soon be dedicated in Winter Quarters, Nebraska; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Perth, Australia. They are under construction in Asunción, Paraguay; Campinas, Brazil; the Tri-Cities area of Washington; Copenhagen, Denmark; Lubbock, Texas; Monterrey, Mexico; Nauvoo, Illinois; Snowflake, Arizona; and The Hague, Netherlands. Another six temples have been announced, and groundbreaking services will soon be held for these. In addition, we have visited and are giving consideration to a significant number of potential temple sites in the United States, Central and South America, Europe, and the isles of the sea. I will not mention their names because this would only create excitement when we do not yet have the ground on which to build them.

The construction of each temple represents a maturing of the Church. We will continue to build these sacred houses of the Lord as rapidly as energy and resources will allow. We are grateful for the faithful Latter-day Saints who pay their tithing and make possible this important program.

### **Return good for evil; be friendly**

We are not without critics, some of whom are mean and vicious. We have always had them, and I suppose we will have them all through the future. But we shall go forward, returning good for evil, being helpful and kind and generous. I remind you of the teachings of our Lord concerning these matters. You are all acquainted with them. Let us be good people. Let us be friendly people. Let us be neighborly people. Let us be what members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ought to be.

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, how much I appreciate your prayers

and your love. I extend my love to each of you. May the heavens open, and may blessings come down upon you in abundance as you walk in faithfulness before the Lord.

We shall now be pleased to go forward with the proceedings of this great gathering.

God bless you, my beloved associates, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "We Are Sowing." We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us.

Following Elder Jensen's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Fulfilling the purposes of mortality

One of the most exhilarating moments of your life—when you were filled with anticipation, excitement, and gratitude—you are not able to remember. That experience occurred in the premortal life when you were informed that finally your time had come to leave the spirit world to dwell on earth with a mortal body.

You knew you could learn through personal experience the lessons that would bring happiness on earth—lessons that would eventually lead you to exaltation and eternal life as a glorified, celestial being in the presence of your Holy Father and His Beloved Son.

You understood that there would be challenges, for you would live in an environment of both righteous and evil influences. Yet surely you resolved that no matter what the cost, no matter what the effort, suffering, and testing, you would return victorious.

You were reserved to come when the fulness of the gospel is on earth. You arrived when His Church and the priest-

hood authority to perform the sacred temple ordinances are in place. You anticipated being born into a home where parents would be expected to love, nurture, strengthen, and teach you truths. You knew that in time you would have the opportunity to form your own eternal family as husband or wife, father or mother. Oh, how you must have rejoiced at that prospect.

These words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:24–26).

After Adam was placed on earth, God said, "Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man

should be alone" (Abraham 5:14). Eve and Adam formed the first family. God declared, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Moses 3:24). They had children who also formed families. "And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God" (Moses 5:16). The pattern of families essential to Father's plan of happiness was established, and our need to continually "call upon God" emphasized. You are in the midst of living that plan.

### Strive for the ideal family

Through the restored gospel we learn there is an *ideal family*. It is a family composed of a righteous Melchizedek Priesthood bearer with a righteous wife sealed to him and children born in the covenant or sealed to them. With a mother in the home in an environment of love and service, the parents teach their children, through example and precept, the ways of the Lord and His truths. They fulfill their divinely appointed roles mentioned in the family proclamation (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Their children mature by living teachings instilled from birth. They develop characteristics of obedience, integrity, love of God, and faith in His holy plan. In due course, each of those children seeks a companion with similar ideals and aspirations. They are sealed in the temple and bear children, and the eternal plan continues, with generation strengthening generation.

Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. If it requires fundamental changes in your personal life, make them.

When you have the required age and maturity, obtain all of the ordinances of the temple you can receive. If for the pres-

ent that does not include sealing in the temple to a righteous companion, live for it. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it.

If your dream requires patience, give it. As brothers, we prayed and worked for 30 years before our mother and our nonmember father were sealed in the temple. Don't become overanxious. Do the best you can. We cannot say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond it, but the Lord will keep His promises. In His infinite wisdom, He will make possible all you qualify in worthiness to receive. Do not be discouraged. Living a pattern of life as close as possible to the ideal will provide much happiness, great satisfaction, and impressive growth while here on earth, regardless of your current life circumstances.

### "Good things" can become distractions

Satan and his hosts will do all in their power to keep you from obtaining the ordinances required for the ideal family. He will attempt to distract you from centering your mind and heart on raising a strong family by nurturing your children as the Lord requires.

Are there so many fascinating, exciting things to do or so many challenges pressing down upon you that it is hard to keep focused on that which is essential? When things of the world crowd in, all too often the wrong things take highest priority. Then it is easy to forget the fundamental purpose of life. Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with "good things" so there is no room for the essential ones. Have you unconsciously been caught in that trap?

"Men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the

great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, . . . for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Why has your moral agency been given to you? Only to live a pleasurable life and to make choices to do the things you want to do? Or is there a more fundamental reason—to be able to make the choices that will lead you to fully implement your purpose for being here on earth and to establish priorities in your life that will ensure the development and happiness the Lord wants you to receive.

### **Danger of focusing only on pleasure**

Recently I met an intelligent young man with great potential. He was undecided about a mission. He has decided not to attend a university now. In his free time he does only what he likes to do. He doesn't work because he doesn't have to, and it would take time from pleasure. He passed seminary classes without much thought of personally applying the knowledge gained. I noted:

"You are making choices today that appear to give you what you want: an easy life, abundant enjoyment, and not much sacrifice. You can do that for a while, yet every decision you make narrows your future. You are eliminating possibilities and options. There will come a time, and it won't be too distant, when you are going to spend the rest of your life doing things you don't want to do, in places you don't want to be, because you have not prepared yourself. You are not taking advantage of your opportunities."

I mentioned how everything I treasure today began to mature in the mission field. Missionary service is not something we do for ourselves, yet great growth and preparation for the future are gained from a mission. Missionaries focus outside of themselves on other people. They draw close to the Lord and really learn His teachings. They find individuals who are interested in the message but not sure of

its worth. Missionaries try with every capacity—prayer, fasting, and testifying—to help individuals embrace the truth. A mission teaches one to be led by the Spirit, to understand our purpose for being on earth and how to accomplish it. I gave him a blessing. As he left, I prayed earnestly that the Lord would help him choose the right priorities. Otherwise, he will fail in life's purpose.

### **Discipline and sacrifice develop character**

In stark contrast, consider the example of another young man. Through the years I have watched how his parents have taught him from infancy to unwaveringly live the commandments of God. By example and precept, they nurtured him, together with their other children, in truth. They encouraged him to develop discipline and sacrifice to obtain worthy goals. This young man chose swimming to instill in his character those qualities. Early-morning practice sessions required discipline and sacrifice. Over time he excelled in that sport.

Then came the challenges—for example, a championship swim meet on Sunday. Would he participate? Would he rationalize an exception to his rule of not swimming on Sunday to help his team win the championship? No, he would not yield, even under intense peer pressure. He was called names, even physically abused. But he would not yield. The rejection of friends, the loneliness, and the pressure brought times of sadness and tears. But he would not yield. He was learning firsthand what each of us must come to know—the reality of Paul's counsel to Timothy: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Over the years this consistent pattern of righteous living—woven from hundreds of correct decisions, some in the face of great challenge—has developed a character of strength and capacity. Now, as a missionary, he is appreciated by his peers

for his ability to work, his knowledge of truth, his unwavering devotion, and his determination to share the gospel. One who earlier was rejected by his peers now has become a respected leader of his peers. Is there a message for you in these examples?

### **Seek the Lord's will, not convenience**

While wholesome pleasure results from much we do that is good, it is not our prime purpose for being on earth. Seek to know and do the will of the Lord, not just what is convenient or what makes life easy. You have His plan of happiness. You know what to do, or can find out through study and prayer. Do it willingly. The Lord declared:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"... Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in no wise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned" (D&C 58:26–29)—meaning stopped in progress and development.

### **Get what you pay for in spiritual matters**

An axiom we all understand is that you get what you pay for. That is true for spiritual matters as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths that are learned in your own life. What you get is the molding of character, the growth in capacity, the success-

ful completion of your purpose here on earth—to be proven.

Time and time again at funerals, statements are made that the deceased will inherit all blessings of celestial glory when that individual has in no way qualified by obtaining the necessary ordinances and by keeping the required covenants. That won't happen. Such blessings can be earned only by meeting the Lord's requirements. His mercy does not overcome the requirements of His law. They must be met.

### **Put first things first**

Some places are sacred and holy, where it seems easier to discern the direction of the Holy Spirit. The temple is such a place. Find a retreat of peace and quiet where periodically you can ponder and let the Lord establish the direction of your life. Each of us needs to periodically check our bearings and confirm that we are on course. Sometime soon you may benefit from taking this personal inventory:

- What are my highest priorities to be accomplished while on earth?
- How do I use my discretionary time? Is some of it consistently applied to my highest priorities?
- Is there anything I know I should not be doing? If so, I will repent and stop it now.

In a quiet moment write down your responses. Analyze them. Make any necessary adjustments.

Put first things first. Do the best you can while on earth to have an *ideal family*. To help you do that, ponder and apply the principles in the proclamation on the family. I testify that the Lord lives. He loves you. As you live worthily and honestly seek His help, He will guide and strengthen you to know His will and to be able to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Marlin K. Jensen

### Be humble

One of the memorable themes of last October's general conference was that in addition to being concerned about what we *do*, we Latter-day Saints ought also to pay attention to what we *are* and are striving to *become*.<sup>1</sup> With that principle in mind, I listened attentively last November to President Gordon B. Hinckley's address to the youth of the Church. I was touched by the six priceless bits of wisdom he shared describing what youth ought to *be*. One of the six—"be humble"—was of special interest to me.<sup>2</sup>

When I suggested to my wife several weeks ago that because of President Hinckley's talk I was considering humility as a possible topic for my remarks today, she paused and, with a twinkle in her eye, teasingly replied, "That leaves you only a few days to gain some!" Being thus encouraged, I have reflected on what might be involved in obeying President Hinckley's injunction to "be humble."

To begin, it should come as no surprise that, in the estimation of some, humility ranks quite low on the scale of desirable character traits. Popular books have been written in recent years on integrity, common sense, civility, and a host of other virtues, but apparently there is little market for humility. Obviously, in these coarsening times when we are taught the art of negotiating by intimidation, and *assertiveness* has become a byword of the business world, those seeking to become humble will be a small and overlooked but critically important minority.

Consciously trying to acquire humility is also problematic. I remember once hearing one of my colleagues in the Seventy say about humility that "if you think you have it, you don't." He suggested we should try to develop humility and be sure we didn't know when we got it, and then

we would have it. But if we ever thought we had it, we wouldn't.<sup>3</sup>

This is one of the lessons C. S. Lewis teaches in his well-known *Screwtape Letters*. In letter XIV, a good man who is being recruited by a devil and his apprentice to their side is growing humble, and the devil remarks that "this is very bad." With great insight, Lewis has the devil say to his associate, "Your patient has become humble; have you drawn his attention to the fact?"<sup>4</sup>

### How to develop humility

Fortunately the Savior has given us a model for developing humility. When His disciples approached Him and inquired, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He responded by placing a little child in their midst and stating, "Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>5</sup>

In this passage the Savior teaches us that to become humble is to become as a child. How does a person become as a child, and what are the childlike qualities we ought to develop? King Benjamin, in his profound Book of Mormon sermon, provides guidance:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."<sup>6</sup>

King Benjamin seems to teach that becoming like a child is a gradual process of spiritual development in which we are aided by the Holy Ghost and our reliance

on Christ's Atonement. Through this process, we will eventually acquire the childlike attributes of meekness, humility, patience, love, and spiritual submissiveness. True humility will inevitably lead us to say to God, "Thy will be done." And because what we *are* does affect what we *do*, our submissiveness will be reflected in our reverence, gratitude, and willingness to accept callings, counsel, and correction.

### **Submissiveness is not subservience**

A story contained in the family lore of Brigham Young's descendants illustrates the submissive nature of humility. It recounts that in a public meeting the Prophet Joseph, possibly as a test, sternly rebuked Brigham Young for something he had done or something he was supposed to have done but hadn't—the detail is unclear. When Joseph finished the rebuke, everyone in the room waited for Brigham Young's response. This powerful man, later known as the Lion of the Lord, in a voice everyone could tell was sincere, said simply and humbly, "Joseph, what do you want me to do?"<sup>77</sup>

The power of that response itself brings a feeling of humility. It reminds us that the greatest act of courage and love in the history of mankind—Christ's atoning sacrifice—was also the greatest act of humility and submissiveness. Some may wonder if those seeking to become humble must forever defer to the strongly held opinions and positions of others. Certainly the Savior's life evidences that true humility is anything but subservience, weakness, or servility.

### **Pride—the antithesis of humility**

Another helpful perspective on humility can be obtained by examining its antithesis—pride. Just as humility leads to other virtues such as modesty, teachableness, and unpretentiousness, pride leads to many other vices. In Latter-day

Saint theology, it was through pride that Satan became the adversary of all truth. It was the growth of this arrogance, termed *hubris*, that the wise men of ancient Greece portrayed as the sure road to destruction.

Twelve years ago President Ezra Taft Benson delivered a powerful conference address declaring that pride is "the universal sin, the great vice."<sup>78</sup> He taught that pride is essentially competitive in nature and made reference to this quote from C. S. Lewis:

"Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If every one else became equally rich, clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone."<sup>79</sup>

What an interesting commentary on today's highly competitive and thus prideful world. What an important reminder as well, for those of us who are blessed with the fulness of the gospel, to avoid both the condition and appearance of haughtiness or condescension in all of our human relationships.

### **How humility would change the world**

I think sometimes of what life would be like if we all possessed greater humility.

Imagine a world in which *we* would replace *I* as the dominant pronoun.

Think of the impact on the pursuit of knowledge if being learned without being arrogant were the norm.

Consider the climate that would exist within in a marriage or family—or any organization, for that matter—if through genuine humility mistakes were freely admitted and forgiven, if we were not

afraid to praise others for fear they might gain on us, and if all were able to listen as well as we now verbalize.

Contemplate the advantages of life in a society in which considerations of status were only secondary, where citizens were more concerned with their responsibilities than their rights, and where those in authority might even occasionally step forward and humbly acknowledge, "I could be wrong." Must our need to be "right" be so all-consuming? Surely this intolerance of others and their viewpoints is nothing less than the hubris the Greeks viewed and warned against as the suicidal sin. One wonders how differently even recent world history might be written if its principal participants had yielded to the gentle nudgings of humility.

Even more importantly, think of the role of humility in the process of repentance. Is it not humility, coupled with faith in Christ, that carries the transgressor to God in prayer, to the offended party in apology, and, where necessary, to his or her priesthood leader in confession?

### Examples of humility

I am grateful for examples of humility I have encountered in my life.

Once my father, in the heat and frustration of a humid July afternoon, overreacted to my youthful farming blunders and administered punishment which I felt was in excess of the crime. Later he approached me with an apology and a much-appreciated expression of confidence in my abilities. That humble expression has remained in my memory for more than 40 years.

I have seen a constant humility in my wonderful wife. Like Nephi turning to Lehi for direction after Lehi had momentarily faltered, she has stayed at my side for 34 years and consistently supported and loved me "notwithstanding my weakness."<sup>10</sup>

I am often deeply moved by evidences of humility in the scriptures. Con-

sider John the Baptist declaring of the Savior, "He must increase, but I must decrease."<sup>11</sup> Think of Moroni pleading with us not to condemn him because of his imperfections, but to thank God that He made Moroni's imperfections manifest so that we can learn to be wiser than Moroni was.<sup>12</sup> Nor should we forget the exclamation of Moses, who, after experiencing the greatness of God and His creations, acknowledged that "for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed."<sup>13</sup> Is not Moses' recognition of our complete dependence on God the beginning of true humility?

### "To walk humbly with thy God"

I resonate to the English author John Ruskin's memorable statement that "the first test of a truly great man is his humility." He continued:

"I do not mean, by humility, doubt of his own power. . . . [But really] great men . . . have a curious . . . feeling that . . . greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them. . . . And they see something Divine . . . in every other man . . . and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."<sup>14</sup>

The Old Testament prophet Micah, like our living prophet, President Hinckley, was concerned about nurturing the development of humility. To his people he said, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"<sup>15</sup>

God bless us all to walk humbly with Him and with all men. I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet and that his counsel to "be humble" comes from God. I testify that Jesus Christ, God's meek and lowly Son, personifies humility. I know that it will be in humility that we one day kneel at the Savior's feet to be judged of Him.<sup>16</sup> May we live our lives to prepare for that humble moment is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 37; Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–33; Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 17.
2. “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4, 10.
3. Albert Choules Jr., unpublished minutes of Seventy Quorum’s meeting, 15 Apr. 1993.
4. *The Screwtape Letters* (1982), 62–63.
5. Matthew 18:1, 4.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Quoted in Truman G. Madsen, “Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran,” *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 6.
9. *Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. (1960), 95.
10. 2 Nephi 33:11.
11. John 3:30.
12. See Mormon 9:31.
13. Moses 1:10.
14. *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (1903–12), 5:331.
15. Micah 6:8.
16. See Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

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## Sister Sydney S. Reynolds

### A God of miracles

With Moroni of old, I believe in a God of miracles. Moroni wrote to the people of our dispensation, “Behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, . . . and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are” (Mormon 9:11). Moroni proclaimed that Jesus Christ did many mighty miracles, that many mighty miracles were wrought by the hands of the Apostles, and that a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever must be a God of miracles today (see Mormon 9:9, 18–19).

### Mighty miracles

Think of the miracles of the Old Testament. Remember Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. For all future generations of Israelites, the great miracles that led to their deliverance from Egypt provided undeniable proof of God’s existence and His love for them.

Many Book of Mormon prophets, including Nephi, pointed to the story of Moses to encourage faith and belief in a God who could deliver His people in their distress (see 1 Nephi 4:1–3). Other Book of Mormon prophets reminded the people that they themselves had witnessed miracles that should convince them of God’s power.

In the New Testament, the Apostle John shared his reason for recording many of the Savior’s miracles—namely, “that [we] might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31).

In this dispensation we witness the great miracle of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. It began when a young boy entered a grove of trees near Palmyra, New York, and poured out his heart and his questions to a God he believed could answer him—the God of miracles. And miracles have followed in this dispensation—mighty miracles—including the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which is itself another testament of Jesus Christ.

### Smaller, private miracles

Just as important as these "mighty miracles" are the smaller "private miracles" that teach each of us to have faith in the Lord. These come as we recognize and heed the promptings of the Spirit in our lives.

I am grateful for a teacher who encouraged his students to keep a journal of the whisperings or promptings of the Spirit in their lives. He directed us to record what we felt and what resulted. Little things became evident.

One day I was frantically trying to complete some assignments and prepare for a trip. I had just been down to the laundry area of the dorm to move my clothes from the washer to the dryer. Unfortunately, all the dryers were in use, and they all had many minutes to go. I went back upstairs discouraged, knowing that by the time those dryers finished, I had to be on the road. I had barely returned to my room when I felt prompted to go back downstairs and check the laundry again. *Foolishness*, I thought—I had just been there, and I didn't have time. But because I was trying to listen, I went. Two of the dryers were empty—and I was able to meet all my commitments.

Could the Lord possibly have been concerned about smoothing my way in such a small but, to me, important matter? I have learned since, through many such experiences, that the Lord will help us in every aspect of our lives when we are trying to serve Him and do His will.

I believe that all of us can bear witness to these small miracles. We know children who pray for help to find a lost item and find it. We know of young people who gather the courage to stand as witnesses of God and feel His sustaining hand. We know friends who pay their tithing with the last of their money and then, through a miracle, find themselves able to pay their tuition or their rent or somehow obtain food for their family. We can share experiences of prayers an-

swered and priesthood blessings that gave courage, brought comfort, or restored health. These daily miracles acquaint us with the hand of the Lord in our lives.

### Miracles in the lives of premature twins

My mind has been much on this topic because of an experience our family has had in the last few months. Our daughter and her husband took a while to find each other, and then, though they wanted children with all their hearts, for a number of years they had difficulty realizing that dream. They prayed and sought priesthood blessings and medical help and eventually were thrilled to learn they were expecting twins.

Things did not go smoothly, however, and three and a half months before the babies were due to arrive, the mother-to-be found herself in the labor and delivery section of the hospital. The doctors at first were hopeful that they could stop the labor for a few more weeks. Quickly, however, the question became, would they even have the 48 hours necessary for medication to prepare the babies' immature lungs to function?

A nurse came in from the newborn intensive care unit to show the couple pictures of the machines the babies would be hooked up to if they were born alive. She explained the risks for eye damage, for lung collapse, for physical impairment, for brain damage. The couple listened, humbled yet hopeful, and then, despite all the doctors could do, it was obvious that these babies were coming.

They were born alive. First the baby girl and then the baby boy—weighing less than four pounds together—were rushed to the intensive care unit and put on ventilators, with umbilical tubes and intravenous lines and constant attention. They couldn't have too much light; they couldn't have too much noise; their chemical balances needed constant monitoring as the hospital, with millions of dollars of equipment and many wonderful doctors and

nurses, attempted to replicate the miracle of a mother's womb.

There were multitudes of little miracles every day: a collapsed lung healed and then, despite the odds, continued to function properly; pneumonia was beaten back; more deadly infections invaded and were overcome; IV lines went bad and were replaced. After two and a half months, the baby boy had gained two pounds and could breathe with an oxygen supplement. His ventilator was gone, he learned to eat, and his grateful parents took him home with monitors attached.

### **Praying and fasting for one more miracle**

The baby girl kept pulling her ventilator tube out, setting off alarms across the nursery. Maybe she wanted to keep up with her brother, we thought, but her throat closed off each time, and she just couldn't breathe on her own. Her throat was so inflamed that at times the respiratory therapists had great difficulty reinserting the tube, and she almost died. Her normal progress was stymied by her continued dependence on the ventilator.

Finally, after her baby brother had been home for two months, the doctors felt they were forced to suggest surgery for her—a surgery that would allow her to breathe by opening a hole in her throat, a surgery that might solve the stomach problems by opening a hole in her side, but a surgery that would impact her little body for many months and maybe for the rest of her life. As the parents wrestled with this decision, a beloved aunt sent a message to all the family. She explained the situation—the critical issue of timing, the importance of getting off the ventilator—and suggested that we join our faith once again, and in prayer and fasting ask for one more miracle—if it was the Lord's will. We would culminate our fast with a prayer the evening of December 3.

Let me read from a letter that was sent to the family the morning of December 4. "Dearest Family, Wonderful news!

Blessings from the Lord. Our heartfelt thanks for your prayers and fasting in behalf of our little girl. Yesterday morning she came off the ventilator and has been off for 24 hours at this writing. To us it is a miracle. The medical staff are still guarded about predicting the future, but we are so grateful to the Lord and to you. We are praying that this will mark the beginning of the end of her hospital stay. And we even dare to hope that she'll be home for Christmas."

She did make it home for Christmas, and both babies are currently doing just fine. Our family has had its own "parting of the Red Sea," and we are prepared to testify that there is today, as there was yesterday and will be forever, a "God of miracles" who loves His children and desires to bless them.

### **The greatest of all God's miracles**

Now, we know, as you do, that all petitions to the Lord and all fasts do not receive this same hoped-for answer. Our extended family also has faced the death of loved ones, serious illness, the trial of divorce, and children who are choosing another path. We do not always understand the reasons behind the tests that come with mortality. But our faith has grown, and perhaps yours has too, as we have watched loved ones, friends, and people we know only by reputation endure with faith in the Lord the most severe trials. They too know the God of miracles and witness in their extremity that whatever the future holds for them, the Lord knows them and loves them and is blessing them. They are sealed to Him and to each other forever, and they are willing to submit their wills to His.

How have they come to such a point? How do we access the quiet miracle that the Lord works as He transforms us, His children, into worthy heirs of the kingdom of God? I believe it is made possible because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). I believe it comes as we yield to the enticings of the Spirit, put off the natural man, and are filled with the love of God (see Mosiah 3:19). "Through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). All mankind—that includes me, that

includes you—we can each have part in the Atonement, the greatest of all God's miracles.

God did part the Red Sea, and He did give us the Book of Mormon. He can heal us of our sins, and He can and will bless us, His children, in our daily lives. I know that He lives and loves us and is today a God of miracles, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### **"Ye shall be witnesses unto me"**

As the resurrected Jesus concluded His earthly ministry, He gave this paramount charge to His Apostles and those who would follow them:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

"Ye shall receive power, . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."<sup>2</sup>

Remembering always to act with courtesy and propriety, we have a responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ "at all times and in all things, and in all places,"<sup>3</sup> to proclaim each in our own way the great cause to which Christ has called us.

### **Be a vast army in assisting missionaries**

Now, you are already wonderful missionaries, better than you think you are, and there is more where that comes from! The 12-hour-a-day, heavy-duty effort we'll leave to the full-time missionaries, but why should they have all the fun? We are entitled to a seat at the abundant table of testimony as well, and fortunately a place has been reserved there for each member of the Church.

Indeed, one of the axioms of our day is that no mission or missionaries can ul-

timately succeed *without* the loving participation and spiritual support of the local members working with them in a balanced effort. If today you are taking notes on a stone tablet, chisel that one in deeply. I promise you won't ever have to erase it. Initial investigators may come from many different sources, but those who are actually baptized and who are firmly retained in activity in the Church come overwhelmingly from friends and acquaintances known to members of the Church.

Just over 24 months ago President Gordon B. Hinckley said in a Church-wide broadcast:

"My heart reaches out to you missionaries. You simply cannot do it alone and do it well. You must have the help of others. That power to help lies within each of us. . . .

"Now, my brethren and sisters, we can let the missionaries try to do it alone, or we can help them. If they do it alone, they will knock on doors day after day and the harvest will be meager. Or as members we can assist them in finding and teaching investigators. . . .

"Brothers and sisters, all of you out in the wards and stakes and in the districts and branches, I invite you to become a vast army with enthusiasm for this work and a great overarching desire to assist the missionaries in the tremendous responsibility they have to carry the

gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”<sup>4</sup>

I like the ring of those phrases “a vast army with enthusiasm for this work” and “a great overarching desire to assist the missionaries.” Let me note a number of things we can do to respond to that call. You will recognize how many of them you are already doing.

### **Set an example by living the gospel**

Above all else we can live the gospel. Surely there is no more powerful missionary message we can send to this world than the example of a loving and happy Latter-day Saint life. The manner and bearing, the smile and kindness of a faithful member of the Church brings a warmth and an outreach that no missionary tract or videotape can convey. People do not join the Church because of what they know. They join because of what they feel, what they see and want spiritually. Our spirit of testimony and happiness in that regard will come through to others if we let it. As the Lord said to Alma and the sons of Mosiah, “Go forth . . . that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls.”<sup>5</sup>

A young returned missionary sister from Hong Kong told me recently that when she and her companion asked an investigator if she believed in God, the woman replied, “I didn’t until I met a member of your church and observed how she lived.” What exemplary missionary work! Asking every member to be a missionary is not nearly as crucial as asking every member to be a member! Thank you for living the gospel.

### **Pray for missionary work**

Thank you also for praying for the missionaries. *Everyone* prays for the missionaries. May it ever be so. In that same

spirit, we should also pray for those who are (or who need to be) meeting the missionaries. In Zarahemla, members were commanded to “join in fasting and mighty prayer”<sup>6</sup> for those who had not yet joined the Church of God. We can do the same.

We can also pray daily for our own personal missionary experiences. Pray that under the divine management of such things, the missionary opportunity you want is already being prepared in the heart of someone who longs for and looks for what you have. “There are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”<sup>7</sup> Pray that they will find you! And then be alert, because there are multitudes in your world who feel a famine in their lives, “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Listen, and you’ll know what to say**

When the Lord delivers this person to your view, just chat—about anything. You can’t miss. You don’t have to have a prescribed missionary message. Your faith, your happiness, the very look on your face is enough to quicken the honest in heart. Haven’t you ever heard a grandmother talk about her grandchildren? That’s what I mean—minus the photographs! The gospel will just tumble out. You won’t be able to contain yourself!

But perhaps even more important than speaking is listening. These people are not lifeless objects disguised as a baptismal statistic. They are children of God, our brothers and sisters, and they need what we have. Be genuine. Reach out sincerely. Ask these friends what matters most to *them*. What do *they* cherish, and what do *they* hold dear? And then listen. If the setting is right, you might ask what their fears are, what they yearn for, or what they feel is missing in their lives.



I promise you that *something* in what they say will *always* highlight a truth of the gospel about which you can bear testimony and about which you can then offer more. Elder Russell Nelson told me once that one of the first rules of medical inquiry is “Ask the patient where it hurts. The patient,” he said, “will be your best guide to a correct diagnosis and eventual remedy.” If we listen with love, we won’t need to wonder what to say. It will be given to us—by the Spirit and by our friends.

For those who find it difficult to initiate missionary conversations—and many do—the Church’s newly produced pass-along cards are a lovely, effortless way to let others know some of your basic beliefs and how they may learn more. For example, this is the easiest way I personally have yet found to offer people a copy of the Book of Mormon without my needing to carry a knapsack full of books as I travel.

### **Prepare for senior missionary service**

Now let me increase the tempo of this message just a little. Many more of us can prepare for senior missionary service when that time in our life comes. As the senior couples at the MTC in Provo have said on a poster, “Let’s lengthen our shuffle!” I just returned from a long trip which took me to half a dozen missions. Everywhere I went during those weeks, I found senior couples giving the most remarkable and rewarding leadership imaginable, providing stability, maturity, and experience that no 19-year-old or 21-year-old could possibly be expected to provide. I found all kinds of couples, including a few former mission and temple presidents and their wives, who had come to parts of the world totally unknown to them to quietly, selflessly serve a second or a third or a fourth mission. I was deeply moved by every one of those people.

### **Service of Elder and Sister Hess**

I had lunch recently with Elder and Sister John Hess of Ashton, Idaho. “We’re just old potato farmers,” John told me, but that is precisely what the nation of Belarus in the Lithuania Vilnius Mission needed. For years the very best potato yields on government plots of ground there had been 50 sacks of potatoes a hectare. Considering it takes 22 sacks of seed to plant a hectare, the return was poor indeed. They needed help.

Brother Hess asked for ground just three feet away from the government plots, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work with the same seed, tools, and fertilizer available in Belarus. Come harvest time they began to dig, then called on others to dig, then called on everyone to dig. With the same rainfall and soil, but with an extra measure of Idaho industry, experience, and prayer, the plots planted by the Hesses produced a whopping 550 sacks per hectare—11 times better than any prior yield on that land. At first no one would believe the difference. They wondered if secret teams had come in the night or if some wonder drug had been used. But it was none of that. Brother Hess said, “We needed a miracle, so we asked for one.” Now just little more than a year later, in that community young proselyting missionaries are finding much more success just because an “old potato farmer” from Idaho answered the call of his church.

### **A family sacrifices for a daughter to serve**

Most missionary couples serve much more routinely than that, employing their leadership experience in wards and branches, but the point is that there are all kinds of needs in this work, and there is a resolute missionary tradition of responding to the call to serve at *every* age and in every circumstance. I learned from a mission president recently that one of

his young sister missionaries, nearing the end of her very faithful and successful mission, said through her tears that she must return home immediately. When he inquired as to the problem, she told him money had become so difficult for her family that to continue her support, the family had rented their home and were using the rental proceeds to pay her mission expenses. For living accommodations, they had moved into a storage locker. For water, they used a neighbor's outdoor tap and hose; and for a bathroom they went to a nearby gasoline station. This family, in which the father had recently passed away, was so proud of their missionary and so independent in spirit that they had managed to keep this recent turn of events from most of their friends and virtually all of their Church leaders.

When this situation was discovered, the family was restored to their home immediately. Long-term solutions to their economic circumstances were put in place, and the complete amount of remaining missionary support for their missionary daughter was secured overnight. With her tears dried and fears allayed, this faithful, hardworking young sister finished her mission triumphantly and was recently married in the temple to a wonderful young man.

In our blessed day we do not ask the kind of severe sacrifice this missionary family offered, but our generation has been the beneficiary of earlier generations who *did* sacrifice so very much in serving the missionary cause we declare. We can all do just a little more to pass that tradition on to those who follow us.

### Bringing souls to God is the greatest work

The Apostle John asked the Lord if he, John, might remain on the earth beyond the normal span of life for no other purpose than to bring more souls unto God. In granting that wish, the Savior

said that this was "a greater work" and a nobler "desire" even than that of desiring to come into the presence of the Lord "speedily."<sup>9</sup>

Like all prophets and apostles, the Prophet Joseph Smith understood the deep meaning of John's request when he said, "After all that has been said, [our] greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> I bear witness of that gospel and of Jesus Christ, who embodied it. I testify that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God"<sup>11</sup> and that saving those souls through the redeeming Atonement of His Beloved Son is at the very heart of His work and His glory.<sup>12</sup> In pursuing that work I testify with Jeremiah that this last great missionary declaration to modern Israel will, in the end, be a greater miracle than ancient Israel's crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>13</sup> That we will courageously and enthusiastically share the miracle of this message, I pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19.
2. Acts 1:8.
3. Mosiah 18:9.
4. "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106–7, 110.
5. Alma 17:11.
6. Alma 6:6.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
8. Amos 8:11.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 7.
10. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 113.
11. D&C 18:10.
12. See Moses 1:39.
13. See Jeremiah 16:14–16.

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The choir sang "Come unto Jesus."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "Come unto Jesus."

As you leave this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in your driving.

We express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be

our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The benediction will be offered by Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Compassion in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is a most interesting place. In company with Elders Richard G. Scott, Rex D. Pinegar, and Larry W. Gibbons, I presided at a regional conference there just a short time ago. The facility in which we met was packed with members of the Church and other interested persons. The singing by the choir was heavenly, the spoken word inspiring, and the sweet spirit which prevailed during the conference will long be remembered.

I reflected on my previous visits to this location, the beauty of the state song—"Oklahoma," from the musical production of Rodgers and Hammerstein—and the wonderful hospitality of the people there.

This community's spirit of compassionate help was tested in the extreme, however, on April 19, 1995, when a terrorist-planted bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, taking 168 persons to their deaths and injuring countless others.

Following the regional conference in Oklahoma City, I was driven to the entrance of a beautiful and symbolic memorial which graces the area where the Murrah building once stood. It was a dreary, rainy day, which tended to underscore the pain and suffering which had occurred there. The memorial features a 400-foot reflecting pool. On one side of the pool are 168 empty glass and granite

chairs in honor of each of the people killed. These are placed, as far as can be determined, where the fallen bodies were found.

On the opposite side of the pool there stands, on a gentle rise of ground, a mature American elm tree—the only nearby tree to survive the destruction. It is appropriately and affectionately named "The Survivor Tree." In regal splendor it honors those who survived the horrific blast.

My host directed my attention to the inscription above the gate of the memorial:

We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence.

May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.

He then, with tears in his eyes and with a faltering voice, declared, "This community, and all the churches and citizens in it, have been galvanized together. In our grief we have become strong. In our spirit we have become united."

We concluded that the best word to describe what had taken place was *compassion*.

### Joseph of old exemplified compassion

My thoughts turned to the musical play *Camelot*. King Arthur, in his dream

of a better world, an ideal relationship one with another, said, as he envisioned the purpose of the Round Table, "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness."

A stirring account which illustrates this statement is found in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Joseph was especially loved by his father, Jacob, which occasioned bitterness and jealousy on the part of his brothers. There followed the plot to slay Joseph, which eventually placed Joseph in a deep pit without food or water to sustain life. Upon the arrival of a passing caravan of merchants, Joseph's brothers determined to sell Joseph rather than leaving him to die. Twenty pieces of silver extricated Joseph from the pit and placed him eventually in the house of Potiphar in the land of Egypt. There Joseph prospered, for "the Lord was with Joseph."<sup>1</sup>

After the years of plenty, there followed the years of famine. In the midst of this latter period, when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt to buy corn, they were blessed by this favored man in Egypt—even their own brother. Joseph could have dealt harshly with his brothers for the callous and cruel treatment he had earlier received from them. However, he was kind and gracious to them, and he won their favor and support with these words and actions:

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . .

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."<sup>2</sup>

Joseph exemplified the magnificent virtue of compassion.

### **The good Samaritan's compassion**

During the meridian of time, when Jesus walked the dusty pathways of the Holy Land, He often spoke in parables. Said He:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

Well could the Savior say to us, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

No doubt our response would be, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Now, as then, Jesus would say to us, "Go, and do thou likewise."<sup>3</sup>

### **Jesus' unlimited capacity for compassion**

Jesus provided us many examples of compassionate concern. The crippled man at the pool of Bethesda; the woman taken in adultery; the woman at Jacob's well; the daughter of Jairus; Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha—each represented a casualty on the Jericho road. Each needed help.

To the cripple at Bethesda, Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."<sup>4</sup> To the sinful woman came the counsel, "Go, and sin no more."<sup>5</sup> To help her who came to draw water, He provided a well of water "springing up into everlasting life."<sup>6</sup> To the dead daughter of Jairus

came the command, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."<sup>7</sup> To the entombed Lazarus, "Come forth."<sup>8</sup>

The Savior has always shown unlimited capacity for compassion.

On this, the American continent, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:

"Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

" . . . And he did heal them every one."<sup>9</sup>

#### **A couple shows compassion for a traveler**

One may well ask the penetrating question: These accounts pertain to the Redeemer of the world. Can there actually occur in my own life, on my own Jericho road, such a treasured experience?

I phrase my answer in the words of the Master, "Come and see."<sup>10</sup>

We have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown.

Genuine gratitude was expressed by the writer of a letter received some time ago at Church headquarters. No return address was shown, no name, but the postmark was from Portland, Oregon:

"To the Office of the First Presidency:

"Salt Lake City showed me Christian hospitality once during my wandering years.

"On a cross-country journey by bus to California, I stepped down in the terminal in Salt Lake City, sick and trembling from aggravated loss of sleep caused by a lack of necessary medication. In my headlong flight from a bad situation in Boston, I had completely forgotten my supply.

"In the Temple Square Hotel restaurant, I sat dejectedly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a couple approach my table. 'Are you all right, young man?' the woman asked. I raised up, crying and a bit shaken, related my story and the predicament I was in then. They listened carefully and patiently to my nearly incoherent ramblings, and then they took charge. They spoke with the restaurant manager, then told me I could have all I wanted to eat there for five days. They took me next door to the hotel desk and got me a room for five days. Then they drove me to a clinic and saw that I was provided with the medications I needed—truly my basic lifeline to sanity and comfort.

"While I was recuperating and building my strength, I made it a point to attend the daily Tabernacle organ recitals. The celestial voicing of that instrument from the faintest intonation to the mighty full organ is the most sublime sonority of my acquaintance. I have acquired albums and tapes of the Tabernacle organ and the choir which I can rely upon any time to soothe and buttress a sagging spirit.

"On my last day at the hotel, before I resumed my journey, I turned in my key; and there was a message for me from that couple: 'Repay us by showing gentle kindness to some other troubled soul along your road.' That was my habit, but I determined to be more keenly on the lookout for someone who needed a lift in life.

"I wish you well. I don't know if these are indeed the 'latter days' spoken of in the scriptures, but I do know that two members of your church were saints to me in my desperate hours of need. I just thought you might like to know."

What an example of caring compassion.

#### **A caregiver's compassion**

At one privately owned and operated care facility, compassion reigned su-

preme. The proprietress was Edna Hewlett. There was a waiting list of patients who desired to live out their remaining days under her tender care, for she was an angelic person. She would wash and style the hair of every patient. She cleansed elderly bodies and dressed them with bright and clean clothing.

Through the years, in visiting the widows of the ward over which I once presided, I would generally start my visits at Edna's facility. She would welcome me with a cheery smile and take me to the living room where a number of the patients were seated. I always had to begin with Jeannie Burt, who was the oldest—102 when she died. She had known me and my family from the time I was born.

On one occasion, Jeannie asked with her thick Scottish brogue, "Tommy, have you been to Edinburgh lately?"

I replied, "Yes, not too long ago I was there."

"Isn't it beautiful!" she responded.

Jeannie closed her aged eyes in an expression of silent reverie. Then she became serious. "I've paid in advance for my funeral—in cash. You are to speak at my funeral and you are to recite 'Crossing the Bar' by Tennyson. Now let's hear it!"

It seemed every eye was upon me, and surely this was the case. I took a deep breath and began:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the  
bar,  
When I put out to sea.<sup>11</sup>

Jeannie's smile was benign and heavenly—then she declared, "Oh, Tommy, that was nice. But see that you practice a wee bit before my funeral!" This I did.

### Care for those who suffer

At some period in our mortal mission, there appears the faltering step, the wan smile, the pain of sickness—even the

fading of summer, the approach of autumn, the chill of winter, and the experience we call death, which comes to all. It comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey. Often it hushes the laughter of little children.

Throughout the world there is enacted daily the sorrowful scene of loved ones mourning as they bid farewell to a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, or a cherished friend.

From the cruel cross, the Savior's tender words of farewell to His mother are particularly poignant:

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."<sup>12</sup>

Let us remember that after the funeral flowers fade, the well-wishes of friends become memories and the prayers offered and words spoken dim in the corridors of the mind. Those who grieve frequently find themselves alone. Missed is the laughter of children, the commotion of teenagers, and the tender, loving concern of a departed companion. The clock ticks more loudly, time passes more slowly, and four walls can indeed a prison make.

I extol those who, with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

### Compassion of the Father and the Son

In our Father's compassion and according to His divine plan, holy temples bring to His children the peace which surpasses understanding.

Today, under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the number of new temples constructed and under con-

struction staggers the mind to contemplate. Heavenly Father's compassionate concern for His children here on earth and for those who have gone beyond mortality merits our gratitude.

Thanks be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His life, for His gospel, for His example, and for His blessed Atonement.

I return in my thoughts to Oklahoma City. To me, it is beyond mere coincidence that now a temple of the Lord, in all its beauty, stands in that city as a heaven-sent beacon to mark the way to joy here on earth and eternal joy hereafter. Let us remember the words from the Psalms: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."<sup>13</sup>

In a very real way the Master speaks to us: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."<sup>14</sup>

Let us listen for His knock. Let us open the door of our hearts, that He—the living example of true compassion—

may enter, I sincerely pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Genesis 39:2; see also Genesis 37:3–36.
2. Genesis 45:5, 7; see also Genesis 41:57; 42:3; 45:10–11.
3. See Luke 10:30–37.
4. John 5:8.
5. John 8:11.
6. See John 4:14.
7. Mark 5:41.
8. John 11:43.
9. 3 Nephi 17:7, 9.
10. John 1:39.
11. "Crossing the Bar," lines 1–4.
12. John 19:26–27.
13. Psalm 30:5.
14. Revelation 3:20.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Stephen B. Oveson offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from Ricks College. Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

#### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B.

Hinckley, who presides at this session, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Come, Rejoice." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of

the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Wesley Jones, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2000.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

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## **The Sustaining of Church Officers**

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My dear brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Claudio R. M. Costa, Richard J. Maynes, L. Whitney Clayton, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, and Steven E. Snow as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Keith K. Hilbig, Robert F. Orton, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, Robert R. Steuer, and H. Ross Workman. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: Salvador Aguirre, Daniel P. Alvarez, David J. Barnett, Oscar W. Chavez, Craig C. Christensen, Carl B. Cook, R. Michael Duffin, Timothy Dyches, Michael H. Holmes, Richard D. May, Joel H. McKinnon, Jorge Mendez, Marcus B. Nash, Timothy M. Olson, Richard G. Peterson,



Gary L. Pocock, Armando A. Sierra, Gary M. Stewart, G. Perrin Walker, Robert B. White, Larry Y. Wilson, and Kazuhiko Yamashita. All in favor will please manifest it by raising the right hand. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. All in

favor may manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We shall now ask that the newly called members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2000

**Wesley L. Jones**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains a functioning, standards-driven auditing department. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other qualified and credentialed professionals.

Risk is the primary factor governing the scheduling, performance, and reporting of audits. As mandated by the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments, functions, and operations worldwide and has access to all records, financial statements and reports, personnel, facilities, and physical properties relevant to the performance of audits. The frequency and nature of audits are determined by Church Auditing Department executives.

Professional auditing standards promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants guide audit work. The Church Auditing Department audits the various financial statements

and operations of the Church in accordance with these recognized professional auditing standards. This includes overseeing the auditing of contributions and expenditures from local ecclesiastical units.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year ended December 31, 2000, were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes in accordance with written policy. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation.

Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees. In the year 2000 the Church Auditing Department audited the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over these contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard Church assets. Budgeting, controllership, accounting and reporting systems, and management's corrective action plan progress for audit comments raised were audited and reported.

Based on our performance of risk-based audits of financial, operational, budgeting, and other controls and our evaluation of management's responsiveness to implementing corrective action plans, the Church Auditing Department

is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received and expended during the year ended December 31, 2000, have been managed in accordance with approved budgetary guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

Church-affiliated businesses, including Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, are operated separately from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The managers of these Church-affiliated businesses report to independent boards of directors and their

respective audit committees. The financial and operational activities of these affiliated organizations were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2000. However, we have verified that these organizations, as well as Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education, are being subjected to a financial statement audit annually by independent public accounting firms.

Respectfully submitted,  
Auditing Department  
Wesley L. Jones  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2000

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the membership growth and standing of the Church as of December 31, 2000. These statistics are based on reports available prior to the conference.

### Church units

Stakes .....	2,581
Districts .....	621
Missions .....	334
Wards and branches .....	25,915

### Church membership

Total membership .....	11,068,861
Increase in children of record during 2000 .....	81,450
Converts baptized during 2000 ..	273,973

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	60,784
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### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2000 .....	34
Temples in operation .....	102

### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Hugh W. Pinnock*, a member of the Seventy; *Elder Bernard P. Brockbank*, an emeritus General Authority; *Wilford W. Kirton Jr.*, former Church general counsel.

### President Faust

We will now hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and then from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve. They will be followed by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy.

## President Boyd K. Packer

This matter of sustaining the officers is a great protection to the Church. The Lord commanded "that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been [duly] ordained by the heads of the church."<sup>1</sup> In this way members of the Church in every organization all over the world know who the true messengers are.

### Healing the spiritual pain of guilt

It is my purpose to ease the pain of those who suffer from the very unpleasant feeling of guilt. I feel like the doctor who begins his treatment by saying, "Now, this may hurt a little . . ."

Every one of us has at least tasted the pain of conscience which follows our mistakes.

John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>2</sup> Then he said it more strongly: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make [the Lord] a liar, and his word is not in us."<sup>3</sup>

All of us sometime, and some of us much of the time, suffer remorse of conscience from things we did wrong or things left undone. That feeling of guilt is to the spirit what pain is to the physical body.

But guilt can be harder to bear than physical pain. Physical pain is nature's warning system that signals something needs to be changed or cleansed or treated, perhaps even removed by surgery. Guilt, the pain of our conscience, cannot be healed the same way.

### Descriptions of the pain of guilt

If you are burdened with depressing feelings of guilt or disappointment, of

failure or shame, there is a cure. My intent is not to hurt your tender feelings but to help you and help those you love. The prophets teach how painful guilt can be. As I read what they have said, be prepared for very strong words. Even so, I will not read the strongest things they have said.

The prophet Alma, describing his feelings of guilt, said, "I was *racked* with eternal *torment*, for my soul was *harrowed up* to the greatest degree and *racked* with all my sins."<sup>4</sup>

The prophets chose very graphic words.

*Racked* means "tortured."<sup>5</sup> Anciently a rack was a framework on which the victim was laid with each ankle and wrist tied to a spindle which could then be turned to cause unbearable pain.

A harrow is a frame with spikes through it. When pulled across the ground, it rips and tears into the soil. The scriptures frequently speak of souls and minds being "harrowed up" with guilt.<sup>6</sup>

*Torment* means "to twist," a means of torture so painful that even the innocent would confess.<sup>7</sup>

The prophets speak of the "gall of bitterness"<sup>8</sup> and often compare the pain of guilt to fire and brimstone. *Brimstone* is another name for sulfur.

King Benjamin said that those who are evil will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment."<sup>9</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. . . . The torment of disappointment in the mind of man [or woman] is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone."<sup>10</sup>

That lake of fire and brimstone, ever burning but never consumed, is the description in the scriptures for hell.<sup>11</sup>

## The Atonement offers relief and peace

Suppose there was no cure, no way to ease spiritual pain or to erase the agony of guilt. Suppose each mistake, each sin was added to the others with the racking, the harrowing up, the torment going on forever. Too many of us needlessly carry burdens of guilt and shame.

The scriptures teach that there "must needs be . . . opposition in all things." If not, "righteousness could not be brought to pass,"<sup>12</sup> neither happiness, nor joy, neither redemption.

The third article of faith teaches, "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." The Atonement offers redemption from spiritual death and from suffering caused by sin.

For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."<sup>13</sup>

The gospel plan is the "great plan of happiness."<sup>14</sup> It is contrary to the nature of God and contrary to the very nature of man to find happiness in sin. "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>15</sup>

We know that some anxiety and depression is caused by physical disorders, but much (perhaps most) of it is not pain of the body but of the spirit. Spiritual pain resulting from guilt can be replaced with peace of mind.

## The healing power of the Atonement

In contrast to the hard words condemning sin, listen to the calming, heal-

ing words of *mercy*, which balance the harsher words of *justice*. Alma said:

"My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but . . . my soul is pained no more."<sup>16</sup>

"I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .

"And . . . as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

"Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

"And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!"<sup>17</sup>

We all make mistakes. Sometimes we harm ourselves and seriously injure others in ways that we alone cannot repair. We break things that we alone cannot fix. It is then in our nature to feel guilt and humiliation and suffering, which we alone cannot cure. That is when the healing power of the Atonement will help.

The Lord said, "Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent."<sup>18</sup>

If Christ had not made His Atonement, the penalties for mistakes would be added one on the other. Life would be hopeless. But He willingly sacrificed in order that we may be redeemed. And He said, "Behold, he who has repented of his

sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>19</sup>

Ezekiel said: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."<sup>20</sup>

Think of that—not even mentioned!

We can even "retain a remission of [our] sins."<sup>21</sup> Baptism by immersion is for the remission of our sins. That covenant can be renewed by partaking of the sacrament each week.<sup>22</sup>

### Apply the Atonement in everyday life

The Atonement has practical, personal, everyday value; apply it in your life. It can be activated with so simple a beginning as prayer. You will not thereafter be free from trouble and mistakes but can erase the guilt through repentance and be at peace.

I quoted the third article of faith. It has two parts: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved." Then the conditions: "by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

Justice requires that there be a punishment.<sup>23</sup> Guilt is not erased without pain. There are laws to obey and ordinances to receive, and there are penalties to pay.

Physical pain requires treatment and a change in lifestyle.

So it is with spiritual pain. There must be repentance and discipline, most of which is self-discipline. But to restore our innocence after serious transgressions, there must be confession to our bishop, who is the appointed judge.

The Lord promised, "A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."<sup>24</sup> That spiritual heart surgery, like in the body, may cause you pain and require a change in habits and conduct.

But in both cases, recovery brings renewed life and peace of mind.

### The ever-present power of the Atonement

When the heavens were opened and the Father and the Son stood before Joseph Smith, the Father spoke seven words: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>25</sup> Revelation followed revelation, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints<sup>26</sup> was organized. The Savior Himself declared it to be "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."<sup>27</sup>

Peter, James, and John restored the higher priesthood, and John the Baptist the Aaronic Priesthood. The fulness of the gospel was revealed.

Following the revelations which came and yet come to His Church, all that has been printed or preached or sung or built or taught or broadcast has been to the end that men and women and children can know the redeeming influence of the Atonement of Christ in their everyday lives and be at peace.

He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."<sup>28</sup>

As one who stands among His Apostles, I testify of Him and of the ever-present power of His Atonement.

### The touch of the Master's hand

From the lofty words of *justice* and *mercy* and of *warning* and *hope* in the verses of scripture, I turn to the very same message in verses of a simple poem:

'Twas battered and scarred, and the  
auctioneer  
Thought it scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin,  
But held it up with a smile:  
"What am I bidden, good folks,"  
he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"  
"A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two!"  
"Only two?"

Two dollars, and who'll make it three?

Three dollars, once; three dollars,  
twice;

Going for three—"But no,

From the room, far back, a gray-  
haired man

Came forward and picked up the bow;

Then, wiping the dust from the old  
violin,

And tightening the loose strings,

He played a melody pure and sweet

As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,

With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said, "What am I bid for the old  
violin?"

And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make  
it two?

Two thousand! And who'll make it  
three?

Three thousand, once, three thousand,  
twice,

And going, and gone!" said he.

The people cheered, but some of them  
cried,

"We do not quite understand

What changed its worth." Swift came  
the reply:

"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,

And battered and scarred with sin,

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless  
crowd,

Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,

A game—and he travels on.

He's "going" once, and "going" twice,

He's "going" and almost "gone."

But the Master comes, and the foolish  
crowd

Never can quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change

that's wrought

By the touch of the Master's hand.<sup>29</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.
2. 1 John 1:8.
3. 1 John 1:10.
4. Alma 36:12; italics added.
5. See Mosiah 27:29; Alma 36:12, 16–17; Mormon 9:3.
6. See 2 Nephi 9:47; Alma 14:6; 15:3; 36:12, 17, 19; 39:7.
7. See Mosiah 2:39; 3:25; 5:5; Moroni 8:21.
8. See Alma 41:11; Acts 8:23; Mosiah 27:29; Alma 36:18; Mormon 8:31; Moroni 8:14.
9. Mosiah 3:25.
10. *Deseret News*, 8 July 1857, 138; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 357.
11. See Revelation 20:10; 21:8; 2 Nephi 9:16, 19, 26; 28:23; Jacob 3:11; 6:10; Mosiah 3:27; Alma 12:17; 14:14; Doctrine and Covenants 63:17; 76:36.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. Philippians 4:7.
14. Alma 42:8.
15. Alma 41:10; see also verse 11.
16. Mosiah 27:29.
17. Alma 36:13, 17–20.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
20. Ezekiel 33:15–16.
21. Mosiah 4:12; see also 2 Nephi 25:26; 31:17; Mosiah 3:13; 4:11; 15:11; Alma 4:14; 7:6; 12:34; 13:16; Helaman 14:13; 3 Nephi 12:2; 30:2; Moroni 8:25; 10:33.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:2.
23. See Alma 42:16–22.
24. Ezekiel 36:26.
25. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
28. John 14:27.
29. Myra Brooks Welch, "The Touch of the Master's Hand," *The Gospel Messenger*, Brethren Press, 26 Feb. 1921; see also *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, comp. Jack Lyon, et al. [1996], 182–83.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The need for mature missionary couples

I feel a deep responsibility to speak to you today about a pressing need in the Church. My greatest hope is that as I speak, the Holy Ghost will touch hearts, and somewhere a spouse or two will quietly nudge his or her companion, and a moment of truth will occur. I will speak on the urgent need for more mature couples to serve in the mission field. We wish to express our appreciation for all those valiant couples who are currently serving, those who have served, and those who will yet serve.

In the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord rebuked the presiding Brethren of the Church, saying:

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth. . . .

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house" (D&C 93:40, 43).

What is the best way to teach our children and grandchildren light and truth? What is the most important way to set our families, both immediate and extended, in order? Is it possible that in spiritual matters our example speaks louder than our words? Temple marriage, family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening are all vitally important. But there is another dimension—the dimension of service. If we are willing to leave our loved ones for service in the mission field, we will bless them with a heritage that will teach and inspire them for generations to come.

It is significant to me that after commanding the Brethren to teach their children light and truth and set their families in order, the Lord immediately called them on missions. "Now, I say unto you, my friends, let my servant Sidney Rigdon go on his journey, and make haste, and also proclaim . . . the gospel of salvation" (D&C 93:51).

### Missionary service brings blessings

As we serve in the mission field, our children and grandchildren will be blessed in ways that would not have been possible had we stayed at home. Talk to couples who have served missions, and they will tell you of blessings poured out: inactive children activated, family members baptized, and testimonies strengthened because of their service.

One missionary couple left a farm at home for their son to manage. During the somewhat dry year that followed, their farm had two hay cuttings while the neighbor's had only one. The neighbor asked their son why he had two cuttings compared to their one. The young man replied, "You need to send your folks on a mission."

If the blessings for missionary couples and their families are so plentiful, why are only a few thousand serving instead of the tens of thousands that are so desperately needed? I believe the four "F's" often stand in their way: *Fear*, *Family concerns*, *Finances*, and *Finding the right mission opportunity*.

### Overcoming the impediment of fear

*First, fear.* Fear of the unknown or fear that we don't have the scriptural skills or language required can cause reluctance to serve. But the Lord has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). Your life is your preparation. You have valuable experience. You have raised a family and served in the Church. Just go and be yourselves. The Lord has promised that angels will go before you (see D&C 103:19–20). You will be told by the Spirit what to say and when to say it in a very natural process as you strengthen young missionaries, testify to investigators and new members, teach leadership skills, and friendship and fellowship less-active members, help-

ing them return to full activity. *You* are the testimony, and you will touch the lives of those with whom you come in contact. Couples normally do not tract and are not expected to memorize discussions or maintain the same schedule as young elders and sisters. Simply be yourself. Serve to the best of your ability, and the Lord will bless you.

Missionary couples provide stability with their friendship and leadership skills in areas where the Church is in its infancy. I learned this firsthand while serving as a mission president in England. I assigned a couple who had been serving in the visitors' center to work in a small, struggling unit. They were somewhat fearful of having to leave the "safe haven" of the visitors' center. But with faith they went to work. Within six months, a unit that had 15 to 20 people coming to sacrament meeting had over 100 attending because of this couple's fellowshipping, working with the priesthood. To this day, they and their children refer to that time as the greatest experience of their lives.

Another couple recently served in a small village south of Santiago, Chile. They had no Spanish skills and were apprehensive about being in a different country so far from the comforts of home. But they plunged in with total dedication, loving and serving the people. Before long the small branch grew from 12 to 75 members. When it came time for them to leave, the entire branch rented a bus so they could go to the airport, four hours away, and say good-bye to their special friends.

The service that couples provide is essential to the work of the Lord. Couples can make a difference. Couples can accomplish remarkable things no one else can do.

### **Service of couples strengthens families**

*Second, family concerns.* The Savior called upon fishermen, entreating them,

"Follow me" (Matthew 4:19). He beseeched them to leave their familiar settings behind and become fishers of men. What is asked of couple missionaries is less than half a tithe of the time they will spend on earth. In the eternal perspective, a mission is but a few moments away from familiar settings, family, and having retirement fun with old friends.

The Lord will send special blessings to your family as you serve. "I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families" (D&C 118:3). Couples are sometimes concerned that in their absence they will miss weddings, births, family reunions, and other family events. We have learned that the impact on families while grandparents are on missions is worth a thousand sermons. Families are greatly strengthened as they pray for their parents and grandparents and read letters sent home which share their testimonies and the contribution they are making in the mission field.

A son wrote a tender letter to his parents in the mission field:

"Your service sets an example for our children. As a result, they are more willing to serve in their callings in the Church. It teaches us all to be more charitable as we exchange letters and send packages. When we receive letters and news from you, it strengthens our testimonies. Even though you retired from your profession and should have been happy by all the world's standards, by going on your mission you have shown us a new way to be happy. You have found happiness money can't buy. We have seen you overcome medical and other types of adversities and have seen you blessed for your willingness to go and leave your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We love you dearly!"

Another couple reports: "One of our grandsons wrote to us while we were in Thailand and told us that he hadn't decided for sure that he wanted to fill a mission, but we had set the example for him



and now he knew he wanted to serve. He is now serving a mission."

My father and mother served a mission in England. As I visited them one day in their small flat, I watched my mother, with a shawl wrapped snugly around her shoulders, putting shillings in the gas meter to keep warm. I asked, "Why did you come on a mission, Mother?" She said simply, "Because I have 11 grandsons. I want them to know that Grandma and Grandpa served."

In 1830 the Lord called Thomas B. Marsh to leave his family and go into the mission field. Brother Marsh was greatly concerned about leaving his family at that time. In a tender revelation, the Lord told him: "I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones. . . . Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come. . . . Wherefore, your family shall live. . . . Go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them" (D&C 31:2-3, 5-6). It is just possible that these are the blessings that are needed most for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and future posterity.

### Resolving financial concerns

*Third, finances.* Some couples who would willingly serve are not able to do so because of age, health, finances, or family circumstances. Perhaps those who are not able to serve could assist another couple to go on a mission.

Missionary work has always involved sacrifice. If some sacrifices are necessary, then the blessings will be all the more abundant. Children, encourage your parents to serve and assist them with financial support if necessary. You may lose a baby-sitter for a short time, but the eternal rewards you and your family receive will more than compensate for the brief sacrifice.

To younger couples with children still at home, I urge you now to decide to serve in your later years and to plan and

prepare so you are financially, physically, and spiritually able. Make certain that the great example of missionary service is a heritage you will leave your posterity.

There are two unique times in our lives when we can truly live the law of consecration and devote ourselves in full-time service to the Lord. One is as a young man or woman serving a full-time mission. The other is the unique time you are given after having fulfilled the requirements of earning a living. The latter could be called the patriarchal years, when you can draw upon the rich experiences of a lifetime, go out as a couple, and consecrate yourselves fully as servants of the Lord.

The blessings of serving with your eternal companion are priceless and can be understood only by those who have experienced them. My wife and I have had that privilege in the mission field. Each day is a special day with daily rewards that cause personal growth and development in the Lord's time and in the Lord's way. The fulfillment that comes from this kind of service will bless you, your marriage, and your family for eternity.

### Finding the right mission opportunity

*Finally, finding the right mission opportunity.* The ways in which couples can serve are virtually limitless. From mission office support and leadership training to family history, temple work, and humanitarian service—there is an opportunity to use almost any skill or talent with which the Lord has blessed you.

Sit down with your companion, make an inventory of your health, financial resources, and unique gifts and talents. Then, if all is in order, go to your bishop and say, "We're ready." You may feel it is improper to approach your bishop or branch president about your desires to serve a mission. But it is proper for a mature sister or couple to let their priesthood leaders know that they are willing and able to serve a mission. I urge you to do so.

Bishops, there should be no hesitation on your part to initiate a Recommend for Missionary Service interview to discuss and encourage missionary couples to serve a mission.

Elder Clarence R. Bishop, director of the Mormon Handcart Visitors' Center, has served five missions. The first one he served as a young man. The last four missions, he was interviewed to serve by inspired priesthood leaders. He indicated that he might not have served any of the last four had his bishop not encouraged him to serve.

Some mature couples and single sisters have been called as missionaries to teach English as a second language to students, teachers, and government officials in Thailand. These retired teachers and educational administrators, by giving freely of their gifts and talents developed through their many years of teaching experience, have made remarkable progress in teaching English to students, training teachers, and being good ambassadors for the Church in Thailand.

Jerry and Karen Johnson served in Hong Kong, teaching English as a second language. One day after class, near the end of their mission, a little second-grade girl, to whom Sister Johnson had become very attached, came up to her and, putting out her arms as though she were an

airplane flying, asked, "*Meiguo?*" (meaning "America?"). Sister Johnson looked at her and said, "Yes, we are returning to America." She buried her head in Sister Johnson's chest and sobbed. "I held her tight and sobbed right along with her," Sister Johnson said. "Fifty other students gathered around, sobbing right along with us. Our mission has placed us in the center of a whirlwind of love that seems to envelop us."

### **Go forth and serve**

As Jesus sent forth the Twelve to go on their missions, He commanded them, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Where much is given, much is expected. You have received much in your life; go forth and freely give in the service of our Lord and Savior. Have faith; the Lord knows where you are needed. The need is so great, brothers and sisters, and the laborers are so few.

"When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). I know this is His work. Go forth and serve!

That you may experience the blessings of missionary service for you and your families is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Darwin B. Christenson**

### **David, a future missionary**

My dear brothers and sisters, a blessing of Church membership is the privilege of feeling and bearing testimony, which expression may also come from an act or an example.

As well as others, my wife and I shall never, never forget the young brother standing in the sweeping, torrential rains during the cornerstone ceremony of the Recife Brazil Temple last December.

As President Hinckley and President Faust came from the temple into his view, this little lad I'll call David—about 10 years old—braced himself, ignoring the wind and the rain, his white shirt and his trousers soaked through and through. He stood tall and resolute as a little soldier and gave determined recognition that he was, indeed, in the presence of the Lord's own prophets, seers, and revelators.

David is representative of the many wonderful young people who are the future of the Church. He has been well taught by loving parents, with reinforcement from Primary teachers, to honor, love, and follow the prophets. Given some exposure, our young brothers and young sisters come quite naturally, like David, to a deep love for Jesus and for our prophets. As parents and teachers, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to reinforce this tender love and respect.

Through this careful guidance, testimonies will grow consistently over time to become finally founded upon personally received revelation.

As poignantly demonstrated by David, our young brother in the rain, the family is the basic, everlasting organization of the Church, from which he has learned so much. With tutoring, he will gain his own personal testimony that Jesus is the Son of the Living God and that through His Atonement the Savior perfectly completed His expiatory promise. Joseph Smith is the first prophet of the Restoration. Gordon B. Hinckley is our current, living, and loving prophet.

David will grow up knowing he will serve a mission. His father will speak often of the blessings of his own mission. He is representative of the fathers in Zion who are faithful priesthood holders.

David's mother will build unity in the family by establishing important and lasting family traditions. She is representative of mothers who are eager to see children grow and who are able to wipe away tears and iron out many of the day-to-day wrinkles of mortality, as well as the wrinkles in shirts and skirts.

### **Avoiding the sharks of mortality**

Along the beautiful beaches of Re-cife, there are posted signs indicating that swimmers can safely enjoy the ocean if they will but confine their activities to the areas between the beaches and the reef.

Those who swim or surf beyond the reef expose themselves to attack by sharks, which are a continuing threat and have caused a significant number of injuries and deaths.

Like the signs on the shore, the Lord and His prophets provide inspired guidance for earthly sons and daughters to be able to avoid the ever-present sharks of mortality: the pornography, drugs, and sins that can diminish or kill the inherent sense of divinity the Lord would have His children enjoy. This heavenly guidance is provided by God because of His inexhaustible, personal love for each of His children. Prayer, scriptures, and fasting are available to all who would use them.

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" is a treasured resource, an inspired document provided by our prophets (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Let us learn and relearn its lessons. Then, as caring parents, we will want to struggle to whatever degree is needful for the protection and benefit of our Davids—representing our children, grandchildren, and loved ones.

Alma the Younger taught each of his sons individually. He indicates that he taught Helaman in his youth, even as we see David is learning in his youth (see Alma 36:3). David's father may well paraphrase, "O David, my son, learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God" (see Alma 37:35).

David learns he will never make even one small foray into the polluted waters of life, because he knows that the sharks of mortality can tear away the tender spiritual muscle of a growing testimony. He also knows he does not need to wear the uniform of the supposed nonconformists by body piercing and tattoos.

### **Book of Mormon lessons on parenthood**

Before David leaves home to begin his missionary service, it will be a blessing for him to be taught individually by his

own father, even as Alma so beautifully taught his son Helaman: "Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord. . . . Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings" (Alma 37:36-37).

Immediately in the Book of Mormon we learn lessons of parenthood. Father Lehi provided the foundation background, giving his son Nephi reason to make the famous statement, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

To Laman and Lemuel, Father Lehi provided a beautiful analogy in powerful teaching: "O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! . . . O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!" (1 Nephi 2:9-10).

Enos, reaching adulthood, and while out hunting in the forest, returned to a remembrance and gave heed to the lifelong teachings of his father, Jacob. Enos at last decided to act upon those teachings, as he cried unto God "all the day long" and still through the night. At last the voice came: "Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed" (Enos 1:4-5). Then Enos changed his life's focus and went about teaching.

The powerful and great prophet Enoch gave credit to his parentage, saying, "My father taught me in all the ways of God" (Moses 6:41).

May all our Davids be so prepared to serve.

We all love to be of service. In the blessing and need for providing service, might I express appreciation for the support of my beautiful wife, for our children and their spouses, for our grandchildren, for our brothers and our sisters, for their families, for our missionaries who are lasting examples of commitment, for friends who are a constant support, for the beautiful people of Brazil, for leaders, for our prophets, and especially for our Lord and Savior. The Church is true.

I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder L. Aldin Porter

### The march of man's accomplishments

We of the Seventy would like to extend a hearty welcome to the brethren who this day were sustained to the five quorums of Seventy.

We are blessed, brothers and sisters, to live in a world filled with almost

daily announcements of progress against disease and other threats to mankind. There seems to be a never-ending march of man's accomplishments in overcoming impediments to a long and healthy life. Most of us have become accustomed to a constant flow of wonders.

Yet with it all, we are also faced with a relentless onslaught of soul-destroying distractions such as pornography, illegal drug use, and abuse of spouse and children. There is a parade of false philosophies which are trumpeted as new and modern answers to the problems of the world.

The extensive communication resources the Lord has revealed for our day have, to a large degree, been appropriated for evil purposes. The print media, television and videos, and now the Internet constantly bring into our homes material that will pollute our souls and destroy our lives. Our homes in times past have generally been peaceful havens against the world. To retain that peace now takes an almost unrelenting vigilance.

### **Christ is our protector**

Yet we have great reason for optimism. We are not left without defense against these wicked elements that would bring us sorrow and despair here and would deny us the joys of eternity hereafter.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:50-51).

He is the answer to the longings of the human heart for certainty. He is the answer to our individual sins and to our sorrows.

He is our protector in a world constantly seeking to solve problems through violence. He is our protector in a world where the minds of so many are filled with evil continually. We, of all people, should look to the future with enthusi-

asm and optimism. We have His word to direct us, to comfort us, and to give us hope for the future. There is so much that lies ahead of light and purity and virtue; and in time violence will disappear, for surely the lamb will lie down with the lion.

### **Book of Mormon is for our protection**

The Lord, of course, saw our day. He saw the devastating effects of transgression. And He prophesied that He would provide protection for His people. He spoke to Enoch of the last days—the days of wickedness and vengeance—and He said:

"And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve;

"And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth" (Moses 7:61-62).

Did you note that He said, "Truth will I send forth out of the earth"? To do what? "To bear testimony of mine Only Begotten."

The Book of Mormon was compiled and translated for our day. It came forth out of the earth as was prophesied to bless and guide the lives of the people of this day. It came in a day and time as the Lord knew it would when the dislocations caused by wickedness would be very intense.

### **Fulfillment of Moroni's promise**

As Moroni concluded the immense work of his father and others, he made a

promise that has been shared widely in a multitude of languages. But I fear it has become too commonplace among us. We learn about it in Sunday School, in seminary, in family home evenings, and we even memorize it as missionaries. But today I would ask that you listen as I read this promise as if you had never heard of it.

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

This is the promise, that our Eternal Father will give us a manifestation of truth—a personal revelation of eternal consequence.

The Book of Mormon was given to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, manifesting Himself unto all nations.

Do not treat lightly the revelations of God. Do not treat lightly this astonishing promise. I bear a solemn testimony to you that this promise has been fulfilled not only in my life but in the lives of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people.

You will find that when Moroni's promise is fulfilled and you are given the knowledge that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God, there will come with it a witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. I have never known an instance where this did not occur. Moreover, I do not believe a violation of this principle will ever take place. A spiritual witness of the Nephi scripture will always bring the certainty of the Savior's existence.

With that witness borne of the Holy Ghost will come a sure knowledge that Joseph Smith told the truth when he said that he had seen the Father and the Son on that spring morning of 1820.

A knowledge that Jesus Christ lives and is our Redeemer and Savior is worth whatever the cost may be. This is the fulfillment of Moroni's promise in our lives.

After that, through study and prayer we can come to know that He has given us life through the Resurrection. We will come to know that He has promised us a quality of life hereafter beyond our capacity to comprehend. We must understand that this testimony comes only through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

### **Be persistent and sincere**

Read the Book of Mormon. With a "sincere heart [and] real intent," begin to read. Ponder the words. Often pause and ask your Heavenly Father "if these things are not true." Continue to read, to ponder, and to ask. It will not be easy reading. There will be roadblocks along the way. Persist.

Approach your Father in Heaven, having expelled your prejudices and biases. Leave your heart open to receive the impressions that come from eternal sources. Many inspiring treasures will be revealed to you. There will, in time, come into your heart and mind an assurance that Jesus Christ is the living Son of the living Father. With it will come a knowledge that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration and that there are apostles and prophets on the earth today. You will come to know with a sure knowledge that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet to the world as well as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **Our love for Christ will increase**

Now I make this promise to those who are investigating the Church, to those who are members but who have lost enthusiasm for the work and are therefore in a state of confusion in a world that is in moral chaos. I make this promise to those

who through transgression and faithless living are in despair over eternal things.

When this sacred witness comes, our love for Him will increase without bounds; our desire to know of Him will increase. We will sorrow as we read such words as King Benjamin's prophecy of Him:

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

"And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:7-8).

### **Our gratitude for Christ will overflow**

Our hearts will overflow with gratitude for His sacrifice in our behalf. This doctrine of personal revelation is not new. This eternal principle has been taught in ages past:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-17).

### **"All things bear record of me"**

After this sacred witness comes, you will see His hand in a thousand things.

"And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me" (Moses 6:63).

We will find great joy in contemplating His life, and we will shortly realize that in truth all things do bear witness of Him. Furthermore, in the midst of our trials and challenges, we will find peace, knowing that in the end it will be all right. We will find serenity in the face of affliction. We will find this serenity in life even as chaos swirls around us.

Such is the power of a testimony and witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the very Savior of the world.

I bear witness of Him. I witness that He lived, He died, He came forth from the tomb a resurrected being, and He has gifted us with resurrection and a promise of an eternal life of joy and fulfillment through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed anew in our day through living prophets.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Russell M. Nelson**

### **Personal preparation for temple blessings**

Under President Gordon B. Hinckley's inspired direction, temples are now

more accessible than ever. Inscribed on each temple are the words "Holiness to the Lord."<sup>1</sup> That statement designates both the temple and its purposes as holy.

Those who enter the temple are also to bear the attribute of holiness.<sup>2</sup> It may be easier to ascribe holiness to a building than it is to a people. We can acquire holiness only by enduring and persistent personal effort. Through the ages, servants of the Lord have warned against unholiness. Jacob, brother of Nephi, wrote, "I would speak unto you of holiness; but as ye are not holy, and ye look upon me as a teacher, [I] must . . . teach you the consequences of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Now I feel that same sense of responsibility to teach. As temples are prepared for our members, our members need to prepare for the temple.

### The temple

The temple is the house of the Lord. The basis for every temple ordinance and covenant—the heart of the plan of salvation—is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Every activity, every lesson, all we do in the Church points to the Lord and His holy house. Our efforts to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead all lead to the temple. Each holy temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church,<sup>4</sup> as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a sacred step toward eternal glory for us and our families.

President Hinckley said that "these unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology."<sup>5</sup>

To enter the temple is a tremendous blessing. But first we must be worthy. We should not be rushed. We cannot cut corners of preparation and risk the breaking of covenants we were not prepared to make. That would be worse than not making them at all.

### The endowment

In the temple we receive an endowment, which is, literally speaking, a gift.

In receiving this gift, we should understand its significance and the importance of keeping sacred covenants. Each temple ordinance "is not just a ritual to go through, it is an act of solemn promising."<sup>6</sup>

The temple endowment was given by revelation. Thus, it is best understood by revelation, prayerfully sought with a sincere heart.<sup>7</sup> President Brigham Young said, "Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father . . . and gain your eternal exaltation."<sup>8</sup>

### Sealing authority

In preparing to receive the endowment and other ordinances of the temple, we should understand the sealing authority of the priesthood. Jesus referred to this authority long ago when He taught His Apostles, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."<sup>9</sup> That same authority has been restored in these latter days. Just as priesthood is eternal—without beginning or end—so is the effect of priesthood ordinances that bind families together forever.

Temple ordinances, covenants, endowments, and sealings enable individuals to be reconciled with the Lord and families to be sealed beyond the veil of death. Obedience to temple covenants qualifies us for eternal life, the greatest gift of God to man.<sup>10</sup> Eternal life is more than immortality. Eternal life is exaltation in the highest heaven—the kind of life that God lives.

### Temple recommend

Preparation also includes qualification for a temple recommend. Our Redeemer requires that His temples be protected from desecration. No unclean thing may enter His hallowed house.<sup>11</sup> Yet anyone is welcome who prepares well.



Each person applying for a recommend will be interviewed by a judge in Israel—the bishop—and by a stake president.<sup>12</sup> They hold keys of priesthood authority and the responsibility to help us know when our preparation and timing are appropriate to enter the temple. Their interviews will assess several vital issues. They will ask if we obey the law of tithing, if we keep the Word of Wisdom, and if we sustain the authorities of the Church. They will ask if we are honest, if we are morally clean, and if we honor the power of procreation as a sacred trust from our Creator.

Why are these issues so crucial? Because they are spiritual separators. They help determine if we truly live as children of the covenant,<sup>13</sup> able to resist temptation from servants of sin.<sup>14</sup> These interviews help to discern if we are willing to live in accord with the will of the true and living God or if our hearts are still set “upon riches and . . . vain things of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Such requirements are not difficult to understand. Because the temple is the house of the Lord, standards for admission are set by Him. One enters as His guest. To hold a temple recommend is a priceless privilege and a tangible sign of obedience to God and His prophets.<sup>16</sup>

### Physical preparation for the temple

One prepares physically for the temple by dressing properly. It is not a place for casual attire. “We should dress in such a way that we might comfortably attend a sacrament meeting or a gathering that is proper and dignified.”<sup>17</sup>

Within the temple, all are dressed in spotless white to remind us that God is to have a pure people.<sup>18</sup> Nationality, language, and position in the Church are of secondary significance. In that democracy of dress, all sit side by side and are considered equal in the eyes of our Maker.<sup>19</sup>

Brides and grooms enter the temple to be married for time and all eternity.

There brides wear white dresses—long sleeved, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. Grooms also dress in white. And brethren who come to witness weddings do not wear tuxedos.

Wearing the temple garment has deep symbolic significance. It represents a continuing commitment.<sup>20</sup> Just as the Savior exemplified the need to endure to the end, we wear the garment faithfully as part of the enduring armor of God.<sup>21</sup> Thus we demonstrate our faith in Him and in His eternal covenants with us.<sup>22</sup>

### Spiritual preparation for the temple

In addition to physical preparation, we prepare spiritually. Because the ordinances and covenants of the temple are sacred, we are under solemn obligation not to speak outside the temple of that which occurs in the temple. There are, however, some principles we can discuss.

Each temple is a house of learning.<sup>23</sup> There we are taught in the Master’s way.<sup>24</sup> His way differs from modes of others. His way is ancient and rich with symbolism. We can learn much by pondering the reality for which each symbol stands.<sup>25</sup> The teachings of the temple are beautifully simple and simply beautiful. They are understood by the humble, yet they can excite the intellect of the brightest minds.

Spiritual preparation is enhanced by study. I like to recommend that members going to the temple for the first time read short explanatory paragraphs in the Bible Dictionary, listed under seven topics:<sup>26</sup> “Anoint,”<sup>27</sup> “Atonement,”<sup>28</sup> “Christ,”<sup>29</sup> “Covenant,”<sup>30</sup> “Fall of Adam,”<sup>31</sup> “Sacrifices,”<sup>32</sup> and “Temple.”<sup>33</sup> Doing so will provide a firm foundation.

One may also read in the Old Testament<sup>34</sup> and the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Such a review of ancient scripture is even more enlightening *after* one is familiar with the temple endowment. Those books underscore the antiquity of temple work.<sup>35</sup>

With each ordinance is a covenant—a promise. A covenant made with God is not restrictive, but protective. Such a concept is not new. For example, if our water supply is not clean, we filter the water to screen out harmful ingredients. Divine covenants help us to filter out of our minds impurities that could harm us. When we choose to deny ourselves of all ungodliness,<sup>36</sup> we lose nothing of value and gain the glory of eternal life. Covenants do not hold us down; they elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective.

### Eternal perspective

President Hinckley has explained that lofty perspective:

"There is a goal beyond the Resurrection," he said. "That is exaltation in our Father's kingdom. . . . It will begin with acceptance of him as our Eternal Father and of his Son as our living Redeemer. It will involve participation in various ordinances, each one important and necessary. The first of these is baptism by immersion in water, without which, according to the Savior, a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. There must follow the birth of the Spirit, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then in succession through the years will come, for men, ordination to the priesthood, followed by the blessings of the temple for both men and women who are worthy to enter therein. These temple blessings include our washings and anointings that we may be clean before the Lord. They include the . . . endowment of obligations and blessings that motivate us to behavior compatible with the principles of the gospel. They include the sealing ordinances by which that which is bound on earth is bound in heaven, providing for the continuity of the family."<sup>37</sup>

I have learned that temple blessings are most meaningful when death takes a loved one away from the family circle. To know that the pain of separation is only temporary provides peace that passes

ordinary understanding.<sup>38</sup> Death cannot sever families sealed in the temple. They understand death as a necessary part of God's great plan of happiness.<sup>39</sup>

Such perspective helps us maintain fidelity to covenants we have made. President Boyd K. Packer emphasized that "ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into [God's] presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality."<sup>40</sup>

Ordinances of the temple relate to *personal* progress and to the redemption of departed *ancestors* as well. "For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."<sup>41</sup> Service in their behalf provides repeated opportunities for temple worship. And that service deserves commitment to a planned schedule. By doing for others what they cannot do for themselves, we emulate the pattern of the Savior, who wrought the Atonement to bless the lives of other people.

One day we will meet our Maker and stand before Him at Judgment.<sup>42</sup> We will be judged according to our ordinances, covenants, deeds, and the desires of our hearts.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, in this world smitten with spiritual decay, can individuals prepared for temple blessings make a difference? Yes! Those Saints are "the covenant people of the Lord, . . . armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."<sup>44</sup> Their example can lift the lives of all humankind. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Exodus 28:36; 39:30; Psalm 93:5. Translated equivalents are used on temples in non-English-speaking localities.
2. See Exodus 19:5–6; Leviticus 19:1–2; Psalm 24:3–5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 20:69; 110:6–9; see also Bible Dictionary, "Holiness," 703–4.

3. 2 Nephi 9:48.
4. See "Following the Master: Teachings of President Howard W. Hunter," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 21–22; Howard W. Hunter, "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 3.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 638.
7. See Moroni 10:4–5.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 416.
9. Matthew 16:19.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:20; see also Isaiah 52:11; Alma 11:37; 3 Nephi 27:19.
12. Or the branch president and mission president.
13. See 3 Nephi 20:26; see also Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 41–42; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 32.
14. See Romans 6:17, 20; Doctrine and Covenants 121:17.
15. Alma 7:6.
16. President Hinckley said, "I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53).
17. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), 73.
18. See Neal A. Maxwell, "Not My Will, But Thine" (1988), 135; see also Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
19. This reminds us that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34; see also Moroni 8:12).
20. The Lord assured that even though "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; . . . my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my people be removed" (Joseph Smith Translation, Isaiah 54:10). Surely we would not ever want knowingly to discard from us an emblem of His everlasting covenant.
21. See Ephesians 6:11–13; see also Alma 46:13, 21; Doctrine and Covenants 27:15.
22. In a letter dated October 10, 1988, the First Presidency wrote:  
 "Practices frequently observed among the members of the Church suggest that some members do not fully understand the covenant they make in the temple to wear the garment in accordance with the spirit of the holy endowment.  
 "Church members who have been clothed with the garment in the temple have made a covenant to wear it throughout their lives. This has been interpreted to mean that it is worn as underclothing both day and night. . . . The promise of protection and blessings is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness in keeping the covenant.  
 "The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible.  
 "The principles of modesty and keeping the body appropriately covered are implicit in the covenant and should govern the nature of all clothing worn. Endowed members of the Church wear the garment as a reminder of the sacred covenants they have made with the Lord and also as a protection against temptation and evil. How it is worn is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior."
23. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; 109:8.
24. In fact, He *is* the way (see John 14:6).
25. See John A. Widtsoe, "Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 62.

26. Members of the Church who do not read English may find comparable terms in their language editions of the Guide to the Scriptures.
27. Page 609, paragraphs 1, 4.
28. Page 617, paragraphs 1–2.
29. Page 633, paragraphs 1–3.
30. Page 651, paragraphs 1–2.
31. Page 670, paragraphs 1–2.
32. Pages 765–66, paragraph 1.
33. Pages 780–81, paragraphs 1–3.
34. Chapters of special interest include Exodus 26–29, 39; Leviticus 8; 2 Samuel 12 (v. 20); 2 Chronicles 6–7; Isaiah 22; Ezekiel 16.
35. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
36. See Moroni 10:32; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26.
37. “Temples and Temple Work,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 3.
38. See Philippians 4:7.
39. See Alma 42:8.
40. In Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
42. See 2 Nephi 9:41.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
44. 1 Nephi 14:14.

### President Faust

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to

us, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, please be courteous, use caution, and obey the traffic rules.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing “Come, Follow Me,” after which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Come, Follow Me.”

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### An undervalued sweet roll

We all have life events that, when we recall them years later, acquire new and important meaning. When I was in junior high, I was honored by the school administration when I was asked to become a member of the student hall patrol. On the days we were assigned to be on hall patrol, we were instructed to bring our lunch to school and eat it together. It was always a special treat, and there was al-

ways a lot of competition to see whose mother had prepared the most desirable lunch. Often we traded lunch items among ourselves.

One day when I was assigned to be on hall patrol, I forgot to tell Mother that I needed a lunch until I was almost ready to leave for school. An expression of concern came over Mother's face when I requested a lunch. She told me that she had just used up her last loaf of bread for

breakfast and would not be baking until that afternoon. All she had in the house to make a lunch was a large sweet roll left over from the previous night's supper. Mother made delicious sweet rolls. She always arranged them in a pan so there was one large one across the top of the pan and then rows of smaller ones down the length of the pan. Only the large one remained. It was about the size of a loaf of bread in length but, of course, not in thickness. I was embarrassed to take just a sweet roll for lunch when I imagined what the other patrol members would have, but I decided it was better to go with the sweet roll than go without lunch.

When it came time to eat lunch, I went to a far-off corner so I wouldn't be noticed. When the trading of lunches started, my friends wanted to know what I had. I explained what had happened that morning, and to my dismay everyone wanted to see the sweet roll. But my friends surprised me. Instead of making fun of me, they all wanted to have a piece of the sweet roll! It turned out to be my best lunch trading day of the entire year! The sweet roll that I thought would be an embarrassment to me turned out to be the hit of our lunch hour.

### **Appreciating our Church membership**

As I have reflected on this experience, it has occurred to me that it is often part of human nature to attach less value to familiar things simply because they are so common to us. One of these familiar things could be our membership in the restored Church.

What members of the Church possess is a "pearl of great price," yet sometimes this priceless gem is so familiar to us that we do not appreciate its true value. While it is true we should not cast our pearls before swine, this does not mean we should not share them with people who will appreciate their value. One of the greatest side benefits of missionary work is watch-

ing the great value that others who have not previously heard about our beliefs attach to them. There is a great benefit in seeing one's treasures through someone else's eyes. My concern is that we often take for granted the unique and valuable blessings that we have of membership in the Lord's Church, and in such a state of underappreciation we are more likely to be complacent about our Church membership and are less valiant contributors to building a community of Saints.

We are blessed with a great and noble heritage that offers a pathway to truth that veers dramatically from the so-called ways of the world. We need to remind ourselves about the value of our heritage so we do not underestimate its worth. I challenge the many Saints who are hiding in the corners to stand tall and proclaim loudly the treasured teachings of our common heritage, not with a spirit of pride or boasting but with a spirit of confidence and conviction.

### **Joseph's vision of a community of Saints**

Something about which I am most proud is how our forefathers, through their faith in God and their industry and perseverance, turned places that nobody wanted into beautiful cities.

When Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Liberty Jail with no prospect of release, an extermination order had been issued against the Saints. This made it necessary for Brigham Young to organize the Saints to move them from Missouri. The migration from Missouri in February of 1839 caused many to complain that the Lord had forsaken His people. Some of the Church members questioned the wisdom of once again gathering the Saints together in one location.

Crossing the Mississippi River and pausing in some of the smaller communities along its banks proved to be a respite necessary for the members to receive new direction from their leaders. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail, en-

couraging the Saints not to scatter but to gather together, then build from centers of strength.

In April of that year, Joseph and Hyrum and their fellow prisoners were allowed to escape from the jail in Missouri. They arrived in Quincy, Illinois, on the 22nd day of April of 1839. The Prophet immediately went to work to find a place to gather the Saints. He found a spot on the banks of the Mississippi River that looked like it had promise. He named the city Nauvoo, meaning "beautiful," but at that time it was anything but beautiful. It was a swampy peninsula that had not been drained. Out of the swamp-infested land rose a city that could truly be called beautiful.

The first homes in Nauvoo were huts, tents, and a few abandoned buildings. Then the Saints started to build log cabins. As time and capital would allow, framed buildings were erected, and, still later, more substantial brick buildings were built.

The Prophet had a design to build a community of Saints. He had three major objectives: first, economic; second, educational; and third, spiritual.

### **Love and work in the community of Saints**

The Prophet Joseph Smith's desire was that the Saints should become economically self-sufficient. Our Father in Heaven has given all of His children everything they have—their talents, their abilities, their material goods—and has made them stewards over these blessings.

A treasured remnant of our heritage of economic self-sufficiency is the Church Welfare Services program. It has two key ingredients. The first is the principle of love, and the second is that of work.

The principle of love is the motivating power that moves us to give our time, money, and services to this wonderful program. John the Beloved wrote:

"Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . .

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7–9, 11).

Then in 1 John, the third chapter, he wrote: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

It is our understanding of the principle of love that encourages us to give generously to the fast offerings, a wonderful, revealed system in which on the first Sunday of each month we voluntarily refrain from eating two meals and contribute the cost of those meals to our bishop. He then has the resources to help him help those in need. The system is mostly painless, and it raises our appreciation for those who are without and provides a means to satisfy their daily requirements.

May the Lord continue to bless us with the desire to love one another and give generously based on the principle of the fast.

The second basic principle is that of work. Work is just as important to the success of the Lord's economic plan as the commandment to love our neighbor.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

"These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them" (D&C 68:31-32).

I have a special concern about the Lord's reference to our children. We see evidence of many parents who overindulge their children without adding sufficient training about the value of work.

In any community of Saints we all work to serve each other in the best way we know how. Our work has a higher purpose because it is work to bless others and to build the kingdom of God.

### Education in the community of Saints

The second requirement in the Prophet Joseph's community of Saints was that of education. As early as 1840, when he applied for the incorporation of Nauvoo, he also asked for authority to establish a university.

From the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read, "Educational ideas and practices of the Church grew directly out of certain revelations received by Joseph Smith that emphasize the eternal nature of knowledge and the vital role learning plays in the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of mankind" ("Education," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 2:441).

There are verses in our modern scripture that make special mention of the importance of secular and spiritual learning. A few of these are, first from the Book of Mormon, "But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29).

And from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

"And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:18-19).

From the Articles of Faith, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

### A community of spiritual Saints

The final desire of the Prophet Joseph Smith was to build a community of spiritual Saints. This begins in the home. The most important instruction our children will ever receive will be that which parents give to them in their own home, if parents diligently teach their children the way our Father in Heaven would like them to follow. One instruction our leaders have given us is to hold regular family home evenings where we can meet together weekly, learn gospel principles, and build family unity. Here we can counsel together, read the scriptures, pray together, and play together. Our greatest goal is to become an eternal family. We build a community of Saints one family at a time.

To enable the eternal family, a magnificent temple was constructed in Nauvoo. It stood as a beacon to remind all the people that the most important blessings in life are spiritual blessings. In the temple, sacred covenants are made and the saving ordinances of the gospel are administered. Repeated visits to the temple give us an opportunity of renewing these covenants and performing ordinances vicariously for those who have died without these blessings.

We now have temples scattered throughout the earth, giving many more the chance to receive the necessary ordinances to qualify for life eternal. Those who are worthy to enter the temple will receive great spiritual blessings if they continue to serve in faithfulness and keep their covenants. The Lord blesses His people when they keep His commandments and frequently visit His house. In God's eternal plan, our temples are gathering places for communities of Saints working to build Zion.

### A community that is one with God

Our community of Saints is not one of exclusion but one of inclusion, built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (see Ephesians 2:20). It is open to all of us who love, appreciate, and have compassion for our Father in Heaven's children. The dual foundations of our economic welfare are the principles of charity and hard work. It is a progressive community in which we educate our youth in courtesy and civility and also in the deeper truths of the restored gospel. Our community has a spiritual center, allowing us to live with the companionship of the Holy Spirit, which guides and directs us in our lives.

May God grant unto us the desire to live closer to Him so we may enjoy the

blessings of peace, harmony, security, and love for all mankind—the hallmarks of a community that is one with Him. He is our God. We are His children. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTE

Historical information is from *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2nd ed. (Church Educational System manual, 2000), 193–223.

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The choir sang “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”

Elder David R. Stone offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 171st Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake City. Paul Broomhead directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to the general priesthood session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the

priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake, under the direction of Paul Broomhead, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Come, O Thou King of Kings.” The invocation will then be offered by Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. The choir will then sing “I Need Thee Every Hour.” Following the singing, Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorenson of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.



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The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Bishop H. David Burton offered the invocation.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### **Our sacred trust to watch over the Church**

I am grateful for the honor of speaking in the name of the Lord to the shepherds of Israel. That is who we are. When we accepted the priesthood, we took upon us the responsibility to do our part in watching over the Church. None of us can escape accountability. The president of the priesthood in all the earth bears the total responsibility. Through the keys of the priesthood, each quorum bears its part. Even the newest deacon in the most distant place on earth has a part in the great responsibility to watch over the Church.

Listen to these words from the Doctrine and Covenants: "Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?" And then the Savior includes even the deacons in His listing of assignments: "The deacons and teachers should be appointed to watch over the church, to be standing ministers unto the church" (D&C 84:109, 111).

### **Protecting the sheep**

I pray that I might explain our sacred trust so that even the newest deacon and the convert most recently ordained will see his opportunity. In many places in the scriptures, the Lord has described Himself and those He calls to the priesthood as shepherds. A shepherd watches over sheep. In the scriptural stories the sheep are in danger; they need protection and

nourishment. The Savior warns us that we must watch the sheep as He does. He gave His life for them. They are His. We cannot approach His standard if, like a hired servant, we watch only when it is convenient and only for a reward. Here is His standard:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep" (John 10:11-12).

### **Feeding the sheep**

The members of the Church are the sheep. They are His, and we are called by Him to watch over them. We are to do more than warn them against danger. We are to feed them. Once, long ago, the Lord commanded His prophet to rebuke the shepherds of Israel. Here is the warning, which is still in force, in the words of the prophet Ezekiel:

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, . . . and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (Ezekiel 34:1-2).

The food those shepherds took for themselves, letting the sheep starve, could lead to salvation for the sheep. One of the great shepherds in the Book of Mormon

described both what that food is and how it can be provided:

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

### **Deacons rescue a lost sheep**

It is painful to imagine a shepherd feeding himself and letting the sheep go hungry. Yet I have seen many shepherds who feed their flocks. One was the president of a deacons quorum. One of his quorum members lived near my home. That neighbor boy had never attended a quorum meeting or done anything with the members of his quorum. His stepfather was not a member, and his mother did not attend church.

The presidency of his deacons quorum met in council one Sunday morning. Each week they were fed the good word of God by the fine adviser and teacher. In their presidency meeting, those 13-year-old shepherds remembered the boy who never came. They talked about how much he needed what they received. The president assigned his counselor to go after that wandering sheep.

I knew the counselor, and I knew he was shy, and I knew the difficulty of the assignment, so I watched with wonder through my front window as the counselor trudged by my house, going up the road to the home of the boy who never came to church. The shepherd had his hands in his pockets. His eyes were on the ground. He walked slowly, the way you would if you weren't sure you wanted to get where you were headed. In 20 minutes or so, he came back down the road with the lost

deacon walking by his side. That scene was repeated for a few more Sundays. Then the boy who had been lost and was found moved away.

Now, that story seems unremarkable. It was just three boys sitting in a room around a small table. Then it was a boy walking up a road and coming back with another boy. But years later I was in a stake conference, a continent away from the room in which that presidency had met in council. A gray-haired man came up to me and said quietly, "My grandson lived in your ward years ago." With tenderness he told me of that boy's life. And then he asked if I could find that deacon who walked slowly up that road. And he wondered if I could thank him and tell him that his grandson, now grown to be a man, still remembered.

He remembered because in those few weeks he had been, for the first time in his life that he recognized, watched over by the shepherds of Israel. He had been warned by hearing eternal truth from people who cared about him. He had been offered the bread of life. And young shepherds had been true to their trust from the Lord.

### **The Savior watches with us**

It is not easy to learn to do that well and do it consistently. The Savior showed us how—and how to train others to do it. He established His Church. He had to leave His Church in the hands of inexperienced servants, just as many of us are. He knew they would face difficulties beyond their human powers to resolve. What He did for them can be a guide for us.

When the Savior went to the Garden of Gethsemane to suffer bitter agonies before His betrayal and sufferings on the cross, He could have gone alone. But He took His priesthood servants with Him. Here is the account from Matthew:

"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:

tarry ye here, and *watch with me*" (Matthew 26:38; italics added).

The Savior prayed to His Father for strength. In the midst of His agony, He returned to Peter to teach him what it requires for all who would watch with Him:

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41).

There is a reassurance and a warning in that simple exchange of the Master with His shepherds. He watches with us. He who sees all things, whose love is endless, and who never sleeps—He watches with us. He knows what the sheep need at every moment. By the power of the Holy Ghost, He can tell us and send us to them. And we can by the priesthood invite His power to bless them.

#### **A warning to watch over ourselves**

The Savior's warning to Peter is to us as well. The wolf who would kill the sheep will surely tear at the shepherd. So we must watch over ourselves as well as others. As shepherds we will be tempted to go near the edges of sin. But sin in any form offends the Holy Ghost. You must not do anything or go anywhere that offends the Spirit. You cannot afford that risk. Should sin cause you to fail, you would not only be responsible for your own sins but for the sorrow you might have prevented in the lives of others had you been worthy to hear and obey the whisperings of the Spirit. The shepherd must be able to hear the voice of the Spirit and bring down the powers of heaven, or he will fail.

The warning given to an ancient prophet is a warning to us as well:

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:7-8).

#### **Shepherds must be motivated by love**

The penalty for failure is great. But the Lord taught Peter how to build the foundation for success. He repeated a simple message three times. It was that love for the Lord would be in the heart of a true shepherd. Here is the end of the account:

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

It is love that must motivate the shepherds of Israel. That may seem difficult at the start, because we may not even know the Lord well. But if we begin with even a little grain of faith in Him, our service to the sheep will increase our love for Him and for them. It comes from simple things that every shepherd must do. We pray for the sheep, every one for whom we are responsible. When we ask, "Please tell me who needs me," answers will come. A face or a name will come into our minds. Or we may have a chance meeting that we feel isn't chance. In those moments we will feel the love of the Savior for them and for us. As you watch over His sheep, your love for Him will grow. And that will increase your confidence and your courage.

#### **Quorum leader becomes a true shepherd**

Now, you may be thinking, "It's not that easy for me. I have so many people to watch over. And I have so little time." But where the Lord calls, He prepares a

way—His way. There are shepherds who believe that. I'll tell you about one.

Two years ago a man was called as the president of his elders quorum. He had been a member of the Church for less than 10 years. He had just become worthy to be sealed to his wife and family in the temple. His wife was an invalid. He had three daughters. The oldest was 13, and she cooked the meals and, with the others, cared for the house. His scant earnings from manual labor supported not only those five people but a grandfather who lived with them in their small house.

When he was called to be president of his elders quorum, it had 13 members. That tiny quorum was responsible for another 101 men who either had no priesthood at all or who were deacons, teachers, or priests. He was responsible to watch over the souls of 114 families, with little hope that he could devote more than his Sundays and perhaps one night a week to his service, with all he did to serve his own family.

The difficulty of what he faced drove him to his knees in prayer. Then he stood up and went to work. In his efforts to meet and know his sheep, his prayers were answered in a way he had not expected. He came to see beyond individuals. He came to know that the Lord's purpose was for him to build families. And even with his limited experience, he knew that the way to build families would be to help them qualify to make and keep temple covenants.

He began to do what a good shepherd always does, but he did it differently when he saw the temple as their destination. First, he prayed to know who were to be his counselors to go with him. And then he prayed to know which families needed him and had been prepared.

He called on as many as he could. Some were cold and did not accept his

friendship. But with those who did, he followed a pattern. As soon as he saw interest and trust, he invited them to meet the bishop. He had asked the bishop beforehand, "Please tell them what it takes to be worthy to go to the temple to claim its blessings for them and their families. And then please testify to them, as I have, that it will be worth it."

A few then accepted the quorum president's invitation to a temple preparation class taught by stake leaders. Not all completed the course, and not all qualified for the temple. But each family and each father was prayed for. Most were invited at least once to a feast of the good word of God. With every invitation came the president's testimony of the blessings of being a family sealed forever and the sadness of being separated. Every invitation was issued with the love of the Savior.

During the president's service, he has seen 12 of the men he taught ordained elders. He has seen four of his elders ordained high priests. Those numbers don't come close to measuring the miracle. The families of those men will be blessed over generations. Fathers and mothers are now sealed to each other and to their children. They are praying over their children, receiving the help of heaven, and teaching the gospel with the love and inspiration the Lord gives to faithful parents.

That president and his counselors have become true shepherds. They have watched over the flock with the Master and have come to love Him. They are eye-witnesses to the truth of what the Savior taught an Apostle, Thomas B. Marsh. It is true for all who watch with the Lord over His sheep:

"Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go.

"Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.

"Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father. Amen" (D&C 31:11-13).

I testify that God the Father lives and answers our prayers. I am a witness that the loving Savior watches over His sheep with His faithful shepherds.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David E. Sorensen

### **You can't pet a rattlesnake**

Some years ago, Sister Sorensen and I had the privilege of visiting India. At one airport I remember walking across the landing strip and seeing some men sitting in front of wicker baskets, playing flutes. As they started to play the music, they would take the top off the basket and a cobra would appear! As the music continued, the snake would rise higher and higher, nearly reaching its full length until the cobra would collapse back into the basket. Once I noticed a cobra fall outside the basket. The man playing the flute reached over, petted the cobra, and carefully put it back into the basket. I was amazed that a man could handle such a dangerous creature, apparently without being harmed. But our guide quickly told me that this was very risky and told us that a major cause of death in this province was indeed poisonous snakebite.

My mind raced back to the days of my youth on the farm. In the summertime one of our responsibilities was to haul hay from the fields into the barn for winter storage. My dad would pitch the hay onto a flatbed wagon. I would then tromp down the hay to get as much as possible on the wagon. One day, in one of the loose bundles pitched onto the wagon was a rattlesnake! When I looked at it, I was concerned, excited, and afraid. The snake was lying in the nice, cool hay. The sun was glistening on its diamond back. After a few moments the snake stopped rattling, became still, and I became very curious. I started to get closer and leaned over for a better look, when suddenly I

heard a call from my father: "David, my boy, you can't pet a rattlesnake!"

### **Dangers of the media's poisonous snakes**

Tonight I would like to talk to you about the dangers of petting poisonous snakes. The ones I refer to do not have long, slithering bodies but come in many other forms. Often the world makes these dangers look harmless—even exciting and interesting. But petting such snakes fills the mind with poison—poison that drives away the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Brethren, today's popular entertainment often makes what is evil and wrong look enjoyable and right. Let us remember the Lord's counsel: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."<sup>2</sup>

Pornography, though billed by Satan as entertainment, is a deeply poisonous, deceptive snake that lies coiled up in magazines, the Internet, and the television. Pornography destroys self-esteem and weakens self-discipline. It is far more deadly to the spirit than the rattlesnake my father warned me not to pet. The Bible records that King David was gifted spiritually, but he stood where he should not have stood. He watched what he should not have watched. Those obsessions became his downfall.<sup>3</sup>

### **Build fortifications against temptation**

Resisting the temptations of today's electronic media is not easy. It takes focused courage and effort. In the small town where I grew up, one had to drive at least an hour to find trouble. But to-

day on the Internet, trouble is just a few mouse clicks away. To avoid such temptations, be like Captain Moroni of old; set up “fortifications” to strengthen your places of weakness. Instead of building walls of “timbers and dirt” to protect a vulnerable city, build “fortifications” in the form of personal ground rules to protect your priceless virtue.<sup>4</sup> When you’re on a date, plan to be in groups and avoid being alone. I know men, young and old, who have simply determined not to turn on the TV or surf the Internet anytime when they are alone. Fathers, it is wise to keep computers and televisions in the family room or other high-traffic areas in your home—not in children’s bedrooms. I also know of fathers who, while on business trips, wisely choose not to turn on the hotel television.

Remember, such “fortifications” are not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, they show strength. The scriptures tell us Captain Moroni was so strong that if all men would be like him, “the very powers of hell would [be] shaken forever.”<sup>5</sup> Remember, Moroni’s “strongholds”<sup>6</sup> were the key to his success. Creating your own “strongholds” will be the key to yours.

### **Decide now where to draw the line**

One key fortification you can build is to decide now, before you face a challenge, where to draw the line. Our prophet teaches that if we decide now not to watch inappropriate media but instead to walk away, “the challenge is behind us.”<sup>7</sup>

Recently my granddaughter Jennifer was invited to go with some of her school friends to a dinner and a movie. The girls all agreed on the movie they were going to see, and Jennifer was comfortable attending. However, the girl who left dinner to buy the movie tickets for the group returned with tickets to a different movie than was planned! She said, “It is a great show, and it’s R-rated.”

Jennifer, caught by surprise, couldn’t believe the situation had changed so quickly. But fortunately she had made up her mind before she ever found herself in this position that she would not watch R-rated movies. She was able to stand firm and say to her friends, “I can’t go see an R-rated movie. My parents would not approve.” To which the girls replied, “Oh, come on! Your parents will never know!” Confronted with this, Jennifer went on to say, “Well, actually it doesn’t matter whether my parents will know. I just don’t go to R-rated movies!”

Her friends were upset and tried to get her to relent. They told her she was ruining everything. When she would not give in, they threw the ticket and change in her face and deserted her for the R-rated movie. It wound up being a lonely night full of rejection from her friends. But it was a great moment for Jennifer and our family.<sup>8</sup> She gained confidence, self-worth, and spiritual power.<sup>9</sup>

### **Do not sin now and plan to repent later**

Knowingly petting a poisonous spiritual snake is doubly dangerous.<sup>10</sup> Those who do remind me of the little boy who was overheard praying, “Heavenly Father, if you can’t make me a better boy, don’t worry about it. I’m having a real good time like I am.”

Don’t be like that shortsighted boy. Those who plan to sin, thinking they can repent before they receive the sacred covenants and ordinances of the temple, risk losing their spiritual health. They find it is a painful process to come back to the right path.

### **Repentance—a spiritual snakebite kit**

For those who suffer from a poisonous snakebite, there is a painful cleansing process. Where the bite was inflicted, a cut with a sharp knife is required. Then

someone must cleanse the infected blood from the wound. Often a stay in the hospital is required. My plea to you tonight, brethren, is to avoid petting that rattle-snake. It is much better not to commit the sin.<sup>11</sup>

Some young men, as they advance in the priesthood, plan for a mission, or prepare to go to the temple, realize they suffer from a snakebite that has spiritually poisoned them. Sexual sins are among the most poisonous.

If you or someone you know has been poisoned spiritually, there is a spiritual snakebite kit. It's called repentance.<sup>12</sup> And like the remedy for temporal snakebite, it is most effective if applied quickly and early. It can combat even the most venomous spiritual poisons. "For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him."<sup>13</sup> The miracle of forgiveness is real.<sup>14</sup> Your repentance is honored of the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

An important step in obtaining the cure for spiritual poison is to get on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to forgive you.<sup>16</sup> Pray for the desire to do what is right. Pray for the courage to talk to your parents and the bishop if necessary.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of your fears, they will continue to love you. You don't have to do this alone. The path of repentance, though difficult, need not be traveled alone. Parents and leaders can provide valuable encouragement and support.

The power and freedom of forgiveness is real. The Savior taught, "The truth shall make you free."<sup>18</sup> Joy comes from living the way the Savior lived.<sup>19</sup> He has asked us to keep our thoughts pure.<sup>20</sup> He has asked us to maintain our self-respect. He has asked us to become a good influence on our family and our friends. We are to love them and to lift them toward the light. He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have

love one to another."<sup>21</sup> He has promised He will help us live His standards. He has said: "Take my yoke upon you. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>22</sup>

### Pattern our lives after the Master

Brethren of the priesthood, can you join me right here, right now, once again to commit and to take upon you the name of Christ? With this priesthood which you hold, can you rise up and wield the power of God to defend righteousness? Can you stand in holy places?<sup>23</sup>

We have all accepted the responsibility to pattern our life after the Master. He has committed the keys of the priesthood and of divine revelation to our living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. He counsels: "Stay away from pornography."<sup>24</sup> "I plead with you to get it out of your life."<sup>25</sup>

Don't allow the poison to touch your souls, brethren. Remember, "He that is righteous is favored of God."<sup>26</sup> I testify of this in the name of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:33; Moses 8:17.
2. Isaiah 5:20.
3. See 2 Samuel 11; Doctrine and Covenants 132:39.
4. See Alma 53:4, 7.
5. Alma 48:17.
6. See Alma 53:4-5.
7. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4.
8. See Galatians 5:16-21.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46.
10. See Mosiah 27:10-11; Alma 1:15.
11. See Luke 15:21.
12. See Isaiah 1:18.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
14. See Mosiah 26:29.
15. See 2 Nephi 9:23; 26:27.
16. See Alma 34; 3 Nephi 18:29-32.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:7.
18. John 8:32.

19. See 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; Mosiah 2:41; 4:3.
20. See Articles of Faith 1:13.
21. John 13:35.
22. Matthew 11:29–30.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:22.
24. In Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 54.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51.
26. 1 Nephi 17:35.

## Elder John H. Groberg

### Unfathomable value of the priesthood

Fellow bearers of the priesthood everywhere: I hope we appreciate the priceless privilege of holding the priesthood of God. Its value is unfathomable.

Through its power, worlds—even universes—have been, are being, and will be created or organized. Through its power, ordinances are performed which, when accompanied by righteousness, allow families to be together forever, sins to be forgiven, the sick to be healed, the blind to see, and even life to be restored.

### Purity required for priesthood power

God wants us, His sons, to hold His priesthood and learn to use it properly. He has explained:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

For if we “exercise control or domination or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men [especially our wives and children], in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we see that while the power of the priesthood is unlimited, our individual power in the priesthood is limited by our degree of righteousness or purity.

Just as clean wires, properly connected, are required to carry electrical

power, so clean hands and pure hearts are required to carry priesthood power. Filth and grime slow or prevent the flow of electrical power. Unclean thoughts and actions interfere with individual priesthood power. When we are humble, clean, and pure of hand, heart, and mind, nothing righteous is impossible. An ancient Oriental saying declares, “If a man lives a pure life, nothing can destroy him.”<sup>3</sup>

### “I cannot approach God with dirty hands”

In His love for us, God has decreed that any worthy man, regardless of wealth, education, color, cultural background, or language, may hold His priesthood. Thus, any properly ordained man who is clean in hand, heart, and mind can connect with the unlimited power of the priesthood. I learned this lesson well as a young missionary years ago in the South Pacific.

My first assignment was to a small island hundreds of miles from headquarters, where no one spoke English, and I was the only white man. I was given a local companion named Feki, who was then serving a building mission and was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

After eight seasick days and nights on a small, smelly boat, we arrived at Niutopotapu. I struggled with the heat, the mosquitoes, the strange food, culture, and language, as well as homesickness. One afternoon we heard cries of anguish and saw a family bringing the limp, seemingly lifeless body of their eight-year-old son to us. They wailed out that he had fallen from a mango tree and would not respond to anything. The faithful father



and mother put him in my arms and said, "You have the Melchizedek Priesthood; bring him back to us whole and well."

Though my knowledge of the language was still limited, I understood what they wanted, and I was scared. I wanted to run away, but the expressions of love and faith that shone from the eyes of the parents and brothers and sisters kept me glued to the spot.

I looked expectantly at my companion. He shrugged and said, "I don't have the proper authority. You and the branch president hold the Melchizedek Priesthood." Grasping at that straw, I said, "Then this is the duty of the branch president."

No sooner had I said this than the branch president walked up. He had heard the commotion and returned from his garden. He was sweaty and covered with dirt and mud. I turned and explained what had happened and tried to give the young boy to him. He stepped back and said, "I will go and wash and put on clean clothes; then we will bless him and see what God has to say."

In near panic I cried, "Can't you see? He needs help now!"

He calmly replied, "I know he needs a blessing. When I have washed myself and put on clean clothes, I will bring consecrated oil, and we will approach God and see what His will is. I cannot—I will not—approach God with dirty hands and muddy clothes." He turned and left me holding the boy. I was speechless.

Finally he returned, clean in body and dress and, I sensed, in heart as well. "Now," he said, "I am clean, so we will approach the throne of God."

That marvelous Tongan branch president, with clean hands and a pure heart, gave a beautiful and powerful priesthood blessing. I felt more like a witness than a participant. The words of the Psalmist came to my mind:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . .

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart."<sup>4</sup>

On that tiny island a worthy priesthood holder ascended into the hill of the Lord, and the power of the priesthood came down from heaven and authorized a young boy's life to continue.

With the fire of faith glowing from his eyes, the branch president told me what to do. Much additional faith and effort were required, but on the third day that little eight-year-old boy, full of life, was reunited with his family.

### **Be pure to connect with God's power**

I hope you understand and feel these truths. This was a tiny island in the midst of a huge ocean—with no electricity, no hospital, no doctors—but none of that mattered. For in addition to great love and faith, there was a branch president who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, who understood the importance of cleanliness of hand and heart and its outward expression in cleanliness of body and dress, who exercised the priesthood in righteousness and purity according to the will of God. That day his individual power *in* the priesthood was sufficient to connect with the unlimited power *of* the priesthood over earthly life.

When I look into the heavens at night and contemplate the endless galaxies therein, I am amazed at what a tiny dot our little earth is and how infinitesimally small I am. Yet I do not feel afraid, alone, insignificant, or distant from God. For I have witnessed His priesthood power connecting with clean hands and pure hearts on a tiny island in a vast ocean.

Brethren, that connection is available to all of us, no matter where, when, or under what circumstances we live, so long as our hands, hearts, and minds are clean and pure. There is no individual power in the priesthood outside of individual purity.

We simply must work harder at purifying our lives by serving others in more Christlike ways. There are always opportunities to serve—in our families, in the Church, on missions, in temples, and among our fellowmen. Noble service requires hard work, deep sacrifice, and complete unselfishness. The more the sacrifice, the greater the resultant purity.

### **Satan tries to limit our priesthood power**

God, who is full of light, life, and love, wants us to hold and properly use His priesthood so we can transmit that light, life, and love to all about us. On the other hand, Satan, the prince of darkness, wants to hold back light, life, and love as much as he can. Since there is nothing Satan can do about the power of the priesthood, he concentrates his energy on trying to limit our individual power *in* the priesthood by attempting to dirty our hands, hearts, and minds through abuse, anger, neglect, pornography, selfishness, or any other evil he can entice us to think or do. He knows that if he can sufficiently soil us individually, he can, to that degree, keep us from the purity needed to properly exercise the priesthood and thus bring more light, life, and love to this earth and all the inhabitants thereof—past, present, and future.

Oh, brethren, please don't sell your precious priesthood birthright for a mess of X- or R-rated pottage. Remember, the sand castles we build on the beaches of mortality, no matter how elaborate, will eventually be washed away by the tide.

Only purity of hand, heart, and mind will allow us to tap into the ultimate power of the priesthood to truly bless others and eventually be able to build eternal mansions more beautiful and lasting than we can presently imagine.

### **Jesus personifies priesthood power**

I have learned for myself that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that He is my friend and your friend. I know that Jesus is the perfect personification of pure priesthood power. Follow Him.

I pray that we may all serve with more purity of heart, that our individual power in the priesthood may eventually be full through the perfect love of Him whose priesthood we bear.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
3. Attributed to Buddha.
4. Psalm 24:3–4.

### **President Monson**

What excellent messages we have just heard. This is a remarkable evening.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and following President Faust's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing that priesthood favorite "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah."

## **President James E. Faust**

### **"Them that honour me I will honour."**

My beloved brethren of this great worldwide brotherhood of the priesthood, I come to you humbly and prayerfully. Speaking to you is a sacred and overwhelming responsibility. I desire to

be understood. I hope that each of us can claim the promise of the Lord, "Them that honour me I will honour."<sup>1</sup>

I fully recognize all that has been accomplished by the Lord's servants in previous generations, but I believe you young men of the priesthood and the

young women of your age are in many ways the most promising generation in the history of the world. I come to this conclusion for several reasons. As Sister Faust and I read our grandchildren's patriarchal blessings, we find that almost without exception they are more promising than mine or hers.

For you to achieve your potential, you will need to honor four sacred principles in your lives. These four are:

1. Reverence for Deity.
2. Respecting and honoring family relationships.
3. Reverence for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the holy priesthood.
4. Respect for yourself as a son of God.

I should like to speak about these four great principles tonight.

### **Reverence for Deity**

The first is reverence for Deity. I am grateful that the Lord has blessed us as a people with temporal blessings unequalled in the history of the Church. These resources have been given to us to do good and to permit our work on earth to accelerate. But I fear that through prosperity, many of us have been preoccupied with what Daniel called "gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know."<sup>2</sup> These, of course, are idols.

In reverence for the sacred, overarching and undergirding all else is a love and respect for Deity. During most of the world's history, mankind has labored much in idolatry, either worshiping false gods or becoming preoccupied with acquiring material opulence.

After the Resurrection of the Savior, Peter and some of the disciples were at the Sea of Tiberias. Peter announced to them that he was going fishing. The disciples agreed to go with him. They seemed to have forgotten that they were called to

be fishers of men. They fished through the night but caught nothing.

In the morning Jesus, standing on the shore, told them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship, and the nets were filled with fish. Jesus told them to bring in the fish they had caught; Peter and his associates landed 153. When they came ashore they saw fish being cooked on a fire of coals, and the Savior invited them to eat the fish and some bread. After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?"<sup>3</sup> Peter was an ardent fisherman. Catching fish was the livelihood from which the Savior called him to become a fisher of men.

The requirement that we should love the Lord above fish, bank accounts, automobiles, fine clothing, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, or any other possession is total; it is absolute. The first commandment given unto the ancient Israelites was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>4</sup> The Savior Himself amplified this command when He told the lawyer who asked Him which was the greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."<sup>5</sup>

I am frequently offended by hearing people in public discourse and on television so casually violate the commandment "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."<sup>6</sup> We are reminded in section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants that in order "to avoid the too frequent repetition of his [holy] name,"<sup>7</sup> the holy priesthood was named after the great high priest Melchizedek. Reverence and respect for sacred things all flow from the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>8</sup>

We who have been commissioned with the priesthood authority to act in the name of the Savior need to respect God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost above all else.

## Respect and honor family relationships

The second principle is to respect and honor family relationships. This should begin with reverence for Mother's sacred love. All mothers go down into the valley of the shadow of death as they labor in birth to give us life. My mother has now been dead many years. I miss her sweet, loving influence in my life. I miss her general counsel and reproof. But mostly I miss her unconditional love. The yearning to be with her is at times almost overpowering. Most of us could say, with Abraham Lincoln, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."<sup>9</sup>

My mother cooked, sewed, patched and remodeled clothes; she did without so that the limited amount of money could stretch to give her sons more opportunities than she ever had. But more important was her unwavering faith that she desired to plant deep into our souls.

Brethren, noble fatherhood gives us a glimpse of the divine attributes of our Father in Heaven. A father should be many things. He should magnify his priesthood and be an example of righteousness. In companionship with his wife, he should be the source of stability and strength for the whole family. He should be the protector and the provider and the champion of the members of his family. Much of his love for his children should flow from his example of love, concern, and fidelity for their mother. By his uncompromising example he should instill character into his children.

When Elder LeGrand Richards left to attend college, his father, George F. Richards, said to him and his brother, George F. Jr., "I would trust you two to go anywhere I would go myself." Their hearts swelled with love and pride in his words. LeGrand later said, "They put rods of steel in our spines, and we couldn't do anything that would disappoint him."<sup>10</sup>

A father should never consciously disappoint his wife or children. In 1989 there was a terrible earthquake in Armenia that

killed over 30,000 people in four minutes. A distraught father went in frantic search of his son. He reached his son's school only to find that it had been reduced to a pile of rubble. But he was driven by his promise to his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" He visualized the corner where his son's classroom would be, rushed there, and started to dig through the debris, brick by brick.

Others came on the scene—the fire chief, then the police—warning him of fires and explosions, and urging him to leave the search to the emergency crews. But he tenaciously carried on digging. Night came and went, and then, in the 38th hour of digging, he thought he heard his son's voice. "Armand!" he called out. Then he heard:

"Dad?! It's me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told 'em that if you were alive, you'd save me and when you saved me, they'd be saved. . . . There are 14 of us left out of 33. . . . When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle, and it saved us."

"Come on out, boy!"

"No, Dad! Let the other kids out first, 'cause I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"<sup>11</sup>

All family relationships should be honored, including those to our kindred dead. Love, service, and help should flow between brothers and sisters and the extended family.

## Respect priesthood ordinances and covenants

The third principle is respect for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the priesthood. Anciently those who participated in priesthood ordinances wore priestly attire. While we do not wear priestly attire, we show respect by wearing appropriate clothing when administering and passing the sacrament and anointing the sick.

Eli the priest was relieved of his calling when he permitted wickedness in the

house of the Lord. The Lord said, "For them that honour me I will honour."<sup>12</sup> The great priesthood power and authority with which we have been entrusted must be exercised by those authorized to do so who have proven themselves worthy to do so. Only in this manner will our acts be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise and thus be honored by the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

We honor the Lord by keeping our baptismal covenants, our sacrament covenants, and our temple covenants, and by keeping the Sabbath day holy. The Lord has said, "All among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me."<sup>14</sup>

### **Respect yourself as a son of God**

The fourth principle is to respect yourself as a son of God. Those of us who have served missions have seen the miracle in the lives of some we have taught as they have come to realize that they are sons and daughters of God. Many years ago an elder who served a mission in the British Isles said at the end of his labors, "I think my mission has been a failure. I have labored all my days as a missionary here and I have only baptized one dirty little Irish kid. That is all I baptized."

Years later, after his return to his home in Montana, he had a visitor come to his home who asked, "Are you the elder who served a mission in the British Isles in 1873?"

"Yes."

Then the man went on, "And do you remember having said that you thought your mission was a failure because you had only baptized one dirty little Irish kid?"

He said, "Yes."

The visitor put out his hand and said, "I would like to shake hands with you. My name is Charles A. Callis, of the Council

of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am that dirty little Irish kid that you baptized on your mission."<sup>15</sup>

That little Irish boy came to a knowledge of his potential as a son of God. Elder Callis left a lasting legacy for his large family. Serving as a mission president for 25 years and in his apostolic ministry for 13 years, he blessed the lives of literally thousands. I feel privileged to have known this great Apostle of the Lord when I was a young man.

If we are constantly aware of the seeds of divinity in us, it will help us rise above earthly challenges and difficulties. Brigham Young said: "When I look upon the faces of intelligent beings I look upon the image of the God I serve. There are none but what have a certain portion of divinity within them; and though we are clothed with bodies which are in the image of our God, yet this mortality shrinks before that portion of divinity which we inherit from our Father."<sup>16</sup> Being aware of our divine heritage will help men young and old to grow and magnify the divinity which is within them and within all of us.

All of us who wish to be honored by the Lord and receive of His goodness, mercy, and eternal blessings must, I repeat, be obedient to these four great principles:

1. Have a reverence for Deity.
2. Have respect for and honor family relationships.
3. Have a profound reverence for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the holy priesthood.
4. Have respect for yourself as a son of God.

### **Priesthood is the greatest force for good**

Brethren, I pray that the Lord will bless each of us in this grand army of righteous priesthood brethren. Individually, perhaps, our contribution may not seem great, but unitedly I believe the priest-

hood power we collectively hold is the greatest force for good in the earth today. It is all exercised under the priesthood keys held by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the presiding high priest on the earth. I pray that we may be obedient to his inspired leadership and follow his example. May his remarkable ministry be extended for many years.

Brethren, I have been privileged, as boy and man, to enjoy the warm, comforting spiritual mantle of the holy priesthood for 68 years. I cannot express in words what a great and marvelous sustaining influence this has been to me and my family. Many times I have been less than I should have been. But in my weak way I have wanted to be deserving of this supernal blessing. So long as there is breath in my life, I want to be found testifying of the wonder and glory of the restored gospel with its priesthood keys and authority. May we be worthy of the Lord's promise, "Them that honour me I will honour," in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 1 Samuel 2:30.
2. Daniel 5:23.
3. See John 21:1-15.
4. Exodus 20:3.
5. Mark 12:30.
6. Exodus 20:7.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:4.
8. Exodus 20:3.
9. Quoted in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Home Book of Quotations* (1934), 1350.
10. Lucile C. Tate, *LeGrand Richards: Beloved Apostle* (1982), 28.
11. Mark V. Hansen, "Are You Going to Help Me?" in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*,

ed. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen (1993), 273-74.

12. 1 Samuel 2:30.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
15. See *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 602-3.
16. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 168.

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The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

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#### President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow. Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. Remember, brethren, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to a combined Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake for the beautiful music they provided this evening.

Following my remarks, it will be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. This session will conclude then with the choir singing "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

#### Be participants, not spectators

Mine is the overwhelming and humbling responsibility tonight to address you, my dear brethren who hold the

priesthood of God and who have assembled here in the Conference Center and throughout the world.

Some of you are deacons, perhaps newly ordained; others of you are high

priests who have served long and faithfully in sacred callings. All have assembled that we might better learn our duty.

Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.

President Wilford Woodruff declared: "All the organizations of the Priesthood have power. The Deacon has power, through the Priesthood which he holds. So has the Teacher. They have power to go before the Lord and have their prayers heard and answered, as well as the Prophet. . . . It is by this Priesthood that men have ordinances conferred upon them, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are redeemed. For this purpose it has been revealed and sealed upon our heads."<sup>1</sup>

Once I heard from a newly ordained deacon soon after he had received the Aaronic Priesthood. He said, "Today is my first day to pass the sacrament. I can't wait. I know it is a very holy ordinance, so I'll treat it with care. I have a true testimony of the Church, and I hope to go on a mission soon."

### Who will go to the rescue?

May I share with you tonight, brethren, a letter which I received some time ago, written by a husband who strayed far from the priesthood path of service and duty. It typifies the plea of too many of our brethren. He wrote:

"Dear President Monson:

"I had so much and now have so little. I am unhappy and feel as though I am failing in everything. The gospel has never left my heart, even though it has left my life. I ask for your prayers.

"Please don't forget those of us who are out here—the lost Latter-day Saints. I know where the Church is, but sometimes I think I need someone else to show

me the way, encourage me, take away my fear, and bear testimony to me."

While reading this letter, I returned in my thoughts to a visit to one of the great art galleries of the world—even the famed Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. There, exquisitely framed, was a masterpiece painted in 1831 by Joseph Mallord William Turner. The painting features heavy-laden black clouds and the fury of a turbulent sea portending danger and death. A light from a stranded vessel gleams far off. In the foreground, tossed high by incoming waves of foaming water, is a large lifeboat. The men pull mightily on the oars as the lifeboat plunges into the tempest. On the shore there stand a wife and two children, wet with rain and whipped by wind. They gaze anxiously seaward. In my mind I abbreviated the name of the painting. To me, it became *To the Rescue*.

### The Lord expects devotion to duty

Amidst the storms of life, danger lurks; and men, like boats, find themselves stranded and facing destruction. Who will man the lifeboats, leaving behind the comforts of home and family, and go to the rescue?

President John Taylor cautioned us, "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."<sup>2</sup>

Brethren, our task is not insurmountable. We are on the Lord's errand, and therefore we are entitled to the Lord's help. But we must try. From the stage play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

When the Master ministered among men, He called fishermen at Galilee to leave their nets and follow Him, declaring, "I will make you fishers of men."<sup>3</sup> And so He did. Tonight He issues a call to each of us to "come join the ranks."<sup>4</sup>

He provides our battle plan with His admonition, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>5</sup>

I love and cherish the noble word *duty*. Let us hearken to the stirring reminder found in the epistle of James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."<sup>6</sup>

There is an old song of my vintage. It's entitled "Wishing Will Make It So." It's not true. Wishing will *not* make it so. The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors. He expects our testimonies. He expects our devotion. Unfortunately there are those who have departed from the track of priesthood activity. Let us help them back to that path that leads to life eternal. Let us build that strong Melchizedek Priesthood base that will be the foundation of Church activity and growth. It will be the underpinning to strengthen every family, every home, every quorum in every land.

Brethren, we can reach out to those for whom we are responsible and bring them to the table of the Lord, there to feast on His word and to enjoy the companionship of His Spirit and be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."<sup>7</sup>

### **The Lord changes lives**

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives—our lives and the lives of those with whom we labor. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says today: "Come forth."<sup>8</sup> Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life. Come forth.

We will discover that those whom we serve, who have felt through our labors the touch of the Master's hand, somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to serve

faithfully, to walk humbly, and to live more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight, who said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."<sup>9</sup>

How can we account for these miracles? Why the upsurge of activity in men long dormant? The poet, speaking of death, wrote, "God . . . touched him, and he slept."<sup>10</sup> I say, speaking of this new birth, "God touched them, and they awakened."

Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions. First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. Men cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once they see excellence is within their reach.

Second, other men have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors' dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The catalyst in this process has been—and will continue to be—the principle of love.

### **Shelley's miraculous change of heart**

Another principle of truth which will guide us in our determination is that boys and men can change. I'm reminded of the words of a prison warden who taught this fact. A critic who knew of Warden Duffy's efforts to rehabilitate men said, "Don't you know that leopards can't change their spots?" Warden Duffy responded, "You should know I don't work with leopards. I work with men, and men change every day."

Many years ago, before leaving to become president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, I had developed a friendship with a man by the name of Shelley, who lived in my ward but did not embrace the gospel, irrespec-



tive of the fact that his wife and children had done so. Shelley had been known as the toughest man in town when he was young. He was quite a pugilist. His fights were rarely in the ring but rather elsewhere. Try as I might, I could not bring about a change in Shelley's attitude. The task appeared hopeless. In time, Shelley and his family moved from our ward.

After I had returned from Canada and was called to the Twelve, I received a telephone call from Shelley. He said, "Will you seal my wife and me and our family in the Salt Lake Temple?"

I answered hesitatingly, "Shelley, you first must be a baptized member of the Church."

He laughed and responded, "Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. My home teacher was a school crossing guard, and every weekday as he and I would visit at the crossing, we would discuss the gospel."

The sealings were performed; a family was united; joy followed.

### **Befriend and love those you would lift**

Abraham Lincoln offered this wise counsel, which surely applies to home teachers: "If you would win a man to your cause, *first* convince him that you are his sincere friend."<sup>11</sup>

A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out.

There are brethren in every ward who seem to have a special skill and aptitude to penetrate the outer shell and reach the heart. Such was Raymond L. Egan, who served as my counselor in the bishopric. He loved to befriend and activate in the Church the father of a family and thereby bring into the fold a dear wife and precious children as well. This wonderful phenomenon occurred many times right up until Brother Egan departed mortality.

There are other ways as well by which one might lift and serve. On one occasion, I was speaking with a retired executive I had known for a long time. I asked him, "Ed, what are you doing in the Church?" He replied, "I have the best assignment in the ward. My responsibility is to help men who are unemployed find permanent employment. This year I have helped 12 of my brethren who were out of work to obtain good jobs. I have never been happier in my entire life." Short in stature, "Little Ed," as we affectionately called him, stood tall that evening as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need. He restored human dignity. He opened doors for those who knew not how to do so themselves.

I truly believe that those who have the ability to reach out and to lift up have found the formula descriptive of Brother Walter Stover—a man who spent his entire life in service to others. At Brother Stover's funeral, his son-in-law paid tribute to him in these words: "Walter Stover had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he treated each person accordingly." Legendary are his acts of compassionate help and his talent to lift heavenward every person whom he met. His guiding light was the Master's voice speaking, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me."<sup>12</sup>

### **Learn the language of the Spirit**

Brethren, acquire the language of the Spirit. It is not learned from textbooks written by men of letters, nor is it acquired through reading and memorization. The language of the Spirit comes to him who seeks with all his heart to know God and keep His divine commandments. Proficiency in this "language" permits one to breach barriers, overcome obstacles, and touch the human heart.

In a day of danger or a time of trial, such knowledge, such hope, such under-

standing bring comfort to a troubled soul and a grieving heart. Shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope; sorrow yields to joy; and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

In closing, I return to the painting by Turner. In a very real sense, those persons stranded on the vessel which had run aground in the storm-tossed sea are like many young men—and older men as well—who await rescue by those of us who have the priesthood responsibility to man the lifeboats. Their hearts yearn for help. Mothers and fathers pray for their sons. Wives and children plead to heaven that Daddy and others may be reached.

Tonight I pray that all of us who hold the priesthood may sense our responsibilities and, as one, follow our Leader—even the Lord Jesus Christ, and His prophet,

President Gordon B. Hinckley—to the rescue. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 2:87.
2. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
3. Matthew 4:19.
4. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
6. James 1:22.
7. Ephesians 2:19.
8. John 11:43.
9. John 9:25.
10. Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4; spelling modernized.
11. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. (1953), 1:273.
12. Matthew 25:40.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, before I begin my talk I want to congratulate very warmly this Melchizedek Priesthood choir, composed of men from many walks of life, all singing together out of their hearts filled with testimony of the hymns of Zion. Brethren, thank you very, very much.

### The Perpetual Emigration Fund

Now, I seek the inspiration of the Lord as I speak briefly on what I consider to be a very important subject.

I begin by taking you back 150 years and more. In 1849 our forebears faced a serious problem. Our people had then been in the Salt Lake Valley for two years. Missionaries in the British Isles and Europe continued to gather converts. They came into the Church by the hundreds. When they were baptized, they desired to gather to Zion. Their strength and their

skills were needed here, and their wish to come was very strong. But many of them were distressingly poor, and they had no money with which to buy passage. How were they to get here?

Under the inspiration of the Lord, a plan was devised. What was known as the Perpetual Emigration Fund was established. Under this plan, funded by the Church, notwithstanding its serious poverty at that time, money was loaned to those members who had little or nothing. Loans were made with the understanding that when the converts arrived here, they would find employment, and as they were able to do so, they would pay off the loan. The money repaid would then be loaned to others to make it possible for them to emigrate. It was a revolving resource. It was truly a Perpetual Emigration Fund.

With the help of this fund, it is estimated that some 30,000 converts to the

Church were enabled to gather to Zion. They became a great strength to the work here. Some of them came with needed skills, such as stone masonry, and others developed skills. They were able to perform a tremendous service in constructing buildings, including the Salt Lake Temple and Tabernacle, and doing other work which required expertise. They came here by wagons and by handcarts. Notwithstanding the terrible handcart tragedy of 1856, when approximately 200 of them died from cold and sickness on the plains of Wyoming, they traveled safely and became an important part of the family of the Church in these mountain valleys.

For instance, James Moyle was a stonemason in Plymouth, England, when he was baptized at the age of 17. Of that occasion he wrote:

"I then covenanted with the Lord that I would serve Him through good and evil report. It was the turning point in my life, as it kept me from evil company" (in Gordon B. Hinckley, *James Henry Moyle* [1951], 18).

Notwithstanding his skill as a mason, he had little money. He borrowed from the Perpetual Emigration Fund and left England in 1854, sailed to America, crossed the plains, and almost immediately secured employment as a stonemason on the Lion House at \$3 a day. He saved his money, and when he had \$70, the amount of his indebtedness, he promptly repaid the Emigration Fund. He said, "I then considered that I was a free man" (see *Moyle*, 19-24).

When the Perpetual Emigration Fund was no longer needed, it was dissolved. I believe that many within the sound of my voice are descendants of those who were blessed by reason of this fund. You are today prosperous and secure because of what was done for your forebears.

#### **Economic trials of young members today**

Now, my brethren, we face another problem in the Church. We have many

missionaries, both young men and young women, who are called locally and serve with honor in Mexico, Central America, South America, the Philippines, and other places. They have very little money, but they make a contribution with what they have. They are largely supported from the General Missionary Fund, to which many of you contribute, and for these contributions we are very deeply grateful.

They become excellent missionaries, working side by side with elders and sisters sent from the United States and Canada. While in this service, they come to know how the Church operates. They develop a broadened understanding of the gospel. They learn to speak some English. They work with faith and devotion. Then comes the day of their release. They return to their homes. Their hopes are high. But many of them have great difficulty finding employment because they have no skills. They sink right back into the pit of poverty from which they came.

Because of limited abilities, they are unlikely to become leaders in the Church. They are more likely to find themselves in need of welfare help. They will marry and rear families who will continue in the same cycle that they have known. Their future is bleak indeed. There are some others who have not gone on missions who find themselves in similar circumstances in development of skills to lift them from the ranks of the poor.

#### **The Perpetual Education Fund**

In an effort to remedy this situation, we propose a plan—a plan which we believe is inspired by the Lord. The Church is establishing a fund, largely from the contributions of faithful Latter-day Saints who have and will contribute for this purpose. We are deeply grateful to them. Based on similar principles to those underlying the Perpetual Emigration Fund, we shall call it the Perpetual Education Fund.

From the earnings of this fund, loans will be made to ambitious young men and women, for the most part returned missionaries, so that they may borrow money to attend school. Then when they qualify for employment, it is anticipated that they will return that which they have borrowed, together with a small amount of interest designed as an incentive to repay the loan.

It is expected that they will attend school in their own communities. They can live at home. We have an excellent institute program established in these countries, where they can be kept close to the Church. The directors of these institutes are familiar with the educational opportunities in their own cities. Initially, most of these students will attend technical schools, where they will learn such things as computer science, refrigeration engineering, and other skills which are in demand and for which they can become qualified. The plan may later be extended to training for the professions.

It is expected that these young men and women will attend institute, where the director can keep track of their progress. Those desiring to participate in the program will make application to the institute director. He will clear them through their local bishops and stake presidents to determine that they are worthy and in need of help. Their names and the prescribed amount of their loans will then be sent to Salt Lake City, where funds will be issued, payable not to the individual but to the institution where they will receive their schooling. There will be no temptation to use the money for other purposes.

We shall have a strong oversight board here in Salt Lake and a director of the program who will be an emeritus General Authority, a man with demonstrated business and technical skills and who has agreed to accept this responsibility as a volunteer.

It entails no new organization, no new personnel except a volunteer director and

secretary. It will cost essentially nothing to administer.

We shall begin modestly, commencing this fall. We can envision the time when this program will benefit a very substantial number.

### **How the fund will bless our members**

With good employment skills, these young men and women can rise out of the poverty they and generations before them have known. They will better provide for their families. They will serve in the Church and grow in leadership and responsibility. They will repay their loans to make it possible for others to be blessed as they have been blessed. It will become a revolving fund. As faithful members of the Church, they will pay their tithes and offerings, and the Church will be much the stronger for their presence in the areas where they live.

There is an old saying that if you give a man a fish, he will have a meal for a day. But if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for the remainder of his life.

Now, this is a bold initiative, but we believe in the need for it and in the success that it will enjoy. It will be carried forward as an official program of the Church with all that this implies. It will become a blessing to all whose lives it touches—to the young men and women, to their future families, to the Church that will be blessed with their strong local leadership.

It is affordable. We have enough money, already contributed, to fund the initial operation. It will work because it will follow priesthood lines and because it will function on a local basis. It will deal with down-to-earth skills and needed fields of expertise. Participation in the program will carry with it no stigma of any kind, but rather a sense of pride in what is happening. It will not be a welfare effort, commendable as those efforts are, but rather an education opportunity. The beneficiaries will repay the money, and when they do so they will enjoy a wonder-

ful sense of freedom because they have improved their lives not through a grant or gift but through borrowing and then repaying. They can hold their heads high in a spirit of independence. The likelihood of their remaining faithful and active throughout their lives will be very high.

We are already carrying forward in limited areas an employment service under the welfare program of the Church. This consists primarily of offices of referral. The matter of education will rest with the Perpetual Education Fund. The operation of employment centers will rest with the welfare program. These employment centers deal with men and women who are seeking employment and have skills but lack proper referrals. The one is a rotating education fund to make possible the development of skills. The other is the placing of men and women in improved employment who already have some marketable skills.

### **United, we can help our poor**

President Clark used to tell us in these general priesthood meetings that there is nothing that the priesthood cannot accomplish if we will work unitedly together in moving forward a program designed to bless the people (see J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 180).

May the Lord grant us vision and understanding to do those things which will help our members not only spiritually but also temporally. We have resting upon us a very serious obligation. President Joseph F. Smith said nearly a hundred years ago that a religion which will not help a man in this life will not likely do much for him in the life to come (see "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West* magazine, Sept. 1905, 242).

Where there is widespread poverty among our people, we must do all we can to help them to lift themselves, to establish their lives upon a foundation of self-reliance that can come of training.

Education is the key to opportunity. This training must be done in the areas where they live. It will then be suited to the opportunities of those areas. And it will cost much less in such places than it would if it were done in the United States or Canada or Europe.

### **May God prosper this program**

Now, this is not an idle dream. We have the resources through the goodness and kindness of wonderful and generous friends. We have the organization. We have the manpower and dedicated servants of the Lord to make it succeed. It is an all-volunteer effort that will cost the Church practically nothing. We pray humbly and gratefully that God will prosper this effort and that it will bring blessings, rich and wonderful, upon the heads of thousands, just as its predecessor organization, the Perpetual Emigration Fund, brought untold blessings upon the lives of those who partook of its opportunities.

As I have said, some have already given very substantial amounts to fund the corpus whose earnings will be used to meet the need. But we will need considerably more. We invite others who wish to contribute to do so.

We anticipate there may be some failures in the repayment of loans. But we are confident that most will do what is expected of them, and generations will be blessed. We may anticipate that future generations will also be in need, for as Jesus said, "The poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8). It must, therefore, be a revolving fund.

It is our solemn obligation, it is our certain responsibility, my brethren, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). We must help them to become self-reliant and successful.

I believe the Lord does not wish to see His people condemned to live in poverty. I believe He would have the faithful enjoy the good things of the earth. He would

have us do these things to help them. And He will bless us as we do so. For the success of this undertaking I humbly pray, while soliciting your interest, your faith, your prayers, your concerns in its behalf. I do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling."

Elder H. Bruce Stucki offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 1, 2001. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice." President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice," and will now favor us with "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy. The choir will then sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," after which President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Robert J. Whetten offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

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## President James E. Faust

### Recollections of baptism

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, the responsibility of speaking to all of you is a matter of great concern to me. I pray for your understanding.

My baptism into this Church was one of the highlights of my life. I was eight years of age. My parents taught me and my brothers the significance of this great ordinance. My mother told me that after my baptism I would be held accountable

for the things I did that were not right. I remember the day of my baptism very vividly. I was baptized in the baptismal font in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. Those who were being baptized put on white coveralls and were gently taken one by one down the steps into the water. One of the children baptized that day was not totally immersed, so the ordinance was repeated. This was necessary because, as the scriptures indicate, "baptism symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection, and can only be done by immersion."<sup>1</sup> It also follows the pattern set by the Savior, who was baptized in the river Jordan, where there was much water. As Matthew records, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."<sup>2</sup>

Even though I was only eight years of age, the words of the baptismal prayer penetrated deeply into my soul. After repeating my name, Brother Irvin G. Derrick, who baptized me, said, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."<sup>3</sup>

Since I was baptized, more than 11 million people have been baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a similar manner and by the same authority. They have been baptized in frozen lakes, the ocean, or ponds, some of which were dug for that purpose. One such pond has great historic significance. In 1840 Wilford Woodruff, then one of the Twelve Apostles, was serving a mission in England and felt impressed to go to a rural district near Ledbury. There he met John Benbow, who had a large farm and a small pond. John introduced him to a congregation of United Brethren who were eager to hear the gospel message. He later recorded in his journal that with no other help at hand on March 7, 1840, "I spent most of the . . . day in clearing out a pool of water and preparing it for baptizing, as I saw that many would receive that ordinance. I afterwards baptized six hundred persons in that pool of water."<sup>4</sup>

## **Baptism is spiritual rebirth**

The Savior taught us that all men and women must be born again. Nicodemus, one of the rulers among the Jews, came surreptitiously to the Savior by night and said:

"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup>

Nicodemus was bewildered and asked: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Jesus explained that He was talking about being born spiritually. He said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."<sup>6</sup>

All of us need to be born spiritually, from 8 to 80—or even 90. When Sister Luise Wulff of the German Democratic Republic was baptized in 1989, she exclaimed, "There I was—ninety-four years old and born again!"<sup>7</sup> Our first birth takes place when we are born into mortality. Our second birth begins when we are baptized by water by one holding the priesthood of God and is completed when we are confirmed, and "then cometh a remission of [our] sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."<sup>8</sup>

## **Baptism of Atiati in Samoa**

Some years ago Albert Peters told of the experience he and his companion had of a man being born again. One day they went to the hut of Atiati in the village of Sasina in Samoa. There they found an unshaven, unkempt, misshapen man lying

on a bed. He asked them to come in and introduce themselves. He was pleased to know they were missionaries and wanted to hear their message. They presented the first discussion, bore witness to him, and then left. As they walked away, they discussed Atiati's condition. He had had polio 22 years before that had left him without the use of his arms or legs, so how could he ever be baptized, being so completely disabled?

When they visited their new friend the next day, they were unprepared for the change in Atiati. He was bright and clean-shaven; even his bedding had been changed. "Today," he said, "I begin to live again, because yesterday my prayers were answered and you [came] to me. . . . I have waited for more than twenty years for someone to come and tell me that they have the true gospel of Christ."

For several weeks the two missionaries taught this sincere, intelligent man the principles of the gospel, and he received a strong witness of the truth and the need for baptism. He asked them to fast with him so that he would have the strength to go down into the water and be baptized. The nearest baptismal font was eight miles away. So they carried him to their car, drove him to the chapel, and set him on a bench. Their district leader opened the service by bearing a strong testimony about the sacred ordinance of baptism. Then Elder Peters and his companion picked up Atiati and carried him to the font. As they did so, Atiati said, "Please, put me down." They hesitated, and he said again, "Put me down."

As they stood in some confusion, Atiati smiled and exclaimed, "This is the most important event in my life. I know without a doubt in my mind that this is the only way to eternal salvation. *I will not be carried to my salvation!*" So they lowered Atiati to the ground. After a huge effort, he managed to pull himself up. The man who had lain 20 years without moving was now standing. Slowly, one shaky step at a

time, Atiati went down the steps and into the water, where the astonished missionary took him by the hand and baptized him. He then asked to be carried from the font to the chapel, where he was confirmed a member of the Church.

Atiati continued to progress so that he gained the ability to walk only by a cane. He told Elder Peters that he knew that he would be able to walk on the morning of his baptism. He said, "Since faith can move a stubborn mountain, I had no doubt in my mind that it would mend these limbs of mine."<sup>9</sup> I believe we can say that Atiati was truly born again!

### Standards of worthiness for baptism

Like Atiati, when we are baptized we are spiritually born of God and are entitled to receive His image in our countenances.<sup>10</sup> We should experience a mighty change of heart<sup>11</sup> so that we can "become new creatures"<sup>12</sup> and exercise faith in the redemption of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in order to maintain our standards of worthiness. The personal standards of worthiness to be baptized into this Church are plain:

"All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church."<sup>13</sup>

### The transcendent gift of the Holy Ghost

Baptism by immersion in water "is the introductory ordinance of the gospel, and must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete."<sup>14</sup> As the Prophet Joseph Smith once said:



"You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost."<sup>15</sup>

The full benefit of forgiveness of sin through the Savior's Atonement begins with repentance and baptism and then expands upon receiving the Holy Ghost. As Nephi said, baptism is the gate, "and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."<sup>16</sup> The baptismal gate opens the way for additional covenants and blessings through priesthood and temple blessings.

The transcendent gift of the Holy Ghost, along with membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is bestowed by confirmation, by the laying on of hands by those having priesthood authority. This was made clear by Paul to the Ephesians when he asked:

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them."<sup>17</sup>

### **Holy Ghost guides, protects, testifies**

If worthy, those possessing this spiritual gift can come to enjoy greater understanding and enrichment and guidance in all of life's activities, both spiritual and temporal. The Holy Ghost bears witness

to us of the truth and impresses upon our souls the reality of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, so surely that no earthly power or authority can separate us from that knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, not having the gift of the Holy Ghost is somewhat like having a body without an immune system.

We believe the Spirit of Christ comes to all men and women.<sup>19</sup> This is distinct from the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>20</sup> Many outside the Church have received revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost, convincing them of the truth of the gospel. Through this power, sincere investigators acquire a testimony of the Book of Mormon and the principles of the gospel before baptism. However, administrations of the Holy Ghost are limited without receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Those who possess the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism and confirmation can receive more light and testimony. This is because the gift of the Holy Ghost is "a permanent witness and higher endowment than the ordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup> It is the higher endowment because the gift of the Holy Ghost can act as "a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin."<sup>22</sup>

### **Baptism for the dead**

Because baptism by water and of the Spirit is essential for full salvation, in the eternal nature of things all of God's children should have this opportunity, including those who have lived in centuries past. The doctrine of baptism of the living for the dead was understood and practiced in the early Christian church. Paul, in his great discussion about the Resurrection, reasoned: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"<sup>23</sup>

Doing something so vital for those who cannot do it for themselves is truly Christlike. By laying down His life to atone for the sins of all mankind, Jesus did that for us which we cannot do for ourselves. The prophet Malachi referenced this concept when he spoke of the coming of the prophet Elijah, who would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [the Lord] come and smite the earth with a curse."<sup>24</sup> This is accomplished in large measure through vicarious work for the dead.

No other organization on the earth is doing more to fulfill Malachi's promise than the Church. At great expense and effort the Church is now the custodian of the greatest treasure of family records in the world. The Church now has 660 million names on the FamilySearch™ Internet Web site.<sup>25</sup> These records are freely shared with anyone who wishes to research them.

### Walk in newness of life

As I have lived so many years since my baptism by water, I have come to savor the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost that come through baptism of the Spirit. I was confirmed 72 years ago by one having authority, Joseph A. F. Everett, a close friend of my parents and a very noble man.

I humbly pray that the Spirit of the Lord will put His seal upon the importance of the things about which I have spoken. I witness that we cannot be fully converted until we "walk in newness of life"<sup>26</sup> and are at heart a new person, "purged from [our] old sins."<sup>27</sup> This can come about only by being born again of the water and of the Spirit through baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. In this way we receive divine forgiveness, by which we can know in our

hearts that our sins are remitted.<sup>28</sup> I know this to be true and so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, "Baptism," 618; see also Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:37-39; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:12; Doctrine and Covenants 20:72-74; 128:12-13.
2. Matthew 3:16.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
4. As quoted in Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1964), 117.
5. John 3:2-3.
6. John 3:4-6.
7. "Born Again at 94," *Tambuli*, June 1994, 24.
8. 2 Nephi 31:17.
9. See Albert Peters, "One Trembling Step at a Time," *Ensign*, June 1994, 56-58.
10. See Alma 5:14.
11. See Alma 5:14.
12. Mosiah 27:26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
14. Bible Dictionary, "Baptism," 618.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 314.
16. 2 Nephi 31:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:31.
17. Acts 19:2-6.
18. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
20. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 199.
21. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 5:4.
22. Bible Dictionary, "Holy Ghost," 704.
23. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
24. Malachi 4:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:47; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
25. See [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).
26. Romans 6:4.
27. 2 Peter 1:9.
28. See Mosiah 4:3.

### President Monson

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bish-

opric will speak to us. The choir and congregation will then sing "Redeemer of Israel," and following the singing, Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Discipleship in today's hostile wilderness

Granted, brothers and sisters, the world is "in commotion," but the kingdom is in forward motion as never before! (see D&C 88:91; 45:26). Its distinctiveness is being more sharply defined by adverse trends in the world, where traditional values are not fastened down by the rivets of the Restoration (see D&C 105:31). They are sliding swiftly.

The results are contradictory mixtures, such as boredom and violence. Some individuals simply exist, "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12; see also Alma 41:11). The trek of modern discipleship is taking us through this hostile wilderness, including cultures ambivalent about setting limits and with no brakes!

Yes, we have unprecedented mass entertainment and mass communications but so many lonely crowds. The togetherness of technology is no substitute for the family.

### Valiantly enduring trials refines us

Much as I lament the resulting and gathering storms, there can be some usefulness in them. Thereby we may become further tamed spiritually, for "except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him" (Helaman 12:3). The Lord is always quietly refining His faithful people individually anyway, but events will also

illuminate God's higher ways and His kingdom (see D&C 136:31).

Our context is challenging, however. We have many overwhelmed parents, more and more marriages in meltdown, and dysfunctional families. Destructive consequences impact steadily from drugs, violence, and pornography. Truly, "despair cometh . . . of iniquity" (Moroni 10:22). Since the adversary desireth "that all men might be miserable like unto himself," his is the plan of misery (2 Nephi 2:27; see also verse 18).

The valiant among us keep moving forward anyway, because they know the Lord loves them, even when they "do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). As you and I observe the valiant cope successfully with severe and relentless trials, we applaud and celebrate their emerging strength and goodness. Yet the rest of us tremble at the tuition required for the shaping of such sterling character, while hoping we would not falter should similar circumstances come to us!

### Disciples stand fast in a troubled world

It may be too late to fix some communities, but not to help those individuals and families willing to fix themselves. It is not too late, either, for some to become pioneer disciples in their families and locations—or for individuals to become local peacemakers in a world from which peace has been taken (see D&C

1:35). If still others experience a shortage of exemplars, they can become such.

While Joshua was able to say, "But as for me and my house . . ." (Joshua 24:15), some individuals, presently bereft of intact families, nevertheless can still say, "But as for me . . ." and then so live as to become worthy of all the Lord has prepared for them. Thus, disciples "stand fast" (D&C 9:14), "hold out faithful to the end" (D&C 6:13), and "hold on [their] way" (D&C 122:9), even in a troubled world.

However, enduring and submitting are not passive responses at all, but instead are actually more like being braced sufficiently to report for advanced duties, while carrying—meekly and victoriously—bruises from the previous frays.

What are a few fingers of scorn now anyway, when the faithful can eventually know what it is like to be "clasped in the arms of Jesus"? (Mormon 5:11; see also 1 Nephi 8:33).

What are mocking words now, if later we hear those glorious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? (Matthew 25:21).

### **"Plow in hope"**

Meanwhile, Paul urges us to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Therefore, desperately needed is longitudinal perspective, the hope of the gospel. Today's *put-down* is then placed in the perspective of our being *lifted up* tomorrow in God's plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16).

Since the Lord wants a people "tried in all things" (D&C 136:31), how, specifically, will we be tried? He tells us, I will try the faith and the patience of my people (see Mosiah 23:21). Since faith in the timing of the Lord may be tried, let us learn to say not only, "Thy will be done," but patiently also, "Thy timing be done."

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, "through patience and comfort of the scriptures," "written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), and bolstered by "having

all these witnesses" (Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). Faith constitutes "the assurance of things hoped for" and the proof of "things not seen" (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1; see also Ether 12:6). Therefore, whatever our humble furrow, we are to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10), finally developing "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also Alma 29:4).

Yet too many of the partially committed, like Naaman, wait for the Lord to bid them to "do some great thing," while declining His biddings in small things (2 Kings 5:13). When Naaman was humbled and corrected, not only did his flesh become like that of a little child, but his heart also (see 2 Kings 5:14–15). Failure to serve the Master in small ways estranges us from Him (see Mosiah 5:13).

Those, however, who "plow in hope" not only understand the law of the harvest, but they also understand what growing seasons are all about. True, those with genuine hope may see their proximate circumstances shaken like a kaleidoscope at times, yet with the "eye of faith" they still see divine design (Alma 5:15).

### **Atonement is the source of ultimate hope**

Ultimate hope, of course, is tied to Jesus and the great Atonement, with its free gift of the universal Resurrection and the proffer of God's greatest gift, eternal life (see Moroni 7:40–41; Alma 27:28; D&C 6:13; 14:7).

Several scriptures describe the essence of Christ's glorious and rescuing Atonement, including a breathtaking autobiographical verse confiding, "Would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18). Since the "infinite atonement" required infinite suffering, the risk of recoil was there! (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:12). All humanity hung on the hinge of Christ's character! Mercifully, He did not shrink but "finished [His] preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19).

But Christ's unique submissiveness has always been in place. Indeed, He has "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11), keenly observing His Father all the while: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

This verse carries intimations of grand things—beyond the beyond.

In the agonizing atoning process, Jesus let His will be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7). As sovereigns, choosing to yield to the Highest Sovereign is our highest act of choice. It is the only surrender which is also a victory! The *putting off* of the natural man makes possible the *putting on* of the whole armor of God, which would not fully fit before! (see Ephesians 6:11, 13).

Redeeming Jesus also "poured out his soul unto death" (Mosiah 14:12; see also Isaiah 53:12; D&C 38:4). As we on occasion "pour" out our souls in personal pleadings, we are thus emptied, making room for more joy!

### **Paying the full dues of discipleship**

Another fundamental scripture describes Jesus' having trodden the winepress of the "fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 88:106; see also D&C 76:107; 133:50). Others can and should encourage, commend, pray, and comfort, but the lifting and carrying of our individual crosses remains ours to do. Given the "fierceness" Christ endured for us, we cannot expect a discipleship of unruffled easiness. As we seek forgiveness, for example, repentance can be a rough-hewn regimen to bear. By the way, let us not, as some do, mistake the chips we have placed on our own shoulders for crosses!

Uniquely, atoning Jesus also "descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things" (D&C 88:6; see also D&C 122:8). How deep that descent

into despair and abysmal agony must have been! He did it to rescue us and in order to comprehend human suffering. Therefore, let us not resent those tutoring experiences that can develop our own empathy further (see Alma 7:11–12). A slothful heart will not do, and neither will a resentful heart. So being admitted fully to "the fellowship of his sufferings" requires the full dues of discipleship (Philippians 3:10; see also 1 Corinthians 1:9).

Moreover, Jesus not only took upon Him our sins to atone for them, but also our sicknesses and aching griefs (see Alma 7:11–12; Matthew 8:17). Hence, He knows personally all that we pass through and how to extend His perfect mercy—as well as how to succor us. His agony was all the more astonishing in that He trod "the wine-press alone" (D&C 133:50).

On occasion the God of heaven has wept (see Moses 7:28). One ponders, therefore, the agonies of Jesus' infinite Atonement and the feelings of the Father—for His Son and for us. There are no instructive, relevant revelations, but our finite, emotional extrapolations come flooding in anyway!

If, like the Savior, we do not "shrink," then we must go with the demanding flow of discipleship, including where the tutoring doctrines of the Master take us. Otherwise, we may walk with Jesus up to a point but then walk no more with Him (see John 6:66). Shrinking includes stopping as well as turning back.

### **"Learn of me"**

The more we know of Jesus, the more we will love Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will trust Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will want to be like Him and be with Him by becoming the manner of men and women that He wishes us to be (see 3 Nephi 27:27), while living now "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27).

Therefore, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we can glorify Christ by repent-

ing and thereby accessing the blessings of the astonishing Atonement, which He provided for us at such a stunning cost! (see John 16:14). So, brothers and sisters, given what Jesus *died for*, are we willing to *live with* the challenges allotted to us? (see Alma 29:4, 6). Trembling is sometimes both permissible and understandable.

There are many specific ways in which we can liken to ourselves these “essence” scriptures about Jesus and the Atonement, but all are covered under this conceptual canopy: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:29). In fact, there is no other way to learn deeply! (see 1 Nephi 19:23). The infinite Atonement is so vast and universal, but finally, it is so very personal! Mercifully, through the Atonement we can be forgiven and, very importantly, we can know that we have been forgiven—that final, joyous emancipation from error.

By utilizing the Atonement, we access the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which “fill-

eth with hope and perfect love” (Moroni 8:26). None of us can afford to be without that needed hope and love in the treks through our Sinais of circumstance!

### Plow to the end of the furrow

Thus, within the discipleship allotted to us we are to overcome the world (see 1 John 5:3–4); to finish the work we personally have been given to do; to be able to partake of a bitter cup without becoming bitter; to experience pouring out our souls; to let our wills increasingly be swallowed up in the will of the Father; to acknowledge—tough though the tutoring trials are—that indeed “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7); and to plow enduringly to the end of the furrow—all the while glorifying Him and using the matchless gifts He has given us, including, one day, all that He has (D&C 84:38).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### An urgent voice of warning

To those who yearn for spiritual truth, some things become self-evident. I bear my witness of these things. God is in His heavens. We mortals are His spirit offspring. Jesus is our Redeemer. Joseph Smith was God’s prophet, and Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. Revelations are pouring forth as in days of old. The kingdom of God, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is once more upon the earth.

Satan is real and is on the earth as well. He and his legions are wreaking havoc among the children of men. He speaks no truth, feels no love, promotes no good, and avows nothing but mayhem and destruction.

Therefore, I raise this day a “voice of warning.”<sup>1</sup> It is an urgent, sobering re-

minder and invitation to good men and women everywhere. Listen to these words of revelation received on November 1, 1831:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.”<sup>2</sup>

### Beware of worldly ways

The Lord speaks of calamity to befall the inhabitants of the earth. Calamities

come in different forms. From time to time the forces of nature convulse, and we are wrenched by their destructive powers.

Even more devastating, however, are the calamitous forces of evil which surfeit us continually. In accordance with the prophecy of 1831, peace has now been taken from the earth, and the devil has power over his dominion. His beguiling ways are mesmerizing the people. Temptation is on every hand. Crassness and wrangling have become a way of life. What was once considered awful is now considered tame; what at first titillates, soon captivates and then destroys.

This calamity of evil will continue to spread until "the whole world . . . groaneth . . . under the bondage of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, this "voice of warning":

- *Beware of worldly lusts.* They stimulate the senses but enslave the soul. Those caught in the web of sensuality find that it is not easily broken.

- *Beware of worldly wealth.* Its promises are enticing, but its happiness is a mirage. Wrote the Apostle Paul, "The love of money is the root of all evil."<sup>4</sup>

- *Beware of worldly preoccupation with self.* The highs are counterfeit; the lows are despairing. Love, kindness, personal fulfillment, and genuine self-worth are found in service to God and others, not in service to oneself.

### **The Church provides a safe harbor**

In the midst of these perils, there is a safe harbor. From the revelation cited earlier comes this assurance:

"And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world."<sup>5</sup>

There is safety in being a Saint. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ today are known as Latter-day Saints. In addition to being the Lord's designation of those who belong to His Church, this appellation also serves as His invitation to a better way of life.

This became clear to me some years ago when, as a young father, I needed to purchase some temple clothing. When I entered the store, my attention was drawn to a sign that read "For Latter-day Saints Only." The message jolted me. In my mind an argument ensued. "Why does it say 'For Latter-day Saints Only'?" I asked myself. "Why doesn't it say something like 'For Endowed Church Members'?" Why does it raise this issue of being a "Latter-day Saint"?

The years since have tempered my impetuous nature. That argumentative encounter of long ago has become a treasured, defining moment. The experience taught me that just being a member of this Church is not enough. Nor is merely going through the motions of membership sufficient in this day of cynicism and unbelief. The spirituality and vigilance of a saint are required.

### **Becoming the Lord's covenant people**

Being saintly is to be good, pure, and upright. For such persons, virtues are not only declared but lived. For Latter-day Saints, the kingdom of God, or the Church, is not a byline; rather, it is the center and the substance of their lives. Home is "a bit of heaven,"<sup>6</sup> not a hotel. The family is not merely a societal or biological entity. It is the basic eternal unit in God's kingdom, wherein the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught and lived. Indeed, Latter-day Saints diligently strive to become a little better, a little kinder, a little nobler in the daily affairs of life.

The Lord sets forth the way in which such progress is made. Said He, "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness."<sup>7</sup>

Holding to this course provides Latter-day Saints the means for avoiding the treacherous shoals of worldliness. Living this way enables members of the Church to become the covenant people of the Lord. For our time, we have the follow-

ing prophetic guidance from President Hinckley on how this can be done:

"We are a covenant people. I have had the feeling that if we could just encourage our people to live by three or four covenants everything else would take care of itself. . . .

*"The first of these is the covenant of the sacrament, in which we take upon ourselves the name of the Savior and agree to keep His commandments with the promise in His covenant that He will bless us with His spirit. . . .*

*"Second, the covenant of tithing. . . . The promise . . . is that He will stay the destroyer and open the windows of heaven and pour down blessings that there will not be room enough to receive them. . . .*

*"Three, the covenants of the temple: Sacrifice, the willingness to sacrifice for this the Lord's work—and inherent in that law of sacrifice is the very essence of the Atonement. . . . Consecration, which is associated with it, a willingness to give everything, if need be, to help in the on-rolling of this great work. And a covenant of love and loyalty one to another in the bonds of marriage, fidelity, chastity, morality.*

*"If our people could only learn to live by these covenants, everything else would take care of itself, I am satisfied."<sup>8</sup>*

### **Covenants help us resist worldly ways**

*Worldly lusts* lose their allure as the holy sacrament assumes its proper place in our lives. This covenant enables the faithful to keep themselves "unspotted from the world."<sup>9</sup>

*Worldly wealth* loses its peril through conscientious adherence to the Lord's tithe. Returning to Him a tithe of all He provides engenders in the giver a love of God above all else. It introduces the obedient to the higher law of giving without command. The fast and fast offerings are embraced, and power comes to loose the bands of wickedness, lift heavy burdens,

bless the less fortunate, and strengthen family ties.<sup>10</sup> The covenant of tithing weans the faithful from the love of money and its attendant trappings.

*Worldly preoccupation with self* surrenders to sacrifice, consecration, and the other holy covenants of the temple. As the Redeemer of the world gave all that we might be saved, these covenants allow us to give our all in the accomplishment of Heavenly Father's purposes for His children.

And so, fear not. The things deemed weak by the world overthrow evils that appear so mighty and strong. Righteous men speak in the name of God the Lord. Faith increases in the earth. The everlasting covenants blossom in the lives of Latter-day Saints. The fulness of Christ's gospel is proclaimed by precept and example unto the ends of the world. And the Lord's covenant people prepare this earth for His Second Coming.<sup>11</sup> This is our duty. May the Lord sustain us in it is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 35.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:49.
4. 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.
6. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 520.
7. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; see Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 146–47; italics added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; see also verses 10, 12–13.
10. See Isaiah 58:6–11.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:19–23.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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## Sister Carol B. Thomas

### Importance of living the law of sacrifice

As a mother, I think one of the most heart-wrenching stories in the Old Testament is that of Abraham, asked by the Lord to offer his young son Isaac as a sacrifice. Sarah must have been at least 100 years old when Isaac was taken to the mountain. Out of kindness to her, I think Abraham might not have told her what he intended to do, and that meant he had to bear this great test of faith alone.

President Lorenzo Snow said, "No mortal man could have done what Abraham did . . . except he were inspired and had a divinity within him to receive that inspiration" (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 116).

Beginning with Adam, all Old Testament prophets have kept the law of sacrifice. Sacrifice is integral to the celestial law, pointing us to the most glorious sacrifice of all: our Savior Jesus Christ.

President Gordon B. Hinckley defined sacrifice so beautifully when he said:

"Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God. . . . 'The Father gave his Son, and the Son gave his life,' and we do not worship unless we give—give of our substance, . . . our time, . . . strength, . . . talent, . . . faith, . . . [and] testimonies" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 565).

Brothers and sisters, the law of sacrifice is one of the things that sets us apart from the rest of the world. We are a covenant people, blessed with opportunities to worship and to give; but are we fully converted to the principle of sacrifice? I'm reminded of the wealthy young man, taught by the Savior, who asked, "What do I still lack in my life?" (see Matthew 19:20). Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell [all] that thou hast . . . and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

Let's discuss three ways that sacrifice can help us follow the Savior: teaching

our families, giving to the poor and needy, and sharing ourselves in missionary work.

### Teach family to sacrifice

First, how can we teach our families to sacrifice? My grandfather Isaac Jacob was a great example to me. Grandpa was a sheep rancher who sent four sons on missions. During the Depression it became my mother's opportunity to serve, and she received her call to Canada.

Grandpa's situation became critical when he was called in by his bank and asked just what was the \$50 a month going out for Mom's mission. He had taken out a loan and was paying a high rate of 12 percent interest. The bankers were not satisfied and told him to bring Mom home from her mission.

The following day Grandpa gave his answer: "If that girl comes home, the sheep are yours—and I'll bring them right up to your door." This caught the bankers by surprise. They were already using Grandpa to care for other sheep outfits which they had acquired, and they would have no one else to take care of all those sheep. Mom completed her mission, and Grandpa's example taught his family the importance of sacrifice.

As we teach our families to sacrifice, we should also teach them to deny themselves. The story is told of the Civil War general Robert E. Lee, who, when asked by a woman for advice in raising her child, said, "Teach [your child] to deny himself" (see Joseph Packard, *Recollections of a Long Life*, ed. Thomas J. Packard [1902], 158).

We must avoid saturating our children with material things. We may deprive a child of enjoyment when we give him too much. If we never allow him to want something, he will never enjoy the pleasure of receiving it.

Are we encouraging our children to sacrifice by giving of their time and re-

sources, such as helping a lonely neighbor or befriending someone who needs it? As they concentrate on the needs of others, their own needs become less important. True joy comes from sacrificing for others.

### **Share material possessions**

Second, we can give more generously to the poor and needy. As I visit with Church members, I am overwhelmed with the goodness of faithful Latter-day Saints. A young man in Colombia, raised by his grandmother, owned several shoe repair shops and served as the custodian in his ward. When he was called on a mission, he had not only saved enough money to pay for his own mission but also contributed extra funds to support another missionary.

What about sharing our food, clothing, and furniture? The Lord commands that we not covet our property (see D&C 19:26). In many places we are blessed to have Deseret Industries. We can teach our children to go through their closets regularly and share their clothing while it is still in style, allowing others to dress fashionably too.

Many rewards come from sharing our material possessions. King Benjamin reminds us of this when he says, "For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, . . . such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief" (Mosiah 4:26). We can all be searching for the many opportunities in our lives to give—to share.

### **Be excited about missionary work**

The third area of sacrifice is missionary work. As part of our assignment in visiting wards and branches throughout the Church, we see the tremendous need for

senior missionaries. You can't imagine what a great good they do as they love the missionaries and teach the local members the doctrine and culture of the Church.

Recently President Hinckley visited a stake conference in an affluent area where only four older couples were serving missions. Hoping to inspire more members to serve, he promised them that their children and grandchildren would not even miss them while they're gone. With the invention of e-mail, friendly letters can be sent and received by senior missionaries just about any day.

Your years of experience will bless others, and you'll discover how wonderful people really are. The missions of the world need you! Pray for that spirit of adventure and a desire to serve a mission. You'll enjoy more excitement than motor-home travel or rocking chairs.

Young people, we hope you are excited about missionary work. Last week each young woman in the Church was invited to bring one other young woman into full activity. How great it would be if the young men would join us in this effort!

Many of you are doing remarkable things. Megan, a young woman, prayed many months for two friends who were not members of the Church, arranging for one friend to sign up for seminary and inviting the other to be taught by the missionaries. Recently these two young women were baptized. The Church needs you. President Hinckley cannot walk down the halls of your school and teach your friends, but you can, and the Lord is counting on you. We're so proud of the courage you have as you share your love for the gospel with your friends.

### **Sacrifice is an eternal investment**

Sacrifice is an amazing principle. As we willingly give our time and talents and all that we possess, it becomes one of our

truest forms of worship. It can develop within us a profound love for each other and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Through sacrifice our hearts can be changed; we live closer to the Spirit and have less of an appetite for things of the world.

President Hinckley taught a grand truth when he said: "It is not a sacrifice to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is never a sacrifice when you get back more than you give. It is an investment, . . . a greater investment than any . . . because its divi-

dends are eternal and everlasting" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 567-68).

How comforting to know that we are not expected to make this investment alone. Like Abraham of old, we have a divinity within us to receive inspiration through the powers of heaven. Brothers and sisters, I pray that by doing these things we will come to love the principle of sacrifice, that this great principle will bring us closer to our Savior, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Prophet's voice gives clear directions

Brothers and sisters, have you ever had the experience of driving around and around the streets of a city with the driver saying, "I know where it is; I'm sure I can find it"? Finally, in frustration, *he* stops and asks someone for directions. I can tell you sisters have experienced this! How much easier it is to find our way when we follow the directions of someone who knows how to locate our destination.

Many of us may find ourselves in a similar situation as we make our way through life's challenging thoroughfares. These are difficult times, and the world's cultural and sociological landmarks of propriety, honesty, integrity, and political correctness are constantly shifting. Just when we think we know the way to happiness and peace, some new ideology comes along which can lead us down a path that will only heighten our confusion and intensify our despair. At such times, we might well ask, "Is there one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that we can always count on? Is there a voice that will always give us clear directions to find our way in today's troubled world?" The answer is yes. That voice is the voice of the living prophet and apostles.

### "Give heed unto all his words"

When The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized 171 years ago this month, the Lord gave a revelation to the members of the Church through His prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. Speaking of the President of the Church, the Savior instructed Church members to "give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4-5).

Then the Lord gave a magnificent promise to those who are obedient: "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory" (D&C 21:6).

A year and a half later the Lord added to that significant promise this stern warning:

"The arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles,

shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14).

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

It is no small thing, my brothers and sisters, to have a prophet of God in our midst. Great and wonderful are the blessings that come into our lives as we listen to the word of the Lord given to us through him. At the same time, knowing that President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet also endows us with responsibility. When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the President of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt. History shows that there is safety, peace, prosperity, and happiness in responding to prophetic counsel as did Nephi of old: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7).

### **Naaman resists, then follows the prophet**

We know of the experience of Naaman, who was struck with leprosy and who eventually contacted the prophet Elisha and was instructed to "go and wash in [the] Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10).

At first, Naaman was unwilling to follow Elisha's counsel. He couldn't understand the thing he had been asked to do—to wash seven times in the Jordan River. In other words, his pride and stubbornness were keeping him from receiving the Lord's blessing through His prophet. Finally he went down and "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14).

What a humbling thing it must have been for Naaman to realize how close he came to allowing his own pride and his unwillingness to listen to the counsel of the prophet to prevent him from receiving such a great, cleansing blessing. And what a humbling thing it is to contemplate how many of us might miss out on great and promised blessings because we do not listen *and then do* the relatively simple things our prophet is telling us to do today.

### **President Hinckley's addresses on youth**

In the last year, for example, President Hinckley has delivered three landmark addresses about strengthening the family—and particularly the youth and young adults of the Church. First he spoke very directly on the subject to mothers during the October general Relief Society meeting. Then he spoke to fathers and priesthood leaders during the priesthood session of general conference. Remember, fathers? He reminded you parents that "you have entered into a partnership with our Father in Heaven to give mortal experience to His sons and daughters. They are His children and they are your children, flesh of your flesh, for whom He will hold you responsible" ("Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 97).

And then last November, from this very pulpit, President Hinckley spoke to all of the young people of the Church. In heartfelt teaching that will long be remembered, he challenged the youth of the Church to set goals for themselves to *be grateful, be smart, be clean, be true, be humble, and be prayerful* (see "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4). The six "B's," as President Hinckley called them, are a marvelous standard for all Latter-day Saints. He repeated these principles to the young women in their meeting last week, and I believe they apply to mothers and fathers

as much as they do to youth and young single adults. As parents and adult leaders of youth, we cannot expect our young people to take to heart the things the prophet says to them if we show a complacent attitude toward his counsel in our own lives.

It is significant to remember that President Hinckley petitioned the Lord on behalf of our young people. He said:

"I want you to know that I have been on my knees asking the Lord to bless me with the power and the capacity and the language to reach into your hearts" (*Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2).

During the priesthood session President Hinckley said: "I hope [your sons and daughters] can share their burden with you, their fathers and mothers. I hope that you will listen, that you will be patient and understanding, that you will draw them to you and comfort and sustain them in their loneliness. Pray for direction. Pray for patience. Pray for the strength to love even though the offense may have been serious. Pray for understanding and kindness and, above all, for wisdom and inspiration" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).

### Are we listening?

Have we studied his counsel and identified the things we need to avoid or to do differently? I know a 17-year-old who, just prior to the prophet's talk, had pierced her ears a second time. She came home from the fireside, took off the second set of earrings, and simply said to her parents, "If President Hinckley says we should only wear one set of earrings, that's good enough for me."

Wearing two pair of earrings may or may not have eternal consequences for this young woman, but her willingness to obey the prophet will. And if she will obey him now, on something relatively simple, how much easier it will be to follow him when greater issues are at stake.

Are we listening, brothers and sisters? Are we hearing the words of the prophet to us as parents, as youth leaders, and as youth? Or are we letting ourselves, as Naaman did *at first*, be blinded by pride and stubbornness, which could prevent us from receiving the blessings that come from following the teachings of God's prophet?

Today I make you a promise. It's a simple one, but it is true. If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray.

### Discuss and apply the prophet's counsel

Now, my brothers and sisters and youth of the Church, please do not miss the opportunity to sit down together as a family and discuss the counsel given by President Hinckley. Parents, teach each other and your children in family home evenings and family councils. Leaders, know and teach these principles in lessons and leadership meetings, and discuss in ward and stake council meetings how to bless the lives of our members, both young and old.

All three of the President's addresses, along with messages to the youth from his counselors, have been published in the *Ensign* and the *Liahona* magazines. *President Gordon B. Hinckley Speaks to Youth and Parents* is now available on video and is a wonderful resource for family home evening and for bishop's youth discussions. Bishops, we did not send this to you to sit on your filing cabinet. Please see that the youth of your ward listen again and understand and commit to live as directed by the President of the Church.

### Do not disregard the prophet's words

Now I speak directly to the young people of the Church on this important subject of following the prophet. As I have traveled throughout the Church the past few months, I have noticed that many of you are eagerly following his counsel.

Many of you have already made the decision to be even more well groomed than you were before. Many of you are striving more diligently to avoid evil talk, to choose your friends wisely, to stay away from pornography and illicit drugs, to not attend evil concerts and dangerous parties, to respect your bodies and keep yourselves morally clean in every way.

To those of you who have not listened yet, I caution you to not disregard the counsel of the President of the Church. He has spoken to you plainly. Study his words and strive to obey them. They are true and come from God. We encourage you who need to repent to go forward with faith and become clean before the Lord. Each one of you is preparing now to be a leader in the Church in the future, and we need you to be clean and faithful and true to the Lord.

Never forget how it felt to listen as President Hinckley prayed for you. Did you feel how precious you are as he prayed? "Bless them that they may walk acceptably before Thee as Thy cherished sons and daughters. Each is Thy child with the capacity to do great and noble things" (*Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 11).

#### ***Listen with your heart—then do***

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, please pay attention to those things that the leaders of the Church have taught during this general conference. Apply the teachings that will help you and your family. Let all of us, regardless of our family circumstances, bring into our homes the teachings of the prophets and the apostles to strengthen our relationships with each other, with our Father in Heaven, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. I promise you in the name of the Lord that if you will listen not just with your ears but also

with your heart, the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth unto you of the messages delivered by President Hinckley, his counselors, the Apostles, and other leaders of the Church. The Spirit will prompt you to know what you should do as individuals and as families in order to follow our counsel, that your testimonies might be strengthened and that you might have peace and joy.

My brothers and sisters, I testify to you that the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Today we are blessed to be led by God's prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. May we *listen* and *then do* those things that he teaches us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "O My Father."

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#### **President Monson**

This magnificent choir has just rendered the beautiful number "O My Father."

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they've provided this morning.

It will now be our pleasure to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Following his remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "High on the Mountain Top." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard H. Winkel of the Seventy. The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, my heart reaches out to you wherever you may be this Sabbath morning. I feel a kinship with all of you who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love this work and marvel at its strength and growth, for the manner in which it touches the lives of people throughout the world. I feel extremely humble in speaking to you. I have pleaded with the Lord to direct my thoughts and words.

### An Uruguayan sister's conversion story

We have just returned from a long journey from Salt Lake City to Montevideo, Uruguay, to dedicate a temple, the 103rd working temple of the Church. It was a time of great rejoicing for our members there. Thousands gathered in that beautiful and sacred building and in surrounding chapels.

One of the speakers, a woman, told a story, the likes of which you have heard many times. As I remember it, she recounted a time in their lives when the missionaries knocked on their door. She had not the remotest idea of what they were teaching. However, she invited them in, and she and her husband listened to their message.

It was, for them, an unbelievable story. They told of a boy who lived in the state of New York. He was 14 years of age when he read in the book of James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Desiring wisdom, because various creeds each claimed to have the truth, young Joseph determined to go into the woods and pray to the Lord.

This he did, and he experienced a vision in response to his prayer. God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the Resurrected Lord, appeared before

him and spoke with him. Other manifestations followed. Among these was securing from a hill near his home golden plates which he translated by the gift and power of God. Heavenly messengers appeared to him, bestowing upon him keys of the priesthood and the authority to speak in the name of God.

How could anyone believe such a story? It seemed preposterous. And yet these people believed as they were instructed. Faith came into their hearts to accept that which they had been taught. It was a miracle. It was a gift from God. They could not believe it, and yet they did.

Following their baptism, their knowledge of the Church grew. They learned more of temple marriage, of families united for eternity under the authority of the holy priesthood. They were determined to have this blessing. But there was no temple anywhere near them. They scrimped and saved. When they had enough, they traveled all the way from Uruguay to Utah with their children, here to be sealed together as a family in the bonds of eternal marriage. She is today an assistant to the matron in the new Montevideo Uruguay Temple. Her husband is a counselor in the temple presidency.

### Faith motivates conversion

I am not surprised that comparatively few people join the Church from among the large number on whom the missionaries call. There's no faith. On the other hand, I am amazed that so many do. It is a marvelous and wonderful thing that thousands are touched by the miracle of the Holy Spirit, that they believe and accept and become members. They are baptized. Their lives are forever touched for good. Miracles occur. A seed of faith comes into their hearts. It enlarges as they

learn. And they accept principle upon principle until they have every one of the marvelous blessings that come to those who walk with faith in this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It is faith that is the converter. It is faith that is the teacher. Thus it has been from the beginning.

I marvel at the quality of the men and women who accepted Joseph Smith's testimony and came into the Church. They included such men as Brigham Young, the Pratt brothers, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, the wives of these men, and a host of others. They were people of substance. Many of them were well educated. They were blessed of the Lord with the faith to accept the story which they heard. When they received the message, when the gift of faith touched their lives, they were baptized. The brethren gladly gave up what they had been doing and, with the support of their families, responded to calls to go across the sea to teach that which they had accepted on faith.

I read again the other day Parley P. Pratt's account of his reading the Book of Mormon and coming into the Church. Said he:

"I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

"As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [1985], 20).

The gift of faith touched his life. He could not do enough to repay the Lord for what had come to him. He spent the remainder of his days in missionary ser-

vice. He died a martyr to this great work and kingdom.

### **New temples testify of pioneer faith**

Beautiful new temples are now being constructed in Nauvoo, Illinois, and Winter Quarters, Nebraska. They will stand as testimonies to the faith and faithfulness of the thousands of Latter-day Saints who built and later forsook Nauvoo, to move with great suffering across what is now the state of Iowa to their temporary abode in Council Bluffs and in Winter Quarters, just north of Omaha.

The Winter Quarters Temple property adjoins the burial ground of many who gave their lives for this cause which they regarded as more precious than life itself. Their journey to the valley of the Great Salt Lake is an epic without parallel. The suffering they endured, the sacrifices they made became the cost of what they believed.

I have in my office a small statue of my own pioneer grandfather burying beside the trail his wife and her brother who died on the same day. He then picked up his infant child and carried her to this valley.

Faith? There can be no doubt about it. When doubts arose, when tragedies struck, the quiet voice of faith was heard in the stillness of the night as certain and reassuring as was the place of the polar star in the heavens above.

It was this mysterious and wonderful manifestation of faith that brought reassurance, that spoke with certainty, that came as a gift from God concerning this great latter-day work. Countless, literally countless, are the stories of its expression in the pioneer period of the Church. But it does not stop there.

### **Gift of faith motivates us still today**

As it was then, so it is today. This precious and marvelous gift of faith, this gift from God our Eternal Father is still



the strength of this work and the quiet vibrancy of its message. Faith underlies it all. Faith is the substance of it all. Whether it be going into the mission field, living the Word of Wisdom, or paying one's tithing, it is all the same. It is the faith within us that is evidenced in all we do.

Our critics cannot understand it. Because they do not understand, they attack. A quiet inquiry, an anxious desire to grasp the principle behind the result could bring greater understanding and appreciation.

I was asked at a news conference on one occasion how we get men to leave their vocations, to leave home, and serve the Church. I responded that we simply ask them, and we know what their answer will be.

What a marvelous and wonderful thing it is, this powerful conviction that the Church is true. It is God's holy work. He overrules in the things of His kingdom and in the lives of His sons and daughters. This is the reason for the growth of the Church. The strength of this cause and kingdom is not found in its temporal assets, impressive as they may be. It is found in the hearts of its people. That is why it is successful. That is why it is strong and growing. That is why it is able to accomplish the wonderful things that it does. It all comes of the gift of faith, bestowed by the Almighty upon His children who doubt not and fear not, but go forward.

### **Faith motivates missionaries**

I sat in a meeting in Aruba the other evening. I dare say that most of those who hear me do not know where Aruba is or that there is even such a place. It is an island off the coast of Venezuela. It is a protectorate of the Netherlands. It is an inconspicuous place in this vast world. There were about 180 in the meeting. On the front row were eight missionaries: six elders and two sisters. The congregation consisted of men and women, boys

and girls of various racial strains. A little English was spoken, much of Spanish, and some expressions of other languages.

As I looked into the faces of that congregation, I thought of the faith there represented. They love this Church. They appreciate all that it does. They stand and testify of the reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Resurrected Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They testify of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the Book of Mormon. They serve where they are called to serve. They are men and women of faith who have embraced the true and living gospel of the Master, and in their midst are these eight missionaries. I am sure that it is a lonely place for them. But they are doing what they have been asked to do because of their faith. The two young women are beautiful and happy. As I looked at them, I said to myself, "Eighteen months is a long time to be in this faraway place." But they do not complain. They speak of the great experience they are having and of the wonderful people they meet. Shining through all of their service is the reassuring faith that the work in which they are engaged is true and that the service they are giving is given unto God.

It is so with our missionaries wherever they might serve, whether it be here in Salt Lake City or in Mongolia. They go and serve with faith in their hearts. It is a phenomenon of great power that quietly whispers, "This cause is true, and to you there is an obligation to serve it regardless of the cost."

Again, people cannot understand it, these thousands of bright and able young men and women who forgo social life, leave school, and selflessly go wherever they are sent to teach the gospel. They go by the power of faith, and they teach by the power of faith, planting a seed of faith here and another there which grow and mature into converts of strength and capacity.

Faith is the basis of testimony. Faith underlies loyalty to the Church. Faith represents sacrifice, gladly given in moving forward the work of the Lord.

### **Father, help us to be faithful**

The Lord has commanded us to take upon ourselves "the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (D&C 27:17).

In the spirit of faith of which I have spoken, I testify that this is the work of the Lord, that this is His kingdom, re-

stored to the earth in our time to bless the sons and daughters of God of all generations.

O Father, help us to be faithful unto Thee and unto our glorious Redeemer, to serve Thee in truth, to make that service an expression of our love, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Richard H. Winkel offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 1, 2001. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Arise, O God, and Shine." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Arise, O God, and Shine."

Elder Adhemar Damiani offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Damiani.

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, it will be our pleasure to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

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## Elder David B. Haight

### Gratitude for parents' temple marriage

My dear brethren and sisters, I have prayed for the blessings of heaven to be with me in these few moments that I occupy the pulpit here this afternoon. I want to say a few words about gratitude and thanksgiving to people who have influenced my life.

Imagine in your mind May 1, 1890. A young man and a young lady in a little country town about 250 miles from the Logan Temple decided to be married. Highways—none. Fancy roads—none. Trails through the sagebrush and wagon trails—yes.

It probably would have taken six or seven days at least to make the journey. In May it rains in southern Idaho and in Utah. Imagine riding in a buggy with all of your clothes—taking something along, I guess, for the horses; taking some food in little sacks of some kind. Fancy clothes, warm clothes—they had none. Sleeping bags—none. Coleman lanterns or cooking stoves—none. They would have had matches and had to find dry sagebrush to make a fire to cook their food.

Just imagine, just run it through your mind for a moment and think of the gratitude that I have and of the blessings they brought into my life by traveling to a place to be married a long ways away. Inconvenience? That wouldn't be a problem; they would do it. And think of what's happened in the last few years with President Hinckley—the inspiration and direction he has had in the building of temples all over the world. And think of what people went through a few years ago.

Those blessings have come into my life from my parents and their parents and others who have affected my life—teachers and good people I have been associated with.

### A performance on an out-of-tune violin

When I was about 11 years old, a man came to our little town to teach at the Church academy. He played the violin a little, and we hadn't had anyone there for a long time who had played the violin. My mother was impressed and picked up a little violin, I guess at some little rummage sale somewhere, and decided that I should learn to play the violin.

Even though I had never seen anyone play the violin in public, he came to our house and started giving me some little simple lessons on playing the violin. I was coming along fairly well by the time we graduated from the eighth grade in grammar school, and for the graduation exercises held in the high school I was asked to play a violin solo.

I'd carefully practiced the little song "Träumerei," as I remember the name. My sister who was four years older than I and was then one of the popular girls in high school was my pianist. At the graduation exercises, Connie McMurray was the valedictorian. Girls are always smarter in school than boys. As she was giving the valedictory address, there was a little pedestal with a pitcher of water and a glass on it for the school board. The school board was on the stand, plus a little handful of us who were graduating from the eighth grade.

As Connie McMurray was giving her famous valedictory address, near the end of it we noticed the little doily under the pitcher of water on the pedestal was moving over a little bit toward the edge, and over it fell with the pitcher and glass of water! Connie McMurray fell in a dead faint.

In the scurrying around of cleaning the water off the stage and rearranging the chairs, they announced that we would

now have a violin solo from David Haight. I walked over to the little old piano, and my sister came up from the audience. I took that simple violin out of the wooden case as my sister sat down at the piano and sounded an A. I said, "Go ahead and play."

She said, "David, you'd better tune it."

I said, "No, no, I tuned it at our piano at home." We had an old Kimball piano at home. You know, homes in those days—if you had a piano and books, that's all you needed for the family. I had carefully tuned the strings by twisting those ebony pegs of that violin, but I didn't know that all pianos weren't the same. So as my sister said, "You'd better tune it," I said, "No, no, it's all tuned. I tuned it at home."

So she went ahead and played the introduction, and then I came down on the first note. We were off about two notes.

As she slowed down, I said, "Keep playing," because I couldn't imagine anyone would take the time of a famous audience like I was playing to—you know, 100 people in that little high school auditorium. You wouldn't hold up Carnegie Hall while you tuned your violin! That would be shop work. You would do that in the back room so that when you would start to play, why, you'd be all ready to play.

She slowed down. I said, "Keep playing." We finished it, and she didn't speak to me for days following that show.

### **Gratitude for family**

I want to honor the little country town that I grew up in with my parents, where I was raised and where they were kind and good to me. I am thankful for the knowledge that I acquired from my loving parents.

I am grateful for my wife, Ruby, coming into my life, for our children, and then their children, and then their children, and the people who are part of my life today who influence my life. And I

hope that I have some influence for good in their lives.

### **Gratitude for a witness of the Savior**

You remember the account of John the Baptist speaking to John the Beloved and to Andrew on the occasion when the Savior met them. And John the Baptist commented, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). And as the Savior met those young men—John the Baptist, John the Beloved, and Andrew—He said, "What seek ye?"

And in that conversation that's reported, they said, "Where dwellest thou?" (John 1:38).

And the Savior said, "Come and see" (John 1:39).

They followed the Savior, and according to the brief account that we have, they stayed with Him. They may have spent the evening together, but it is not known where He was staying or what accommodations He had.

John and Andrew were with the Savior for several hours. Just imagine being in His presence or being able to sit and look into His eyes or to hear Him explain who He was and why He had come to earth and to hear that inflection in His voice in describing what He would have told those young men. They would have shaken His hand. They would have felt of that precious, wonderful personality as they listened to Him.

And following that encounter, the account says that Andrew went to find his brother Simon because he had to share it with someone. As we meet in a great conference like this and talk about the gospel and talk about our responsibility and the opportunity we have, just imagine if that had happened to any of us, to have been in that divine, precious personality's presence and to have listened to Him and to have shaken His hand and to have looked into His eyes and to have heard what He would say.

When Andrew found his brother Simon, he said to him, "We have found the [Messiah]" (John 1:41). He probably said, "We've been in His presence. We've felt of His personality. We know that what He is telling us is true." Yes, Andrew had to share it with someone.

That is what we do in sharing what we know and what we understand. And I'm grateful for that knowledge I have that God lives, that He is our Father, and for the understanding that I have of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, Jesus the Christ, our Savior and the Redeemer of all of mankind.

### **A Scottish man's gratitude for the gospel**

I had a letter only a few days ago from a man in Edinburgh, Scotland. His name is George Stewart. He'll be surprised at my mentioning this, but he wanted to thank me because when he was 15 years old (some 40 years ago), I was presiding over the mission in Scotland. He wanted to thank me for the missionaries' coming to their home in Thornliebank, one of the areas of Glasgow. He had joined the Church along with his mother.

He said that as he developed a testimony of the Book of Mormon, as he started reading it and kept reading it, he couldn't put it down because he knew it was true. He kept reading and reading and developing a testimony of the gospel as a young man. He told how he used to come over to the mission home and how we were kind to him and would spend time with the young people because they were getting into Mutual, which we were starting in the branches.

Then he told of the blessings that came into his life as a young man, that he had met his sweetheart in that branch—his wife—and that they were married and that they had four children: a son who had finished a mission in the Washington D.C. Mission, a son who served in the England Leeds Mission, a daughter who was married in the temple, and one

who is waiting for the return of a missionary. He expressed gratitude for all of the blessings that had come into his life and the lives of his sons who have been on missions and his daughters.

During the past 40 years he has served as a bishop four times in four different units, and his wife has served as a Relief Society president on three occasions. He is currently serving as a counselor in the Edinburgh stake presidency. He said, "And I'm going to be retiring very shortly from the company I'm with. I've done very well, and we plan to go out on a mission together."

Then he said these words to me: "This amazing Church has woven a pattern of miracles in our lives." Let me say that again: "This amazing Church has woven a pattern of miracles in our lives."

And he says the gospel came into his life, to his wife, to all of his children, and to their children. The grandchildren are active in the Church, and he and his wife now have a great desire to go out into the world when they retire from their profession.

When you think of the majesty and the impact and the spiritual direction of this work out in the world and that this work is meant to reach the people of the world, it is thrilling just to contemplate what lies before us.

### **The word *retirement* is not in the Bible**

There was a Brother and Sister Andrus from Walnut Creek, California, who had served four missions, and then they were called to go to Zimbabwe and assigned to the district in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. This was their fifth mission.

As they told of the marvelous things that they were able to do in reactivating people, she told a story of how there was a little portable electronic organ in the chapel and how she started showing some of the boys and girls in Bulawayo how to play the organ. There was also a little piano keyboard in another room, and she

would have a class where the organ was and another one where this little keyboard was. She would teach these children to play the organ after school. They said they started a temple preparation class in the reactivation process, and before they left they were able to put 28 people on the bus to go from Bulawayo all the way to Johannesburg to the temple, 650 miles away—two days and one night. They said, “We’ve talked about how we are in our late 70s now—these two old people wandering around in Africa having the greatest period of our lives, the greatest excitement we could have.”

Think of Dr. Alan Barker, who had retired from the Salt Lake Clinic, a wonderful cardiologist here in Salt Lake. He and his wife accepted a mission call to the Philippines. While there, they accomplished a marvelous work in helping correct a serious disease problem. He was there long enough to help find a solution to the problem and obtain the needed medical equipment and medication.

These are examples of the marvelous service being given by senior missionary couples in various parts of the world.

I leave you my love, my witness, my testimony that God lives, that this work is true. You can’t find the word *retirement* in the Bible. I don’t think you can find the word in the Bible Dictionary. Isn’t it interesting to think what can happen in our lives today and what possibilities lie ahead for us if we believe and understand and have a commitment and a dedication to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to bless the lives of people?

May you be so blessed. May you have a burning feeling in your heart. May you feel as I do on this day that this work is true and that it is meant for us to help bring about God’s eternal plan of salvation and exaltation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We’ve just heard from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who is a marvelous work and a wonder.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### The Church is centered on love

My beloved brethren and sisters, I feel as you do that Elder David B. Haight is an inspiration to the entire Church and so many others.

Two thousand years ago, upon the sand and stones of Galilee, walked a man that few recognized for who He truly was: the Creator of worlds, the Redeemer, the Son of God.

A lawyer approached Him and asked, “Which is the great[est] commandment?” Jesus answered:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>1</sup>

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord has established His Church once again among men. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, restored to the earth in these latter days, is centered on those commandments the Savior proclaimed as the greatest: to love our Heavenly Father and to love our fellowmen. Our Savior said, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.”<sup>2</sup>

## Manifest love by living the law of the fast

One way we show our love is through observance of the law of the fast. This law is based upon a primary yet profound principle—a simple practice that, if observed with the proper spirit, will help us draw closer to our Heavenly Father and strengthen our faith, while at the same time help us ease the burdens of others.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members are encouraged to fast whenever their faith needs special fortification and to fast regularly once each month on fast day. On that day we go without eating or drinking for two consecutive meals, commune with our Heavenly Father, and contribute a fast offering to help the poor. The offering should be at least equal to the value of the food that would have been eaten.

Typically the first Sunday of each month is designated as fast Sunday. On that day members who are physically able are encouraged to fast, pray, bear witness to the truthfulness of the gospel, and pay a generous fast offering. “The law of the fast,” taught Elder Milton R. Hunter, “is probably as old as the human family. . . . In ancient times, prophet-leaders repeatedly gave to church members the commandment to observe the law of fasting and praying.”<sup>3</sup>

## Prayer adds power to fasting

We observe that in the scriptures, fasting almost always is linked with prayer. Without prayer, fasting is not complete fasting; it’s simply going hungry. If we want our fasting to be more than just going without eating, we must lift our hearts, our minds, and our voices in communion with our Heavenly Father. Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the Spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation.

Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They

can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions.

Fasting and prayer can help us in our families and our daily work. They can help us magnify our callings in the Church. President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

“If you want to get the spirit of your office and calling as a new president of a quorum, a new high [councilor], a new bishop [or, I might say, a Relief Society president]—try fasting for a period. I don’t mean just missing one meal, then eating twice as much the next meal. I mean really fasting, and praying during that period. It will do more to give you the real spirit of your office and calling and permit the Spirit to operate through you than anything I know.”<sup>4</sup>

The Quorum of the Twelve, in a letter to the Church dated May 17, 1845, stated: “Let this be an [example] to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time. . . . And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance.”<sup>5</sup>

Book of Mormon prophets taught the law of the fast: “Behold, now it came to pass that the people of Nephi were exceedingly rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God; yea, and they did fast much and pray much, and they did worship God with exceedingly great joy.”<sup>6</sup>

The powerful combination of fasting and prayer is exemplified by the four sons of Mosiah. They faced overwhelming odds, yet worked miracles in bringing

thousands of the Lamanites to a knowledge of the truth. They shared the secret of their success. They “searched the scriptures,” and “they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting.” What was the result? “They had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Help the poor by living the law of the fast**

When we fast, brethren and sisters, we feel hunger. For a short time we literally put ourselves in the position of the hungry and the needy. As we do so, we have greater understanding of the deprivations they might feel. When we give to the bishop an offering to relieve the suffering of others, we not only do something sublime for others, but we do something wonderful for ourselves as well. King Benjamin taught that as we give of our substance to the poor, we retain “a remission of [our] sins from day to day.”<sup>8</sup>

Another Book of Mormon prophet, Amulek, explained that often our prayers have no power because we have turned our backs on the needy.<sup>9</sup> If you feel that Heavenly Father is not listening to your petitions, ask yourself if you are listening to the cries of the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the afflicted all around you.

Some look at the overwhelming need in the world and think, “What can I do that could possibly make a difference?”

I will tell you plainly one thing you can do. You can live the law of the fast and contribute a generous fast offering.

Fast offerings are used for one purpose only: to bless the lives of those in need. Every dollar given to the bishop as a fast offering goes to assist the poor. When donations exceed local needs, they are passed along to fulfill the needs elsewhere.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have traveled the world testifying of Him. I come before you today to bear another witness—a witness to the suffer-

ing and need of millions of our Heavenly Father’s children. Far too many in the world today—thousands upon thousands of families—experience want each day. They hunger. They ache with cold. They suffer from sickness. They grieve for their children. They mourn for the safety of their families.

These people are not strangers and foreigners but children of our Heavenly Father. They are our brothers and our sisters. They are “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”<sup>10</sup> Their fervent prayers ascend to heaven pleading for respite, for relief from suffering. At this very hour on this very day, some members even in our Church are praying for the miracle that would allow them to surmount the suffering that surrounds them. If, while we have the means to do so, we do not have compassion for them and spring to their aid, we are in danger of being among those the prophet Moroni spoke of when he said, “Behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Bring a needy family a wagon of hope**

How well I remember my father, the bishop of our ward, filling my small red wagon with food and clothing and then directing me—as a deacon in the Church—to pull the wagon behind me and visit the homes of the needy in our ward.

Often, when fast-offering funds were depleted, my father would take money from his own pocket to supply the needy in his flock with food that would keep them from going hungry. Those were the days of the Great Depression, and many families were suffering.

I remember visiting one family in particular: a sickly mother, an unemployed and discouraged father, and five children with pallid faces, all disheartened and hungry. I remember the gratitude that beamed in their faces when I walked up to



their door with my wagon nearly spilling over with needed supplies. I remember how the children smiled. I remember how the mother wept. And I remember how the father stood, head bowed, unable to speak.

These impressions and many others forged within me a love for the poor; a love for my father, who served as a shepherd to his flock; and a love for the faithful and generous members of the Church who sacrificed so much to help relieve the suffering of others.

Brothers and sisters, in a sense you too can bring to a needy family a wagon brimming with hope. How? By paying a generous fast offering.

### **Teach children the law of the fast**

Parents, teach your children the joys of a proper fast. And how do you do that? The same as with any gospel principle—let them see you live it by your example. Then help them live the law of the fast themselves, little by little. They can fast and they can also pay a fast offering if they choose. As we teach our children to fast, it can give them the power to resist temptations along their life's journey.

### **Give generous fast offerings**

How much should we pay in fast offerings? My brothers and sisters, the measure of our offering to bless the poor is a measure of our gratitude to our Heavenly Father. Will we, who have been blessed so abundantly, turn our backs on those who need our help? Paying a generous fast offering is a measure of our willingness to consecrate ourselves to relieve the suffering of others.

Brother Marion G. Romney, who was the bishop of our ward when I was called on a mission and who later served as a member of the First Presidency of the Church, admonished:

“Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. Don't give just for

the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your means and your time.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Collecting fast offerings**

The deacons in the Church have a sacred obligation to visit the home of every member to collect fast offerings for the poor. President Thomas S. Monson once related to me how he, as a young bishop, began to sense that the young deacons in his ward were complaining about having to get up so early to collect fast offerings. Instead of calling the young men to task, this wise bishop took them to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City.

There the boys met a disabled woman operating the switchboard. They saw a blind man placing labels on cans, and an elderly brother stocking shelves. As a result of what they saw, President Monson said, a penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed the end result of their efforts to collect the sacred funds that aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.<sup>13</sup>

### **Blessings of living the law of the fast**

As members of the Church, we have a sacred responsibility to assist those in need and to help relieve their heavy burdens. Observance of the law of the fast can help all people of all nations. President Gordon B. Hinckley asked:

“What would happen if the principles of fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world[?] The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. . . . A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere.”<sup>14</sup>

Fasting in the proper spirit and in the Lord's way will energize us spiritually. It will strengthen our self-discipline, fill our homes with peace, lighten our hearts with

joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven.

Listen to the rich blessings prophesied for those who live the law of the fast:

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."<sup>15</sup>

As we live the law of the fast, we not only draw nearer to God through prayer, but we feed the hungry and care for the poor. Each time we do so, we fulfill both of the great commandments upon which "hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>16</sup>

I know that Jesus the Christ lives. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, seer, and revelator. And I bear solemn witness of this reality. I also bear witness that He who had compassion for the "least of these"<sup>17</sup> looks with love and compassion upon those today who "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>18</sup>

I raise my voice in testimony and promise, along with the great Apostles who have preceded us, that those who live the law of the fast will surely discover the rich blessings that attend this holy principle. Of this I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Matthew 22:36–40.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
3. "Will a Man Rob God?" (1952), 207–8.
4. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 331–32.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
6. Alma 45:1.
7. Alma 17:2–3.
8. Mosiah 4:26.
9. See Alma 34:28.
10. Ephesians 2:19.
11. Mormon 8:37.
12. "The Blessings of the Fast," *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.
13. See Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 8.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52–53.
15. Isaiah 58: 9, 11.
16. Matthew 22:40.
17. Matthew 25:40.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

## Elder John K. Carmack

### Love and testimony unify the Church

Seventeen years ago today, during the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, I responded to President Hinckley's assignment that I represent the six newly called Seventy in accepting our calls. As I awaited my turn at the midpoint of the session, I stood between two great Apostles: Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Bruce R. McConkie. I felt their love and support as I gazed with no little trepidation at the congregation of Saints gathered in the Tabernacle. Incidentally, we're four times greater today.

Elder Ashton, sensing my feelings, whispered, "I know it's an awesome sight, but they're all your friends." As I stood that first time to speak, I felt the love of the Saints washing over me. Since then, in all the places to which worldwide assignments have taken us, Shirley and I have felt that same love and tried to return it.

The unity of the Saints is unique and powerful. I have seen and felt it on virtually every continent and in the islands of the sea. That unity is a major reason the Church is progressing. Without it we would falter. As Jesus explained, "Every

city or house divided against itself shall not stand."<sup>1</sup>

Division and fault lines abound in the world, but "we are not divided; all one body we."<sup>2</sup> We have that unity under the spiritual direction of our prophet. Our wealth, social status, or skin color doesn't matter. The feast of the gospel is freely available to all who desire to partake of its delicacies. Jesus told His disciples, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>3</sup> The Church is quietly moving forward in crescendo, as a great symphony orchestra moving toward a climax, strengthening communities as it grows.

We enjoy that unity through love. We can neither purchase nor force it. Our method is to "persuade, . . . and bless with wisdom, love, and light, . . . but never force the human mind."<sup>4</sup> To the extent we operate in other ways, we diminish our right to be recognized as disciples of Christ. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>5</sup>

That unifying love is coupled with our individual testimonies. Almost all members could and would respond if called upon to bear their own testimonies in this conference. Yes, we are united in love and testimony.

### Testimony of the Book of Mormon

My testimony is built on the firm convictions that the Book of Mormon is true and that Jesus is our Savior. This spiritual foundation has helped me weather the storms of challenge and doubt. I started reading the Book of Mormon in my youth and have continued, learning and drinking its spirit with every study.

As one in the last large group of missionaries called before demands of the Korean War diverted our young men into military service, I participated in about five days of training in the Salt Lake Mission Home on State Street. One of our trainers was Bryant S. Hinckley, a leader

of stature and a stimulating teacher. He invited those missionaries assembled to share reasons they believed the Book of Mormon to be true. I was impressed with the variety of reasons shared by the missionaries. On that occasion I suggested that in addition to the witness of the Holy Ghost, the number of new names identifying people, places, animals, and things in the Book of Mormon had impressed me.

Now, 50 years later, I am still impressed by these new names. When researchers reported the discovery of stones in the southern Arabian Desert with the name *Nahom* inscribed on them, I paid attention. These inscriptions appear to be dated about 700 B.C. Ishmael, we read, was buried in a place called Nahom. Nahom is one of those names that impressed me.

Evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon continues to mount. During his mission in Germany, Jack Welch found verses in the Book of Mosiah that clearly form a chiasmus, or an X-shaped configuration. That finding evidenced ancient rather than modern authorship.

Scholars continue to find and publish new insights into what the book says and how it says it. A distinguished literature professor has published a recent book containing his lifetime study of the Book of Mormon, detailing its astonishing variety of literary forms.<sup>6</sup> Statisticians have found evidence of multiple authors within the covers of the book. Although these evidences have added to my testimony, the original powerful witness of the Holy Ghost has remained unshaken and unaltered. It has also recurred many times.

### Value of Book of Mormon witnesses

I also wonder if we fully appreciate the value and strength of the witnesses' testimonies published in each copy of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris saw

the plates and the angel. And Joseph also showed the gold plates to eight other men who saw and, using their words, “hefted” them.<sup>7</sup> These witnesses did not recant their testimonies, nor have their published testimonies ever been otherwise impeached. Those eight additional witnesses, in effect, testified, “Yes, we saw and lifted those plates. Joseph had them.”

The witnesses have been important to me. The Lord told Joseph that the declarations of these witnesses prove “to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old.”<sup>8</sup>

### Testimony of Christ is the main message

Having discovered that the book is true, we must ask, “What is its message?” Alma (and incidentally, Professor Welch says that they’ve discovered recently ancient usage of the word *Alma*), in speaking to the people of Gideon, put his finger on the central message of the book. He said, “There be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.”<sup>9</sup> Yes, Jesus’ coming and His Atonement, worked out in Gethsemane and on the cross, are surely more important than all other knowledge a person can gain. And the Book of Mormon is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” as its subtitle proclaims.

Before reading the Book of Mormon, I had a child’s testimony of Jesus. My first awareness of Jesus was when my Grandmother Carmack, an artist of some minor acclaim, pointed out to me the beauty of the Arizona sunset and then asked, “John Kay, who made this beautiful world?” Answering her own question, she explained, “Jesus made this world. Yes, He did.” Grandmother was right, of course. Jesus, the Son of God, did create the worlds under the Father’s direction.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally,

grandparents should not underestimate their influence in the lives of their grandchildren.

### Jesus helps us personally in times of need

Christ’s Atonement is the central doctrine, but of even more comfort and benefit has been how wonderfully accessible and individual His mercy and help have been to me personally. These familiar words capture my feelings about that important aspect of Jesus’ influence and ministry:

In ev’ry condition—in sickness, in health,  
In poverty’s vale or abounding in wealth,  
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—  
As thy days may demand, . . . so thy succor shall be.<sup>11</sup>

During those chaotic moments we all seem to experience—when suffering anxiety or despair, when misunderstood and depreciated—as our days demand, our Savior can and will provide that succor or help in time of need. His succor brings us peace. Did He not say, “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” but “in me ye might have peace”?<sup>12</sup> Oh, how I have needed that peace! And it has been available in every condition, as my days and circumstances may have demanded.

To conclude, Church members are unified in Christ through love and testimony. This dispensation’s pathway to our Savior is through Joseph and the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup> Thus we can be certain that the New Testament account of Jesus is true. Jesus is our Lord and Redeemer. At every opportunity we ought to proclaim, “Hallelujah! How great Thou art!”

President Hinckley is His prophet on the earth. This is His Church. May our unity constitute evidence to the world that we are His disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Matthew 12:25.
2. "Onward, Christian Soldiers," *Hymns*, no. 246.
3. Matthew 8:11.
4. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. John 13:35.
6. See Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (1997).
7. "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," *Book of Mormon*.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:11.
9. Alma 7:7.
10. See Hebrews 1:1-2.
11. "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85.

12. John 16:33.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 5:10.

**President Monson**

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and then Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

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## Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

**Enhancing our temple experience**

One of the great blessings that we enjoy today is the opportunity to attend the temple. With an ever increasing number of temples, the blessings of the temple are available to a growing number of Church members.

These blessings should not be taken lightly. The Savior has commanded that we should "trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12). The temple and the holy ordinances are indeed sacred, and we should be spiritually sensitive to them. It is a sacred blessing to attend the temple to worship the Lord.

There is a difference in just attending the temple and having a rich spiritual experience. The real blessings of the temple come as we enhance our temple experience. To do so, we must feel a spirit of reverence for the temple and a spirit of worship.

**The spirit of reverence in the temple**

All who attend the temple should remember the counsel of the Lord when

He said, "Reverence my sanctuary" (Leviticus 19:30). Reverence is an expression of deep respect, honor, and adoration for the Lord. It is having reverence for His name, for His words, for His ordinances and covenants, for His servants, for His chapels, and for His temples.

It is an outward indication of an inner feeling that we have for Him. We should always remember that it is by His invitation that we come to His holy house, the temple of the Lord. We should respond to His invitation by being worthy, by being prepared, and by having the temple as a priority in our lives. While in the temple, we should act as if we are in His holy presence.

To be reverent is not just to be quiet. It involves an awareness of what is taking place. It involves a divine desire to learn and to be receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. It involves a striving to seek added light and knowledge. Irreverence is not only an act of disrespect for Deity, but it makes it impossible for the Spirit to teach us the things that we need to know.

It is in the temple that we must speak in reverent tones. Reverence is no minor or mundane matter. It has eternal consequences and should be treated as divine in nature. To be reverent in the temple, we must sense it to be a place of purity and a place of holiness.

### *A place of purity*

The temple is a place of purity. It is of the utmost importance that we keep the temple pure and holy. The Savior promised:

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, . . . my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it" (D&C 97:15-16).

Those who enter the temple should prepare both their hearts and their minds. They should be able to answer in the affirmative the questions asked by Alma when he said:

"Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?" (Alma 5:19).

When we are reverent in the temple, we help keep it pure and holy, free from distractions and offenses to the Spirit. We must remember to say or do nothing that would be offensive to the Lord. President David O. McKay counseled:

"When you enter a church building, you are coming into the presence of our Father in heaven; and that thought should be sufficient incentive for you to prepare your hearts, your minds, and even your attire, that you might appropriately and properly sit in his presence" (*Improvement Era*, July 1962, 509).

Reverence involves thinking, speaking, feeling, and acting as we would in the presence of the Lord.

### *A place of holiness*

The temple is a place of holiness. It is the most sacred and holy place on earth and should be treated with the greatest degree of reverence and respect. Reverence in the temple is an expression to the Lord that we consider it to be sacred and that we recognize it to be, indeed, His holy house.

### **The spirit of worship in the temple**

The temple is a place of worship. Reverence is a supernal form of worship. It is the form of worship that is found in the celestial kingdom. In the vision of the degrees of glory given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, this celestial worship was described with these words:

"And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, . . . where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

"Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever" (D&C 76:92-93).

Our worship in the temple is in preparation for living in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son. We should worship Them in a spirit of humility and in a spirit of reverence.

True worship of the Lord in His holy house means that we should enhance our temple experience. We can obtain a rich spiritual experience in the temple by doing the following:

First, we must leave the world behind as we enter the temple.

Second, we must seek to gain added light and knowledge.

### *Leave the world behind*

When we enter the temple, we should leave the world behind. We should feel what it would be like when we enter the presence of the Lord. We may consider what thoughts we would think and what communications we would have in His

holy presence. If we can catch the vision of this eventual event, it will help us in preparing to enter His presence and in leaving the world behind as we enter His temple.

1. *Thoughts.* As we enter the temple grounds, we should leave our worldly thoughts behind and focus on the sacred responsibilities that are ours as we serve in the house of the Lord.

Our thoughts should be spiritual in nature. We must remember that the Lord is aware of our thoughts. He spoke to Ezekiel and said, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezekiel 11:5).

2. *Communications.* The Savior has given us great counsel concerning our communications in the temple. He said, "Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, . . . from all your pride and light-mindedness" (D&C 88:121).

Just as we leave our worldly thoughts behind as we enter the temple grounds, we should also leave our worldly discussions behind. It is inappropriate to discuss matters of business, pleasure, or current events in the temple.

It is important not only what we speak in the temple, but also the manner in which we speak. We must always speak in soft and subdued tones in all places in the temple. This should be our temple voice.

There should be silence in the sacred ordinance areas of the temple, except for the necessary communications concerning the performance of the ordinances. These ordinance areas are sacred and should not be used for any worldly conversations.

The Savior has given us loving counsel that will assist us in enhancing our temple experience by leaving the world behind: "And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better" (D&C 25:10).

Perhaps the chastening words of the Savior to David Whitmer may be appropriate for us to remember:

"Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me, your Maker, . . . and you have not given heed unto my Spirit. . . .

"Wherefore, you are left to inquire for yourself" (D&C 30:2-3).

#### *Seek to gain added light and knowledge*

Gaining added light and knowledge is not a passive process. It involves focusing on the things of the Spirit and seeking the spiritual lessons to be learned. The Savior counseled:

"And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

The Spirit of the Holy Ghost is the teacher in the temple. He teaches principles of eternal significance. It is during these instructions that we see the relationship between the earthly and the eternal. We must remember that the Spirit teaches only those who are teachable. If we enter the temple seeking added light and knowledge, we can learn and understand something new during the temple experience. The Savior promised:

"That which is of God is light; and he that . . . continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

#### **Prepare to live in the Lord's presence**

May we enhance our temple experience with a spirit of reverence, treating it as a place of purity and a place of holiness. May we enhance our temple experience with a spirit of worship by leaving the world behind and seeking to obtain added light and knowledge. If we do these things, the Lord will bless us and we will become prepared to live in His holy presence. To this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Bruce D. Porter

### The most important class in Cambridge

Nearly 25 years ago our family lived in Massachusetts, where I was enrolled in graduate school. My program of study was very demanding, leaving me little free time. One Sunday in church the ward Primary president approached me and asked if I might substitute as a Primary teacher for two weeks. Primary was then held on a weekday afternoon, and I knew it would be difficult to find room in my schedule to teach the class. But after some hesitation, I agreed.

The appointed day came to teach Primary. That afternoon I was in the university library, absorbed in a book on international politics. The subject I was studying seemed somehow more important than the upcoming Primary class. Consequently, I procrastinated until just 30 minutes before the class was to begin to review the lesson I was to teach. Then I walked from the library down to our ward chapel on the edge of campus. My reluctant attitude must have slowed my steps, for I arrived a few minutes late. As I stepped to the door of the Primary room, the children were just beginning to sing the opening hymn. It was a song I had never heard before, a song whose melody and message touched me deeply:

As I have loved you,  
Love one another.  
This new commandment:  
Love one another.  
By this shall men know  
Ye are my disciples,  
If ye have love  
One to another.  
[“Love One Another,” *Hymns*,  
no. 308]

As I stood there, transfixed in the doorway, the Spirit bore witness that I was looking at the most important class taking place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that day.

Back at the university in dozens of classrooms and laboratories, dedicated scholars were pursuing answers to the world's problems. Yet valuable though such efforts may have been, the university did not and could not hold the ultimate answers to the problems of a troubled world. Here before me was the Lord's answer: the quiet building up of His kingdom on earth by the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was taking place in Primary that day was a small part of a divinely revealed plan for the salvation of a fallen world.

### God's kingdom is built by simple means

In October 1831, the Lord, in reference to the Restoration, declared, “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that kingdom whose destiny it is to fill the whole earth. In the miraculous wisdom of the Almighty, the building up of God's kingdom in the latter days will take place by means as plain and simple as what I witnessed in Primary that day.

We rejoice to hear of temples being reared in every quarter of the earth and of far-flung nations opening their doors to the gospel. Built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, the Lord's Church is being taken to the whole world by missionaries called to proclaim His word. Sometimes, perhaps, we may be inclined to see the building of the kingdom as something that takes place beyond the horizon, far away from our own branch or ward. In truth, the Church advances both by outward expansion and by inward refinement. “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must



be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened" (D&C 82:14).

We do not have to be called to serve far from home, nor do we have to hold a prominent place in the Church or in the world to build up the Lord's kingdom. We build it in our own hearts as we cultivate the Spirit of God in our lives. We build it within our families by instilling faith in our children. And we build it through the organization of the Church as we magnify our callings and share the gospel with neighbors and friends.

As our missionaries labor in fields ready for harvest, others labor in fields at home to strengthen the kingdom in the ward and community where they reside. From its earliest days, the Lord's Church has been built up by ordinary people who magnified their callings in humility and devotion. It does not matter to what office we are called to serve, only that we act "in all diligence" (D&C 107:99). In the words of modern revelation:

"Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

### **The kingdom of God is built in the home**

President Joseph F. Smith observed once that "great causes are not won in a single generation" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 119). More than anywhere else, it is within the family, in the quiet sanctuary of the home that generations unite in building the kingdom of God. The rearing of children is a divine work. The First Presidency has called on the parents of the Church to hold family home evening and family prayer, to study the gospel in the home, and to spend time with children in wholesome activities. As fathers and mothers teach their children the eternal truths once taught to them, they pass on the torch of truth to yet another generation, and the kingdom waxes stronger. "We are watchers of a beacon whose light

must never die" ("For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35).

When I was growing up, my father often led our family in gospel discussions around the dinner table. Only with the perspective of years do I understand today the contribution those family hours made to my own testimony. I rejoice in the prophecy of Isaiah that the time will come when "upon every dwelling place of mount Zion" there shall be "a cloud . . . by day, and . . . a flaming fire by night" (Isaiah 4:5), when the Spirit of God will abide in the homes of His people continually.

### **"The kingdom of God is within you"**

The Lord's kingdom encompasses not only Church and family, but also the hearts and minds of His people. As the Savior taught during His mortal ministry, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). If we truly desire to contribute to this great latter-day work, our eyes will be single to the glory of God, our minds enlightened by "the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10), our hearts pure and consecrated. Personal prayer, study, and pondering are vital to building the kingdom within our own souls. It is in quiet moments of contemplation and communion with the Almighty that we come to know and love Him as our Father.

I bear witness that the kingdom of God has been restored to the earth, never to be taken away again. Under the direction of our Eternal Father, Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of this work, the cornerstone of the Church, and the Holy One of Israel. In the strength and power of the Lord, may we build up the kingdom of God on earth that it may be prepared to meet the kingdom of heaven at His coming. In the words of a battlefield anthem that might also stand as an anthem of the Restoration:

He has sounded forth the trumpet  
that shall never call retreat;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men  
before his judgment seat.  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer him;  
be jubilant my feet!  
Our God is marching on.  
["Battle Hymn of the Republic,"  
*Hymns*, no. 60]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We shall now have the pleasure to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Accountability for our use of resources

As we approach the conclusion of this wonderful conference, it is timely to ask ourselves what we are going to strive to *become* because of what we have heard from the Lord's servants.

We are accountable and will be judged for how we use what we have received. This eternal principle applies to all we have been given. In the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14–30), the Savior taught this principle with reference to the use of property. The principle of accountability also applies to the spiritual resources conferred in the teachings we have been given and to the precious hours and days allotted to each of us during our time in mortality.

I wish to examine how this principle of accountability applies to our use of the enlarged time and information we have been given in our day.

Because of increased life expectancies and modern timesaving devices, most of us have far more discretionary time than our predecessors. We are accountable for how we use that time. "Thou shalt not idle away thy time," and "Cease to be idle" (D&C 60:13; 88:124), the Lord commanded the early missionaries and members. "Time flies on wings of lightning," we sing in a popular hymn; "we cannot call it back. It comes, then passes forward along its onward track. And if we are not

mindful, the chance will fade away, for life is quick in passing. 'Tis as a single day" ("Improve the Shining Moments," *Hymns*, no. 226).

The significance of our increased discretionary time has been magnified many times by modern data-retrieval technology. For good or for evil, devices like the Internet and the compact disc have put at our fingertips an incredible inventory of information, insights, and images. Along with fast food, we have fast communications and fast facts. The effect of these resources on some of us seems to fulfill the prophet Daniel's prophecy that in the last days "knowledge shall be increased" and "many shall run to and fro" (Daniel 12:4).

### Principles for using time and information

With greatly increased free time and vastly more alternatives for its use, it is prudent to review the fundamental principles that should guide us. Temporal circumstances change, but the eternal laws and principles that should guide our choices never change.

#### *Value what we have, not a bigger truckload*

A homely story contains a warning. I like this story because it translates easily into different languages and cultures.

Two men formed a partnership. They built a small shed beside a busy road.

They obtained a truck and drove it to a farmer's field, where they purchased a truckload of melons for a dollar a melon. They drove the loaded truck to their shed by the road, where they sold their melons for a dollar a melon. They drove back to the farmer's field and bought another truckload of melons for a dollar a melon. Transporting them to the roadside, they again sold them for a dollar a melon. As they drove back to the farmer's field to get another load, one partner said to the other, "We're not making much money on this business, are we?" "No, we're not," his partner replied. "Do you think we need a bigger truck?"

We don't need a bigger truckload of information, either. Like the two partners in my story, our biggest need is a clearer focus on how we should value and use what we already have.

Because of modern technology, the contents of huge libraries and other data resources are at the fingertips of many of us. Some choose to spend countless hours in unfocused surfing the Internet, watching trivial television, or scanning other avalanches of information. But to what purpose? Those who engage in such activities are like the two partners in my story, hurrying to and fro, hauling more and more but failing to grasp the essential truth that we cannot make a profit from our efforts until we understand the true value of what is already within our grasp.

A poet described this delusion as an "endless cycle" that brings "knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word," in which "wisdom" is "lost in knowledge" and "knowledge" is "lost in information" (T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* [1962], 96).

#### *Be wise and focused in using information*

We have thousands of times more available information than Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln. Yet which of us would think ourselves a thousand times

more educated or more serviceable to our fellowmen than they? The sublime quality of what these two men gave to us—including the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address—was not attributable to their great resources of information, for their libraries were comparatively small by our standards. Theirs was the wise and inspired use of a limited amount of information.

Available information wisely used is far more valuable than multiplied information allowed to lie fallow. I had to learn this obvious lesson as a law student.

Over 45 years ago I was introduced to a law library with hundreds of thousands of law books. (Today such a library would also include millions of additional pages available by electronic data retrieval.) When I began to prepare an assigned paper, I spent many days searching in hundreds of books for the needed material. I soon learned the obvious truth (already familiar to experienced researchers) that I could never complete my assigned task within the available time unless I focused my research in the beginning and stopped that research soon enough to have time to analyze my findings and compose my conclusions.

Faced with an excess of information in the marvelous resources we have been given, we must begin with focus or we are likely to become like those in the well-known prophecy about people in the last days—"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). We also need quiet time and prayerful pondering as we seek to develop information into knowledge and mature knowledge into wisdom.

#### *Avoid harmful information*

We also need focus to avoid what is harmful. The abundant information and images accessible on the Internet call for sharp focus and control to avoid accessing the pornography that is an increasing scourge in our society. As the *Deseret News*

noted in a recent editorial, "Images that used to be hidden in out-of-the-way store counters now are as close as a mouse click" ("Staying ahead of Pornography," 21–22 Feb. 2001, A12). The Internet has made pornography accessible almost without effort and often without leaving the privacy of one's home or room. The Internet has also facilitated the predatory activities of adults who use its anonymity and accessibility to stalk children for evil purposes. Parents and youth, beware!

*Use focused, not excessive, teaching resources*

There are many gospel implications of this easily accessible flood of information. For example, our Church web site now provides access to all of the general conference addresses and other contents of Church magazines for the past 30 years. Teachers can download bales of information on any subject. When highly focused, a handout can enrich. But a bale of handouts can detract from our attempt to teach gospel principles with clarity and testimony. Stacks of supplementary material can impoverish rather than enrich, because they can blur students' focus on the assigned principles and draw them away from prayerfully seeking to apply those principles in their own lives.

Nephi taught, "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). That is focus. Nephi also said that as he taught from the scriptures, "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). That is personal application.

As a further illustration of the need for focus in using and teaching from the great information resources of the past, consider the comparative value today of the advice Brigham Young gave to an audience 140 years ago with what President Hinckley and other servants of the Lord are saying to each of us right now, in this conference. Or compare the value to

each of us of some other facts or advice from the distant past with what our stake president said at our last stake conference or what our bishop counseled us last Sunday.

*Hear and heed the Spirit's whisperings*

Overarching all of this is the importance of what the Spirit whispered to us last night or this morning about our own specific needs. Each of us should be careful that the current flood of information does not occupy our time so completely that we cannot focus on and hear and heed the still, small voice that is available to guide each of us with our own challenges today.

I hope that these cautions on the need for focus will not be understood as hostile to selective use of the new technology that has put such a wealth of information at our fingertips. In this I echo Brigham Young, who declared:

"Every discovery in science and art, that is really true and useful to mankind, has been given by direct revelation from God. . . . We should take advantage of all these great discoveries . . . and give to our children the benefit of every branch of useful knowledge, to prepare them to step forward and efficiently do their part in the great work" (*Deseret News*, 22 Oct. 1862, 129).

**Principles for establishing priorities**

We also need priorities. Our priorities determine what we seek in life. Most of what has been taught in this conference concerns priorities. I hope we will heed these teachings.

*Give top priority to God and His work*

Jesus taught about priorities when He said, "Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto

you” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; in Matthew 6:33; footnote a).

“Seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God” means to assign first priority to God and to His work. The work of God is to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39), and all that this entails in the birth, nurturing, teaching, and sealing of our Heavenly Father’s children. Everything else is lower in priority. Think about that reality as we consider some teachings and some examples on priorities. As someone has said, if we do not choose the kingdom of God first, it will make little difference in the long run what we have chosen instead of it.

#### *Seek revealed knowledge and eternal treasures*

As regards knowledge, the highest priority religious knowledge is what we receive in the temple. That knowledge is obtained from the explicit and symbolic teachings of the endowment and from the whisperings of the Spirit that come as we are desirous to seek and receptive to hear the revelation available to us in that sacred place.

As regards property, Jesus taught that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Consequently, we should not lay up for ourselves “treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19). In other words, the treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call “riches [and] the vain things of this world” (Alma 39:14). The “vain things of [the] world” include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. As to all of these, the scriptures remind us that “you cannot carry them with you” (Alma 39:14). We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: “great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19).

All around us we have the good examples of those who seek permanent treasures—those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 5:6) and put the kingdom of God first in their lives. Among the most visible such examples are the men and women who set aside their worldly pursuits and even say good-bye to their families to serve missions for the Lord. Tens of thousands of these are young missionaries. In addition, I pay particular tribute to those who serve missions in their mature years, some as mission leaders and some as what we call couple missionaries. Their remarkable service evidences their priorities, and their impressive example is a guide to their families and to all who know them.

#### *Prioritize precious, quality family time*

Our priorities are most visible in how we use our time. Someone has said, “Three things never come back—the spent arrow, the spoken word, and the lost opportunity.” We cannot recycle or save the time allotted to us each day. With time, we have only one opportunity for choice, and then it is gone forever.

Good choices are especially important in our family life. For example, how do family members spend their free time together? Time together is necessary but not sufficient. Priorities should govern us in the precious time we give to our family relationships. Compare the impact of time spent merely in the same room as spectators for television viewing with the significance of time spent communicating with one another individually and as a family.

To cite another example, how much time does a family allocate to learning the gospel by scripture study and parental teachings, in contrast to the time family members spend viewing sports contests, talk shows, or soap operas? I believe many of us are overnourished on entertainment junk food and undernourished on the bread of life.

*Make decisions based on their eternal impact*

In terms of priorities for each major decision (such as education, occupation, place of residence, marriage, or childbearing), we should ask ourselves, "What will be the *eternal impact* of this decision?" Some decisions that seem desirable for mortality have unacceptable risks for eternity. In all such choices, we need to have inspired priorities and apply them in ways that will bring eternal blessings to us and to our family members.

Then, after we have done all we can, we should remember the wise counsel and comforting assurance of King Benjamin, who taught, "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

*Secure relationships through ordinances and covenants*

The ultimate Latter-day Saint priorities are twofold: First, we seek to understand our relationship to God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to secure that relationship by obtaining their saving ordinances and by keeping our personal covenants. Second, we seek to understand our relationship to our family members and to secure those relationships by the ordinances of the temple and by keeping the covenants we make in that holy place. These relationships, secured in the way I have explained, provide eternal blessings available in no other way. No combination of science, success, property, pride, prominence, or power can provide these eternal blessings!

I testify that this is true, and I testify of God the Father, whose plan establishes

the way, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it all possible. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Monson**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Ricks College, and the Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center. We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, please obey the traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Conferences held to edify and fortify us

Brethren and sisters, we've had a wonderful conference. The talks have been inspirational. The prayers of the speakers who prepared them and of those of us who heard them have been answered. We've all been edified.

Now, before I give my concluding words, I would like to make a little explanation. People are talking about why in the world I'm walking with a cane. That's become the topic of conversation these days. Well, I saw that Brigham Young used a cane. John Taylor had a cane, and Wilford Woodruff had a cane, and President Grant had a cane in his old age. And I've seen President McKay with a cane and Spencer Kimball with a cane, and I'm just trying to get in style.

The fact of the matter is, I have a little vertigo. I'm a little unsteady on my feet, and the doctors don't know why it is. But they're still working on me, and I hope it'll be over in a day or two.

Now, we've all been edified in this great conference. We should all be standing a little taller as we adjourn today than we were when we came together yesterday morning.

I constantly marvel at these great semiannual gatherings. We have heard 26 speakers during these two days. That's a very large number. Each is told how much time he or she will have. But none is told what to speak about. And yet all of the talks seem to harmonize, one with another, each a thread in the tapestry of a grand and beautiful pattern. I think nearly everyone in this vast worldwide audience can now say of one or more of the talks, "That was intended just for me. That is just what I needed to hear."

This is the reason, I may say, why these conferences are held—to strengthen our testimonies of this work, to fortify us against temptation and sin, to lift our sights, to receive instruction concerning the programs of the Church and the pattern of our lives.

Many churches, of course, have large gatherings, but I know of none to compare with these conferences held every six months, year after year. They are truly world conferences.

### Go forth with a stronger resolve

This work is alive and vital as it moves across the world in communities both large and small. The genius of this work lies with the missionaries who teach in faraway places with strange-sounding names, and with the converts who come of these teachings. As I have occasion to travel, these are the places I like to visit—the small and largely unknown and scattered branches where a great pioneer work is going forward.

Now, brothers and sisters, let us go forth from this conference with a stronger resolve to live the gospel, to be more faithful, to be better fathers and mothers and sons and daughters, to be absolutely loyal to one another as families, and absolutely loyal to the Church as members.

### Nurture and cultivate testimonies

This is God's holy work. It is divine in its origin and in its doctrine. Jesus Christ stands as its head. He is our immortal Savior and Redeemer. His revelation is the source of our doctrine, our faith, our teaching, in fact the underlying pattern of our lives. Joseph Smith was an instrument

in the hands of the Almighty in bringing to pass this Restoration. And that basic element of revelation is with the Church today as it was in Joseph's day.

Our individual testimonies of these truths are the basis of our faith. We must nurture them. We must cultivate them. We can never forsake them. We can never lay them aside. Without them we have nothing. With them we have everything.

As we return to our homes, may we experience a strengthening of our faith

in these eternal and unchanging truths. May there be peace and love in our homes and an abundance of the good things of heaven and earth, I humbly pray as I bid you good-bye for another season, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from Ricks College provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. The choir was directed by Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood

choir from stakes in Salt Lake City. Paul Broomhead directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference



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**Ordinances:** obtain all, of the temple, 6; blessings of celestial glory are obtained by receiving the necessary, 8; through the Atonement, all mankind may be saved by obedience to, 28; testimony comes only through obedience to, 38; of the temple are the heart of the plan of salvation, 40; of the temple are solemn promises, not just rituals, 40; priesthood, are eternal, 40; are our credentials for admission into God's presence, 42; are performed through priesthood power, 56; respect,

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**Responsibility:** humble citizens are more concerned with their, than their rights, 11; to be witnesses of Christ, 15; priesthood, to watch over the Church, 49; to pattern lives after the Master, 55; reach out to those for whom we have, for, 64; priesthood, to rescue, 66; we have, to help the poor become self-reliant, 69; we have a great, when we believe in prophet, 84; we have, to assist those in need, 97. *See also* Duty

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-first  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 6 and 7, 2001**



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# Report of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 2001. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D.

Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Charles Didier, and Cecil O. Samuelson

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorín, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Overton, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whet-

ten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice." President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice" and will now favor us with "The Lord Is My Light." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "The Lord Is My Light."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Blessings of living in the fulness of times

My beloved brethren and sisters, wherever you may be, welcome to this great world conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are assembled in our wonderful new Conference Center in Salt Lake City. This building is filled or soon will be. I am so glad that we have it. I am so thankful for the inspiration to build it. What a remarkable structure it is. I wish all of us could be assembled under one roof. But that is not possible. I am so deeply thankful that we have the wonders of television, radio, cable, satellite transmission, and the Internet. We have become a great worldwide Church, and it is now possible for the vast majority of our members to participate in these meetings as one great family, speaking many languages, found in many lands, but all of one faith and one doctrine and one baptism.

This morning I can scarcely restrain my emotions as I think of what the Lord has done for us.

I do not know what we did in the pre-existence to merit the wonderful blessings we enjoy. We have come to earth in this great season in the long history of mankind. It is a marvelous age, the best of all. As we reflect on the plodding course of mankind, from the time of our first parents, we cannot help feeling grateful.

The era in which we live is the fulness of times spoken of in the scriptures, when God has brought together all of the elements of previous dispensations. From the day that He and His Beloved Son manifested themselves to the boy Joseph, there has been a tremendous cascade of enlightenment poured out upon the world. The hearts of men have turned to their fathers in fulfillment of the words of Malachi. The vision of Joel has been fulfilled wherein the Lord declared:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all

flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:28-32).

There has been more of scientific discovery during these years than during all of the previous history of mankind. Transportation, communication, medicine, public hygiene, the unlocking of the atom, the miracle of the computer, with all of its ramifications, have blossomed forth, particularly in our own era. During my own lifetime, I have witnessed miracle after wondrous miracle come to pass. We take it for granted.

And with all of this, the Lord has restored His ancient priesthood. He has organized His Church and kingdom during the past century and a half. He has led His people. They have been tempered in the crucible of terrible persecution. He has brought to pass the wondrous time in which we now live.

We have seen only the foreshadowing of the mighty force for good that this Church will become. And yet I marvel at what has been accomplished.

Our membership has grown. I believe it has grown in faithfulness. We lose too many, but the faithful are so strong. Those who observe us say that we are moving into the mainstream of religion. We are

not changing. The world's perception of us is changing. We teach the same doctrine. We have the same organization. We labor to perform the same good works. But the old hatred is disappearing; the old persecution is dying. People are better informed. They are coming to realize what we stand for and what we do.

### **A time of greater evil than ever before**

But wonderful as this time is, it is fraught with peril. Evil is all about us. It is attractive and tempting and in so many cases successful. Paul declared:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We see today all of these evils, more commonly and generally, than they have ever been seen before, as we have so recently been reminded by what has occurred in New York City, Washington, and Pennsylvania, of which I shall speak tomorrow morning. We live in a season when fierce men do terrible and despicable things. We live in a season of war. We live in a season of arrogance. We live in a season of wickedness, pornography, immorality. All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.

### **This work will go forward**

And so, my brothers and sisters, we are met together in this great conference

to fortify and strengthen one another, to help and lift one another, to give encouragement and build faith, to reflect on the wonderful things the Lord has made available to us, and to strengthen our resolve to oppose evil in whatever form it may take.

We have become as a great army. We are now a people of consequence. Our voice is heard when we speak up. We have demonstrated our strength in meeting adversity. Our strength is our faith in the Almighty. No cause under the heavens can stop the work of God. Adversity may raise its ugly head. The world may be troubled with wars and rumors of wars, but this cause will go forward.

You are familiar with these great words written by the Prophet Joseph:

"No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

The Lord has given us the goal toward which we work. That goal is to build His kingdom, which is a mighty cause of great numbers of men and women of faith, of integrity, of love and concern for mankind, marching forward to create a better society, bringing blessings upon ourselves and upon the heads of others.

### **Bless all humanity by reaching out**

As we recognize our place and our goal, we cannot become arrogant. We cannot become self-righteous. We cannot become smug or egotistical. We must reach out to all mankind. They are all sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father, and He will hold us accountable for what we do concerning them.

May the Lord bless us. May He make us strong and mighty in good works. May our faith shine forth as the sunlight of the morning. May we walk in obedience to His divine commandments. May He smile with favor upon us.

As we go forward, may we bless humanity with an outreach to all, lifting those who are downtrodden and oppressed, feeding and clothing the hungry and the needy, extending love and neighborliness to those about us who may not be part of this Church. The Lord has shown us the way. He has given us His word, His counsel, His guidance, yea, His commandments. We have done well. We have much to be grateful for and much to be proud of. But we can do better, so much better.

How I love you, my brothers and sisters of this great cause. I love you for what you have become and for what you can become. Notwithstanding the afflictions about us, notwithstanding the sordid things we see almost everywhere, notwithstanding the conflict that sweeps across the world, we can be better.

I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you as I express my love for you and com-

mend to you the great messages you will hear from this pulpit during the next two days, and do so in the sacred name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Baptism."

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### **President Monson**

We have just listened to President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing the musical selection "Baptism."

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

Thank you, President Hinckley, for your great message. We are all profoundly grateful for your vigorous and inspired leadership in this difficult time. Under that leadership, we are going forward with the work of the Lord, so urgently needed in this troubled world.

### **Sharing the gospel**

To proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. Three of the gospel writers report this direction by the Savior.

The book of Mark records:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Matthew quotes the Savior's command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Luke states, "Thus it is written . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:46-47).

Applying the Savior's directions to our day, modern prophets have challenged each of us to share the gospel.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has given the clarion call for our time. In a worldwide satellite address to missionaries and local leaders, he asked for "an infusion of enthusiasm" for missionary work "at every level in the Church" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 107). Though missionaries must continue their best efforts to find persons to teach, he declared that the "better way . . . is through the members of the Church" (105). He asked each of us to give our very best efforts to assisting missionaries in finding persons to teach. He also asked that each stake president and each bishop "accept full responsibility and accountability for the finding and friendship of investigators" within their units (107). President Hinckley also invoked the blessings of the Lord upon each of us "in meeting the tremendous challenge that is ours" (108).

Though it has been two and a half years since our president made this plea, most of us have not yet acted effectively upon his challenge.

As I have prayerfully studied President Hinckley's words and pondered over how we can share the gospel, I have concluded that we need three things to fulfill our prophet's challenge. First, we need a sincere *desire* to share the gospel. Second, we need *divine assistance*. Third, we need to *know what to do*.

## I. Desire

As with so many other things, sharing the gospel begins with *desire*. If we are to become more effective instruments in the hands of the Lord in sharing His gospel, we must sincerely *desire* to do so. I believe we acquire this desire in two steps.

First, we must have a firm testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This in-

cludes the supreme value of God's plan for His children, the essential position of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in it, and the role of The Church of Jesus Christ in carrying out that plan in mortality.

Second, we must have a love for God and for all of His children. In modern revelation we are told that "love, with an eye single to the glory of God, [qualifies us] for the work" (D&C 4:5). The early Apostles of this dispensation were told that their love should "abound unto all men" (D&C 112:11).

From our testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel, we understand the value of what we have been given. From our love of God and our fellowmen, we acquire our desire to share that great gift with everyone. The intensity of our desire to share the gospel is a great indicator of the extent of our personal conversion.

The Book of Mormon contains some marvelous examples of the effect of testimony and love. When the sons of Mosiah, who had been "the very vilest of sinners," acquired their testimony, "they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish" (Mosiah 28:3-4). In a later account, their associate Alma cried, "O that I were an angel, . . . that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth" and declare "the plan of redemption" to every soul, "that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:1-2).

I like to refer to missionary efforts as sharing the gospel. The word *sharing* affirms that we have something extraordinarily valuable and desire to give it to others for their benefit and blessing.

The most effective missionaries, member and full-time, always act out of love. I learned this lesson as a young man. I was assigned to visit a less-active member, a successful professional many years older than I. Looking back on my actions,

I realize that I had very little loving concern for the man I visited. I acted out of duty, with a desire to report 100 percent on my home teaching. One evening, close to the end of a month, I phoned to ask if my companion and I could come right over and visit him. His chastening reply taught me an unforgettable lesson.

"No, I don't believe I want you to come over this evening," he said. "I'm tired. I've already dressed for bed. I am reading, and I am just not willing to be interrupted so that you can report 100 percent on your home teaching this month." That reply still stings me because I knew he had sensed my selfish motivation.

I hope no person we approach with an invitation to hear the message of the restored gospel feels that we are acting out of any reason other than a genuine love for them and an unselfish desire to share something we know to be precious.

If we lack this love for others, we should pray for it. The prophet Mormon's writings about "the pure love of Christ" teach us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:47-48).

## II. Divine assistance and right timing

We also need divine assistance to guide us in sharing the gospel. Just as our desires must be pure and rooted in testimony and love, our actions must be directed by the Lord. It is His work, not ours, and it must be done in His way and on His timing, not ours. Otherwise, our efforts may be fated to frustration and failure.

All of us have family members or friends who need the gospel but are not now interested. To be effective, our efforts with them must be directed by the Lord so that we act in the way and at the time when they will be most receptive. We must pray for the Lord's help and directions so we can be instruments in His

hands for one who is now ready—one He would have us help today. Then we must be alert to hear and heed the promptings of His Spirit in how we proceed.

Those promptings will come. We know from countless personal testimonies that in His own way and His own time the Lord is preparing persons to accept His gospel. Such persons are searching, and when we are seeking to identify them the Lord will answer their prayers through answering ours. He will prompt and guide those who desire and who sincerely seek guidance in how, where, when, and with whom to share His gospel. In this way, God grants unto us according to our desires (see Alma 29:4; D&C 6:8).

In modern revelation, the Lord's prophet has told us that "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12). When we are standing as "witnesses of God at all times and in all things" (Mosiah 18:9), the Lord will open ways for us to find and have appropriate communications with those who are seeking. This will come when we seek direction and when we act out of a sincere and Christlike love for others.

The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, "My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me" (John 10:27).

## III. How to do it

When we have a sincere desire to share the gospel with others, and when we have sought divine assistance in our efforts, what should we do? How do we proceed? We begin by beginning. We should not wait for a further invitation

from heaven. Revelation comes most often when we are on the move.

The Lord has given us this instruction as to *who* and *how*: "And let your preaching be . . . every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:41). "Neighbors," of course, means not only those who live beside us and other friends and associates. When He was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" the Savior told of a Samaritan who recognized a neighbor on the road to Jericho (see Luke 10:25-37). Thus, our neighbors also include those we encounter in our daily travels.

We should pray, as Alma of old, for the Lord to give us "power and wisdom that we may bring" our associates to the Lord (Alma 31:35). We also pray for the welfare of their souls (see Alma 6:6).

We must be sure we act out of love and not in any attempt to gain personal recognition or advantage. The warning against those who use Church position to gratify their pride or vain ambition (see D&C 121:37) surely applies to our efforts to share the gospel.

The need to act out of love also warns us against manipulation, real or perceived. People who do not share our belief can be repelled when they hear us refer to something as a "missionary tool." A "tool" is something used to manipulate an inanimate object. If we talk about something as a "missionary tool," we can convey the impression that we want to manipulate someone. That impression is entirely contrary to the unselfish, sharing spirit of our missionary service.

In his great message President Hinckley declares that "opportunities for sharing the gospel are everywhere" (*Ensign*, May 1999, 106). He mentions many things we can do. We should live so that what he called "the tremendous power of the example of a member of the Church" (104) will influence those around us. "The most effective tract we will carry," he said, "will be the goodness of our own lives and

example" (107). We must be sincerely friendly to all.

President Hinckley reminded us that we can "leave a piece of Church literature" (106) with those with whom we come in contact. We can offer our homes "to carry on this missionary service" (105). The missionaries "may appropriately ask the members for referrals" (107), and when they do, we should respond.

In summary, President Hinckley said every member of the Church can "work constantly at the task of finding and encouraging investigators" (107).

There are other things we can do, especially as we act upon the prophet Mormon's great statement, "I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear" (Moroni 8:16; see also 1 John 4:18). We can invite friends to Church meetings or Church-related activities. We can make appreciative references to our Church and the effect of its teachings and ask persons if they would like to know more.

Even easier, we can carry a packet of these attractive pass-along cards and give them to persons—even casual acquaintances—with whom we come in contact in the daily activities of our lives. These cards are an ideal way to invite people to investigate the additional truths we have to share. In a nonintrusive way, they offer something precious, but the gift depends upon the choice and initiative of the potential recipient. In our experience, a significant fraction of those who telephone for the offered gift choose to have it delivered by those who can tell them more.

The Church has just announced another way to share the gospel, worldwide, on the Internet. In its potential, this new initiative is as exciting as the publishing of written tracts in the 19th century and our use of radio, television, and film in the 20th. The Church has activated a new Internet site to which we may refer persons interested in obtaining information about the Church and its doctrine and how they can find a place to worship with us. Its ad-



dress is [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org). For missionaries, the value and use of this new resource will emerge with experience. For members of the Church, it will help us answer the questions of friends directly or by referring them to the site. It will also allow us to send our friends electronic greeting cards that include gospel messages and invitations.

#### IV. Conclusion

We have been asked to redouble our efforts and our effectiveness in sharing the gospel to accomplish the Lord's purposes in this great work. Until we do so, these wonderful full-time missionaries—our sons and daughters and our noble as-

sociates in the Lord's work—will remain underused in their great assignment to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have spoken about loving desire, heavenly guidance, and ways we can proceed with the divine command to share the gospel with our neighbors. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the brightest light and the only hope for this darkened world. "Wherefore," as Nephi teaches, we "must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and of His desire that we join wholeheartedly in this, His work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Charles Didier

### Building a bridge of faith

Entering the offices of a large advertising company, one could read the following thought framed on one of the walls: "Men are building too many walls and not enough bridges" (from JCDcaux, a firm based in France).

Indeed, walls are usually built to separate two or more entities physically, mentally, or even spiritually and to create obstacles. They are built because they represent the idea of defense, protection, or separation. Some walls have acquired fame because of that nature: the walls of Jerusalem, the Great Wall of China, the Wall of Berlin. Walls, as a symbol, are also used in our common vocabulary to reflect this idea of separation, as in "a wall of incomprehension," "a wall of intolerance," or "it is like talking to a brick wall!"

Bridges are the opposite of walls. Bridges are built to bring together, to join two or more entities, and to create unity. They are built to overcome obstacles. Some bridges have become famous, like

the Bridge of Sighs, the Allenby Bridge, and so many others. The term is also used in our language to express the idea of reunion or unity, as in "to bridge a gap" or "to bridge differences."

As we consider our mortal existence on this earth and the purpose of life expressed by Amulek—that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32)—what is the Lord's way to help us achieve this very purpose? It is simply, by using this metaphor, to help us build a bridge of faith in our life for crossing and overcoming the walls of unbelief, indifference, fear, or sin. Our mortal life is the time for men to meet God by building a bridge of faith, opening the door into immortality and eternal life.

### Building a bridge in Belgium

How do we build such a bridge of faith?

When I was a young man living in a city called Namur in Belgium, there was a large river separating it from an adjacent city on the other side of the river. At that

time, only one bridge connected the two cities. It had been built and rebuilt over the remnants of a bridge built centuries before by the Roman conquerors. It had become too narrow for the traffic, and there were too many small arches to allow the passage of large boats and barges. A new bridge was necessary, wider and with only one arch. The work to establish the foundations soon started on both sides of the river. Rapidly, two huge metallic arms began to stretch from each side with the aim to meet together in the middle of the river. I was fascinated by the engineering and rode my bicycle almost every day to watch the progress of the work.

Finally the day came when the centerpiece, a cornerstone made of steel, was going to link the two arms together. Crowds were now watching with me the delicate operation, the final step that would join the two arms together and permit crossing the bridge for the first time. When it took place, people applauded; workers embraced; the obstacle of the river had been conquered and overcome.

### **The centerpiece of the bridge of faith**

I mention this experience because of the symbolism it represents. The bridge is more than a bridge of metal. It symbolizes the bridge of faith enabling us, children of our Heavenly Father, to meet Him again. The centerpiece of the bridge, the cornerstone, represents the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the link between mortality and immortality, the connection between the natural man and the spiritual man, the change from temporal life to eternal life. It is because of Him that mankind can be reconciled with Heavenly Father and can overcome the walls of sin and mortality—these obstacles that represent spiritual and physical death. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of the plan of salvation, the promised reunion with our Heavenly

Father, as we read in the book of Moses: “This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time” (Moses 6:62).

The love of God, the other side of the bridge, is the reward of our faith in His Son, Jesus the Christ. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). The greatest of all the gifts of God is the supreme sacrifice of His Son, His Atonement, which brings not only immortality but also eternal life if we keep His commandments and endure to the end (see D&C 14:7).

And so as we attempt to build a bridge of faith, we need to build in our lives a firm testimony of the Father and the Son and His Atonement. This bridge of faith will make a difference between the reality of eternal reunion with our Heavenly Father or eternal separation from Him if we erect walls of sin that turn us away from His love and mercy.

### **The foundation of the bridge of faith**

The gift of the Holy Ghost is the foundation of the bridge of faith. Salvation comes only by Jesus Christ and by our divine exercise of faith in Him, allowing us to repent of our sins and to receive the ordinances of salvation, the railings of the bridge. The inner feelings and promptings to overcome the obstacles of life and to make righteous choices will come by listening to the voice of the Holy Ghost. Crossing the bridge of faith may not be as easy as we may think. A bridge will only resist the storms because of the strength of the pillars of its foundation. Storms in life, crises of faith—such as death, serious illness, loss of a job or financial security—are part of our mortal existence. Sometimes these crises may be exacerbated to the point where one may even question the very existence of a God and of a Savior. A cry for increased faith at such a time will always be answered by the Comforter,

which is the Holy Ghost, a “constant companion, . . . an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:46).

Yes, the solutions to our daily problems can always be found by daily seeking, by our faith, the influence of the Holy Ghost, who brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26). Let me illustrate this point by quoting from a letter written many years ago by a new convert at that time and addressed to President Harold B. Lee after he spoke at a stake conference:

“As you spoke, an idea kept repeating itself in my mind: how life as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is like crossing a swinging bridge suspended between the points of birth by baptism into the Church and death into eternal life over the turbulent stream of worldliness and sin. As one starts out onto the bridge, the nearness of his baptism lends a feeling of security and faith, but as one becomes aware of the stream below and the vast expanse to be crossed, the sense of security gives way to spasmodic twinges of doubt and fear, causing one to lose the rhythm of prayer, faith, and love, and work which makes one’s progress smooth. The mists of doubt and apathy arise and corrode one’s heart and mind, impeding one’s progress and restricting one’s response to the magnetic force of love which streams across the bridge. It is then one breaks step and falls to his knees and hangs on until the force of love restores faith and direction to the crossing” (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1965, 15; or *Improvement Era*, June 1965, 497).

### **Uniting families with a bridge of faith**

Finally, a bridge of faith would not be complete without the linking of parents and children, uniting them to achieve an eternal family. The purpose of building this bridge of faith between generations is so they become one, as the Father and the Son are one—one in purpose in achieving

life eternal. In order to do so, commandments are given to us: first, for children to honor their father and their mother, then for parents to teach their children “to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). Let me illustrate.

While I was a little boy during the Second World War, my country had been invaded; danger was all around us. My mother taught me a great lesson of trust and unity that I have never forgotten. She alerted me to the perils of war and simply said, “Trust my word and follow me; listen to my voice. If you do so, I will protect you the best I know how.” I simply listened to my mother because I loved her and trusted her.

A little later, school started, and this, for me, was a new bridge to cross. As a preparation for this new experience in my life, leaving the home, my mother told me to listen to my teacher and to be obedient. Again I trusted my mother’s advice. I decided to be obedient to my teacher and a new code of rules. School therefore became a bridge of knowledge instead of a wall of ignorance.

That lesson of trust and unity was vital to become one with my parents, family members, and teachers. It allowed me later to become one with my Savior by being baptized into His Church. It reminded me as a husband, father, and grandfather to continue to build trust and unity among our family members by keeping the temple covenants. As President Hinckley has said, “The temple is concerned with things of immortality. It is a bridge between this life and the next” (*Stand a Little Taller* [2001], 6).

### **Let us build bridges, not walls**

In our day it is so easy to isolate ourselves by erecting temporal, spiritual, and even family or religious walls. Let us instead build more bridges of faith, of reconciliation, and live by the peace that is given “not as the world giveth” (John 14:27), but

by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the bridge of faith unto eternity.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ; I put my trust in Him and in His gospel of salvation to be reunited someday. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Sister Sheri L. Dew

### **“Not good that . . . man should be alone”**

For nearly five years I have had the blessing of serving with Relief Society sisters and priesthood leaders from Africa to the Amazon. These experiences with you have reinforced for me the importance of a fundamental gospel principle. I wish to direct my remarks about this principle especially to the young adult men and women of the Church, who are embarking upon a most demanding phase of their lives.

This summer I injured a shoulder and lost the use of an arm for weeks. I hadn't realized how much one arm depends upon the other for balance, or how much less I could lift with one arm than two, or that there were some things I couldn't do at all. This disability not only renewed my respect for those who deal so well with a physical limitation, but helped me realize how much more two arms working together can do.

Two are usually better than one,<sup>1</sup> as our Father confirmed when He declared that “it was not good that the man should be alone”<sup>2</sup> and made a help meet for Adam—someone with distinct gifts who would give him balance, help him shoulder the burdens of mortality, and enable him to do things he couldn't do alone. For “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Satan's efforts to devour marriages**

Satan understands the power of men and women united in righteousness. He

is still stinging from his banishment into eternal exile after Michael led the hosts of heaven, comprised of valiant men and women united in the cause of Christ, against him. In the chilling words of Peter, “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”<sup>4</sup> Lucifer is determined to devour marriages and families because their demise threatens the salvation of all involved and the vitality of the Lord's kingdom itself. Thus, Satan seeks to confuse us about our stewardships and distinctive natures as men and women. He bombards us with bizarre messages about gender, marriage, family, and all male-female relationships. He would have us believe men and women are so alike that our unique gifts are not necessary, or so different we can never hope to understand each other. Neither is true.

### **The Lord's pattern for couples**

Our Father knew exactly what He was doing when He created us. He made us enough alike to love each other but enough different that we would need to unite our strengths and stewardships to create a whole. Neither man nor woman is perfect or complete without the other. Thus, no marriage or family, no ward or stake is likely to reach its full potential until husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, men and women work together in unity of purpose, respecting and relying upon each other's strengths.

These truths about the divinely appointed stewardships of men and women

are largely lost on the world today. You will not find them on a TV sitcom or even, sadly, in some homes and wards. But they are not lost to the Lord, who has given us "a pattern in all things, that [we] may not be deceived."<sup>5</sup>

The Lord's pattern for couples and in large measure men and women serving together in His kingdom was established by our first parents. Together Adam and Eve labored,<sup>6</sup> mourned,<sup>7</sup> were obedient, had children,<sup>8</sup> taught their posterity the gospel,<sup>9</sup> "called upon the name of the Lord, . . . heard the voice of the Lord,"<sup>10</sup> "blessed the name of God,"<sup>11</sup> and dedicated themselves to God. Repeatedly the scriptures about Adam and Eve refer to the pronoun *they*.

Neither Adam with his priesthood nor Eve with her motherhood could bring about the Fall alone. Their unique roles were interconnected. They counseled with one another, lifted burdens neither could have lifted alone, and then faced the wilderness, with all its uncertainty, together. This is the Lord's pattern for righteous men and women.

Now, some of us encounter life circumstances that are less than ideal. I understand this. I personally deal with this. And yet, my dear young friends, in whose hands rests the future of the Church and its families, I must tell you that your understanding of this divine pattern will affect your marriage, your family, your ability to help build the kingdom, and your eternal life.

### **Priesthood magnifies, not diminishes, women**

My young sisters, some will try to persuade you that because you are not ordained to the priesthood, you have been shortchanged. They are simply wrong, and they do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The blessings of the priesthood are available to every righteous man and woman. We may all receive the Holy Ghost, obtain personal revelation, and be

endowed in the temple, from which we emerge "armed" with power.<sup>12</sup> The power of the priesthood heals, protects, and inoculates all of the righteous against the powers of darkness. Most significantly, the fulness of the priesthood contained in the highest ordinances of the house of the Lord can be received only by a man and woman together.<sup>13</sup> Said President Harold B. Lee: "Pure womanhood plus priesthood means exaltation. But womanhood without priesthood, or priesthood without pure womanhood doesn't spell exaltation."<sup>14</sup>

Sisters, we as women are not diminished by priesthood power; we are magnified by it. I know this is true, for I have experienced it again and again.

Your future husbands and the men with whom you serve will need the support only you can give. You have an inner spiritual strength that President James E. Faust said equals and even surpasses that of men.<sup>15</sup> Do not abdicate your spiritual responsibility. Your faith will preach compelling sermons. No amount of time in front of the mirror will make you as attractive as having the Holy Ghost with you. Bless your family and the Church as only a woman of God can—with virtue, faith, integrity, and constant compassion.

### **Counsel for young priesthood holders**

Young men, your ordination to the priesthood is a grand privilege and responsibility—and not a license to dominate. Be unfailingly worthy to exercise this godly power, which is given you to be of service. A man is never more magnificent than when he is guided by the Spirit to honor the priesthood he holds.

If you will marry a virtuous woman who can hear the voice of the Lord, she will bless your life every day of your life. Consider Eve. She was the first to see that the fruit of the tree was good, and after partaking, she "gave unto her husband . . . , and he did eat."<sup>16</sup> Were it not for Eve, our progression would have ceased.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated that her act was “a glorious necessity [that opened] the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same.”<sup>17</sup>

Young men, you will preside at home and in the Church. But be humble enough to listen to and learn from the women in your life. They will provide insight, balance, and unique wisdom. And when challenges come, you will see how resilient a woman committed to God the Father and Jesus Christ is.

### **Divine pattern strengthens the Church**

This divine pattern for men and women that strengthens marriages and families also fortifies the Church. For the Church cannot achieve the full measure of its creation unless both faithful men who bear the priesthood and righteous women who rejoice in serving under the direction of the priesthood work together. Time and again I have experienced this joy.

I think of a meeting in Brazil where I had a translator who was unsure of her ability to convert my English into Portuguese. But as it turned out, she and I communicated with ease. After the meeting I found out why. I learned that not only had the General Authority who presided been literally on the edge of his seat behind us the entire meeting, prompting the translator when necessary, but he had also assigned another priesthood leader to pray for both of us throughout the meeting.

That General Authority created a safety net of support so that I could fulfill the assignment he had given me. Such a circle of support has no end, because there is no end to the good works of righteous men and women who respect each other and who thrust in their sickles and reap, side by side, in the Lord's vineyard. If we are going to build the kingdom of God, we as men and women of God must build each other. There is no challenge—with activation, retention, families, or anything—that we can't solve when we counsel to-

gether in councils and help each other lift the load.

### **Unite in righteousness**

My dear young friends, learn the Lord's pattern for men and women now. Ponder the scriptural accounts of Adam and Eve and see what the Lord will teach you that will strengthen your marriage, your family, and your Church service. Recent devastating events in the United States seem to indicate difficult days ahead. But they are days that will be filled with confidence and courage if the men and women of your generation unite in righteousness as never before. There is no limit to what you can accomplish if you will work together, equally yoked, under the guidance of the priesthood.

Our Father's patterns help us avoid deception. Look to the Lord and not to the world for your ideas and ideals about men and women. For, my young friends, you are the mothers, fathers, and leaders who were reserved for this unprecedented time because our Father knows you, and He knows you have what it takes to face the world and to be fearless in building the kingdom. Do it together, for it is not good for man or woman to be alone. Lift each other, and together you will be able to lift the beautiful burdens of mortality and have glory added upon your heads forever.<sup>18</sup> The Lord must have righteous men and righteous women to build His kingdom. I know that this is so. God is our Father. His Only Begotten Son is the Christ. This is Their work and Their glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Ecclesiastes 4:9.
2. Moses 3:18; see also Abraham 5:14.
3. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
4. 1 Peter 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
6. See Moses 5:1.
7. See Moses 5:27.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:20.
9. See Moses 5:12.

10. Moses 5:4.
11. Moses 5:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:19–20.
14. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (1996), 292.
15. See “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 101.
16. Moses 4:12.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 98; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73.
18. See Abraham 3:26.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A turning to fervent, heartfelt prayer

The world seems to be in commotion. There are wars and rumors of wars. The economies of whole continents are faltering. Crops are failing from lack of rain in places all over the earth. And the people in peril have flooded heaven with prayers. In public and in private, they are petitioning God for help, for comfort, and for direction.

You have probably noticed, as I have in recent days, that prayers have not only become more numerous but more heartfelt. I often am seated on the stand in a meeting near the person who has been asked to pray. I have listened recently with wonder. The words spoken are clearly inspired by God, both eloquent and wise. And the tone is that of a loving child seeking help, not as we might from an earthly parent but from an all-powerful Heavenly Father who knows our needs before we ask.

Such a turning to fervent prayer when the world seems out of joint is as old as mankind. In times of tragedy and danger, people turn to God in prayer. Even the ancient King David would recognize what is happening. You remember his words from the book of Psalms:

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”<sup>1</sup>

### “I hope that the change lasts”

The great increase in heartfelt prayer, and the public acceptance of it, has been remarkable to me and to others. More than once in recent days, someone has said to me with great intensity and with a sound of worry in the voice, “I hope that the change lasts.”

That worry is justified. Our own personal experience and God’s record of His dealing with His children teaches us that. Dependence upon God can fade quickly when prayers are answered. And when the trouble lessens, so do the prayers. The Book of Mormon repeats that sad story over and over again.

### The awful pattern of forgetting God

From the book of Helaman, “O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?”<sup>2</sup> And later from the same book, after God had answered prayers with gracious kindness, the awful pattern is described again:

“And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

“Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver,

and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

“And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.”<sup>3</sup>

### **The reasons why some forget God**

And now, from the next words of that same scripture, we learn why it is we forget so easily the source of our blessings and cease to feel our need to pray with faith:

“O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

“Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom’s paths!

“Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.”<sup>4</sup>

From those three short verses of scripture, we see three causes for the sad drift away from humble prayer. First, while God

implores us to pray, the enemy of our souls belittles and then derides it. The warning from 2 Nephi is true:

“And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.”<sup>5</sup>

Second, God is forgotten out of vanity. A little prosperity and peace, or even a turn slightly for the better, can bring us feelings of self-sufficiency. We can feel quickly that we are in control of our lives, that the change for the better is our own doing, not that of a God who communicates to us through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Pride creates a noise within us which makes the quiet voice of the Spirit hard to hear. And soon, in our vanity, we no longer even listen for it. We can come quickly to think we don’t need it.

The third cause is rooted deeply within us. We are spirit children of a loving Heavenly Father, who placed us in mortality to see if we would choose—freely choose—to keep His commandments and come unto His Beloved Son. They do not compel us. They cannot, for that would interfere with the plan of happiness. And so there is in us a God-given desire to be responsible for our own choices.

### **Be submissive, putting off the natural man**

That desire to make our own choices is part of the upward pull toward eternal life. But it can, if we see life only through our mortal eyes, make dependence on God difficult or even impossible when we feel such a powerful desire to be independent. This true doctrine can sound hard:

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of



Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”<sup>6</sup>

Those who submit like a child do it because they know that the Father wants only the happiness of His children and that only He knows the way. That is the testimony we must have to keep praying like a submissive child, in the good times as well as the times of trouble.

### **What it means to be diligent in prayer**

With that faith we will be able to pray for what we want and appreciate whatever we get. Only with that faith will we pray with the diligence God requires. When God has commanded us to pray, He has used words like “pray unceasingly” and “pray always” and “mighty prayer.”

Those commands do not require using many words. In fact, the Savior has told us that we need not multiply words when we pray. The diligence in prayer which God requires does not take flowery speech nor long hours of solitude. That is taught clearly in Alma in the Book of Mormon:

“Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Joseph's example of diligence in prayer**

Our hearts can be drawn out to God only when they are filled with love for Him and trust in His goodness. Joseph Smith, even as a boy, gave us an example of how we can come to pray from a heart filled with the love of God and then pray unceasingly through a life filled with trials and blessings.

Joseph started for the grove to pray with faith that a loving God would answer his prayer and relieve his confusion. He gained that assurance reading the word of

God and receiving a witness that it was true. He said that he read in James, “Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”<sup>8</sup> His faith to ask of God in prayer came after pondering a scripture which assured him of God's loving nature. He prayed, as we must, with faith in a loving God.

He prayed with the intent not only to listen but to obey. He did not ask only to know the truth. He was committed to act upon whatever God would communicate to him. His written account makes clear that he prayed with real intent, determined to comply with whatever answer he received. He wrote:

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.”<sup>9</sup>

The Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him in answer to his prayer. And he was told how to act, as he had desired. He obeyed like a child. He was told to join none of the churches. He did as he was told. And because of his faithfulness, in the days and months and years ahead his prayers were answered with a flood of light and truth. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the keys of the kingdom of God were restored to the earth. His humble dependence on God led to the Restoration of the gospel, with authority and sacred ordinances. Because of that Restoration, we have the chance to choose the most priceless independence to be free of the bondage of sin through

the cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Joseph Smith's mission was unique, yet his humble prayer can be a helpful model for us. He began, as we must, with faith in a loving God who can and wants to communicate with us and help us. That faith was rooted in impressions which came to him as he pondered the words of God's servants in the scriptures.

We can and must go often and carefully to the word of God. If we become casual in our study of the scriptures, we will become casual in our prayers. We may not cease to pray, but our prayers will become more repetitive, more mechanical, lacking real intent. Our hearts cannot be drawn out to a God we do not know, and the scriptures and the words of living prophets help us know Him. As we know Him better, we love Him more.

We must also serve Him to love Him. Joseph Smith did that, finally surrendering life itself in His service. Joseph prayed with the intent to obey. That obedience always includes service to others. Service in God's work allows us to feel a part of what He feels and come to know Him.

"For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?"<sup>10</sup> As our love for Him increases, so will our desire to approach the Father in prayer.

### Ensuring we do not drift from prayer

The words and the music of this conference will lead you to do what will strengthen you against the danger of a drift away from heartfelt prayer. From what you hear you will feel promptings to go to the scriptures. Follow the promptings. You will be reminded in this conference of service you committed to give when you entered the waters of baptism. Choose to obey.

If you ponder the scriptures and begin to do what you covenanted with God to do, I can promise you that you will feel more love for God and more of His love for you. And with that, your prayers will come from the heart, full of thanks and of pleading. You will feel a greater dependence on God. You will find the courage and the determination to act in His service, without fear and with peace in your heart. You will pray always. And you will not forget Him, no matter what the future brings.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. He loves us. He hears our prayers, and He answers with what is best for us. As we come to know Him through His words and in His service, we will love Him more. I know that is true.

The fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the true Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of the priesthood are only in this Church. I know as surely as I live that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds and exercises the keys on the earth. Jesus Christ lives—I know that—and He leads His Church today. He will teach you through His servants in this conference.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Psalm 9:9–10.
2. Helaman 7:20.
3. Helaman 12:1–3.
4. Helaman 12:4–6.
5. 2 Nephi 32:8.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Alma 34:27.
8. James 1:5; see Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:12.
10. Mosiah 5:13.

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The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

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### President Monson

The choir has sung "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

As you leave this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided during this session.

## President James E. Faust

### The incomparable Atonement

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I come humbly to this pulpit this morning because I wish to speak about the greatest event in all history. That singular event was the incomparable Atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. This was the most transcendent act that has ever taken place, yet it is the most difficult to understand.

My reason for wanting to learn all I can about the Atonement is partly selfish: Our salvation depends on believing in and accepting the Atonement.<sup>1</sup> Such acceptance requires a continual effort to understand it more fully. The Atonement advances our mortal course of learning by making it possible for our natures to become perfect.<sup>2</sup> All of us have sinned and need to repent to fully pay *our* part of the debt. When we sincerely repent, the Savior's magnificent Atonement pays the *rest* of that debt.<sup>3</sup>

Paul gave a simple explanation for the need of the Atonement: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ was appointed and foreordained to be our Redeemer before the world was formed. With His divine sonship, His sinless life, the shedding of His blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, His excruciating death on the cross and subsequent bodily Resurrection from the grave, He became the author of our

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will be offered by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

salvation and made a perfect Atonement for all mankind.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding what we can of the Atonement and the Resurrection of Christ helps us obtain a knowledge of Him and of His mission.<sup>6</sup> Any increase in our understanding of His atoning sacrifice draws us closer to Him. Literally, the Atonement means to be "at one" with Him. The nature of the Atonement and its effects is so infinite, so unfathomable, and so profound that it lies beyond the knowledge and comprehension of mortal man.

I am profoundly grateful for the principle of saving grace. Many people think they need only confess that Jesus is the Christ and then they are saved by grace alone. We cannot be saved by grace alone, "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after* all we can do."<sup>7</sup>

### A parable to help us understand the Atonement

Some years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley told "something of a parable" about "a one room school house in the mountains of Virginia where the boys were so rough no teacher had been able to handle them.

"Then one day an inexperienced young teacher applied. He was told that every teacher had received an awful beating, but the teacher accepted the risk. The first day of school the teacher asked the

boys to establish their own rules and the penalty for breaking the rules. The class came up with 10 rules, which were written on the blackboard. Then the teacher asked, 'What shall we do with one who breaks the rules?'

"'Beat him across the back ten times without his coat on,' came the response.

"A day or so later, . . . the lunch of a big student, named Tom, was stolen. 'The thief was located—a little hungry fellow, about ten years old.'

"As Little Jim came up to take his licking, he pleaded to keep his coat on. 'Take your coat off,' the teacher said. 'You helped make the rules!'

"The boy took off the coat. He had no shirt and revealed a bony little crippled body. As the teacher hesitated with the rod, Big Tom jumped to his feet and volunteered to take the boy's licking.

"Very well, there is a certain law that one can become a substitute for another. Are you all agreed?' the teacher asked.

"After five strokes across Tom's back, the rod broke. The class was sobbing. 'Little Jim had reached up and caught Tom with both arms around his neck. "Tom, I'm sorry that I stole your lunch, but I was awful hungry. Tom, I will love you till I die for taking my licking for me! Yes, I will love you forever!"' "8

President Hinckley then quoted Isaiah:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."9

### **The Savior's suffering for us**

No man knows the full weight of what our Savior bore, but by the power of the Holy Ghost we can know something of the supernal gift He gave us.<sup>10</sup> In the words of our sacrament hymn:

We may not know, we cannot tell,  
What pains he had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.<sup>11</sup>

He suffered so much pain, "indescribable anguish," and "overpowering torture"<sup>12</sup> for our sake. His profound suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He took upon Himself all the sins of all other mortals, caused Him "to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit."<sup>13</sup> "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly,"<sup>14</sup> saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."<sup>15</sup> He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and denied by Peter. He was mocked by the chief priests and officers; He was stripped, smitten, spat upon, and scourged in the judgment hall.<sup>16</sup>

He was led to Golgotha, where nails were driven into His hands and feet. He hung in agony for hours on a wooden cross bearing the title written by Pilate: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."<sup>17</sup> Darkness came, and "about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>18</sup> No one could help Him; He was treading the winepress alone.<sup>19</sup>

Then "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."<sup>20</sup> "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."<sup>21</sup> "The earth did quake," and "when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."<sup>22</sup> In the words of the hymn, "Let me not forget, O Savior, / Thou didst bleed and die for me."<sup>23</sup> I wonder how many drops were shed for me.

What He did could be done only by Deity. As the Only Begotten Son of the

Father in the flesh, Jesus inherited divine attributes. He was the only person ever born into mortality who could perform this most significant and supernal act. As the only sinless Man who ever lived on this earth, He was not subject to spiritual death. Because of His godhood, He also possessed power over physical death. Thus He did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He broke the cold grasp of death. He also made it possible for us to have the supreme and serene comfort of the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>24</sup>

### **Blessings of Atonement and Resurrection**

The Atonement and the Resurrection accomplish many things. The Atonement cleanses us of sin on condition of our repentance. Repentance is the condition on which mercy is extended.<sup>25</sup> After all we can do to pay to the uttermost farthing and make right our wrongs, the Savior's grace is activated in our lives through the Atonement, which purifies us and can perfect us.<sup>26</sup> Christ's Resurrection overcame death and gave us the assurance of life after death. Said He, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."<sup>27</sup> The Resurrection is unconditional and applies to all who have ever lived and ever will live.<sup>28</sup> It is a free gift. President John Taylor described this well when he said:

"The tombs will be opened and the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall come forth, they who have done good to the resurrection of the just, and they who have done evil to the resurrection of the unjust."<sup>29</sup>

With reference to our mortal acts and the Atonement, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. contributed this valuable insight when he said:

"I feel that [the Savior] will give that punishment which is the very least that our transgression will justify. I believe that he will bring into his justice all of the infinite love and blessing and mercy and

kindness and understanding which he has. . . .

"And on the other hand, I believe that when it comes to making the rewards for our good conduct, he will give us the maximum that it is possible to give, having in mind the offense which we have committed."<sup>30</sup>

As Isaiah wrote, if we will return unto the Lord, "he will abundantly pardon."<sup>31</sup>

We are commanded to remember the singular events of the mediation, Crucifixion, and Atonement by partaking of the sacrament weekly. In the spirit of the sacrament prayers, we partake of the bread and water in remembrance of the body and the blood sacrificed for us, and we are to remember Him and keep His commandments so that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.

Our Redeemer took upon Himself all the sins, pains, infirmities, and sicknesses of all who have ever lived and will ever live.<sup>32</sup> No one has ever suffered in any degree what He did. He knows our mortal trials by firsthand experience. It is a bit like us trying to climb Mount Everest and only getting up the first few feet. But He has climbed all 29,000 feet to the top of the mountain. He suffered more than any other mortal could.

### **Atonement is source of healing for victims**

The Atonement not only benefits the sinner but also benefits those sinned against—that is, the victims. By our forgiving "those who trespass against us" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13), the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort to those of us who have been innocently victimized by the sins of others. The basic source for the healing of the soul is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is true whether it be from the pain of a personal tragedy or a terrible national calamity such as we have recently experienced in New York and Washington, D.C., and near Pittsburgh.

A sister who had been through a painful divorce wrote of her experience in drawing from the Atonement. She said: "Our divorce . . . did not release me from the obligation to forgive. I truly wanted to do it, but it was as if I had been commanded to do something of which I was simply incapable." Her bishop gave her some sound advice: "Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes, welcome it in." Many months passed as this struggle to forgive continued. She recalled:

"During those long, prayerful moments . . . I tapped into a life-giving source of comfort from my loving Heavenly Father. I sense that he was not standing by glaring at me for not having accomplished forgiveness yet; rather he was sorrowing with me as I wept. . . .

"In the final analysis, what happened in my heart is for me an amazing and miraculous evidence of the Atonement of Christ. I had always viewed the Atonement as a means of making repentance work for the sinner. I had not realized that it also makes it possible for the one sinned against to receive into his or her heart the sweet peace of forgiving."<sup>33</sup>

The injured should do what they can to work through their trials, and the Savior will "succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>34</sup> He will help us carry our burdens. Some injuries are so hurtful and deep that they cannot be healed without help from a higher power and hope for perfect justice and restitution in the next life. Since the Savior has suffered anything and everything that we could ever feel or experience,<sup>35</sup> He can help the weak to become stronger. He has personally experienced all of it. He understands our pain and will walk with us even in our darkest hours.

### Becoming one with Him

We long for the ultimate blessing of the Atonement—to become one with Him, to be in His divine presence, to be

called individually by name as He warmly welcomes us home with a radiant smile, beckoning us with open arms to be enfolded in His boundless love.<sup>36</sup> How gloriously sublime this experience will be if we can feel worthy enough to be in His presence! The free gift of His great atoning sacrifice for each of us is the only way we can be exalted enough to stand before Him and see Him face-to-face. The overwhelming message of the Atonement is the perfect love the Savior has for each and all of us. It is a love which is full of mercy, patience, grace, equity, long-suffering, and, above all, forgiving.

The evil influence of Satan would destroy any hope we have in overcoming our mistakes. He would have us feel that we are lost and that there is no hope. In contrast, Jesus reaches down to us to lift us up. Through our repentance and the gift of the Atonement, we can prepare to be worthy to stand in His presence. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Mosiah 4:6–7.
2. See Moroni 10:32.
3. See 2 Nephi 25:23.
4. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
5. See Bible Dictionary, "Atonement," 617.
6. See Jacob 4:12.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23; italics added.
8. "Pres. Hinckley: Christmas a Result of Redeeming Christ," *Church News*, 10 Dec. 1994, 4.
9. Isaiah 53:4–5.
10. See 1 Corinthians 12:3.
11. "There Is a Green Hill Far Away," *Hymns*, no. 194.
12. John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 150.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
14. Luke 22:44.
15. Matthew 26:42.
16. See Matthew 26:47–75; 27:28–31; John 18:28, 33; 19:1–3.
17. John 19:19.
18. Matthew 27:46.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:50.

20. Matthew 27:50.
21. John 19:34.
22. Matthew 27:51, 54.
23. "In Humility, Our Savior," *Hymns*, no. 172.
24. See John 15:26.
25. See Alma 42:22–25.
26. See 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 34:15–16; 42:22–24; Moroni 10:32–33.
27. John 11:25.
28. See Acts 24:15.
29. *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 118; see also John 5:28–29.
30. "As Ye Sow . . .," Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (3 May 1955), 7.

31. Isaiah 55:7.
32. See Alma 7:11–12.
33. Name Withheld, "My Journey to Forgiving," *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 42–43.
34. Alma 7:12.
35. See Alma 7:11.
36. See Alma 26:15; Mormon 5:11; 6:17; Moses 7:63.

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The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Bishop Richard C. Edgley offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from Utah County. Steven Kapp Perry directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Utah County, under the direction of Steven Kapp Perry, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy. After the invocation, the choir will sing "I Am a Child of God."

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The choir sang "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the invocation.

The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

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### President Monson

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

Following President Faust, Elders David B. Haight and Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy.

## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders L. Aldin Porter and Marlin K. Jensen as members of the Presidency of the Seventy. It is also proposed that we release Elders L. Aldin Porter, Vaughn J. Feath-

erstone, Rex D. Pinegar, John K. Carmack, and L. Lionel Kendrick as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Richard B. Wirthlin, Richard E. Cook, Wayne M. Hancock, and Ray H. Wood and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Norman C. Boehm, Jess L. Christensen, Dale L. Dransfield, David W. Eka, James E. Griffin, Esteban Guevara, Ronald J. Hammond, Thomas A. Holt, Ernst Husz, Julio H. Jaramillo, Lloyd W. Jones, Seiji Katanuma, J. Grey Larkin, Haruyoshi Nakamura, Karl E. Nelson, Jesús Nieves, Rodrigo Obeso, James S. Olson, Glen A. Overton, William W. Parmley, Steven H. Pond, Michael T. Robinson, Jorge W. Ventura, and Craig T. Vincent. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Marlin K. Jensen, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency; and Elders Robert K. Dellenbach, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madsen as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please signify by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Charles Didier and Cecil O. Samuelson as members of the Presidency of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.



It is proposed that we sustain Carlos J. Garcia, R. Randall Huff, and John W. Yardley as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Cecil O. Samuelson, John H. Groberg, and Richard J. Maynes as the Sunday School general presidency and Elders F. Melvin Hammond, Glenn L. Pace, and Spencer J. Condie as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

## Elder David B. Haight

I hope that you had a little burning in your heart as I did when I raised my hand in sustaining President Hinckley as President of the Church and as prophet, seer, and revelator, and the other officers that have been presented to you. What a wonderful and grand opportunity that is for all of us to be able to sustain our living prophet upon the earth today—but not just to sit there and raise your hand in a haphazard way, but to feel it in your heart and soul that you not only sustain him but you endorse what he has been doing and what he has done for us in representing us to the world. We are thankful for the marvelous and inspired way in which he has communicated and spoken to the world, particularly in these last few days and weeks.

### Conference helps us keep our lives in tune

A few years ago, when Arturo Toscanini was musical director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in New York City, he had a Saturday afternoon radio broadcast. And one day he received in his mail a crumpled little note on some brownish paper which read:

"Dear Mr. Toscanini, I am a lonely shepherd in the mountains of Wyoming. I have two prized possessions: an old violin and a battery radio. And the

batteries are getting weak and beginning to run down on my radio, and my violin is so out of tune I can't play it anymore. Would you please sound an A next Saturday on your program?"

The next week on the program, Arturo Toscanini announced: "To a new-found friend in the mountains of Wyoming, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra is now, all together and in unison, going to sound a perfect A." And they sounded the perfect A. Then that lonely little man was able to tune the A string and then the E string and the D and the G from that perfect A.

Isn't it interesting to reflect in our own lives and in the lives of the many people who may hear me at this time—those whose violin or lives may be a little out of tune—that we are able to come to a general conference of the Church and hear the marvelous messages that are spoken? Those of us who have the opportunity to speak here pray mightily that we would have the energy and the strength and the vitality even as I do, as I enter the twilight of my life, to stand and bear witness of the truthfulness of this work—because I am a witness of it.

I have had the opportunity—as many of you have and as many of you would wish to have—of being raised in a Mormon home and to be a product of the

Church, and to have had the opportunity to go out and live in the world and rub shoulders with people in many places, whether it would be in government or the corporate world or whatever, but to associate with people and to be able to share with them the feelings that you have in your heart.

### **President Hinckley's inspired leadership**

Often President Hinckley has said to us in some of our meetings, and I think he has said it publicly, that behind his desk he has a picture of Brigham Young. Sometimes when President Hinckley has had a busy day and a hard day of making many, many difficult decisions, he turns in his chair and looks up at Brigham's picture behind him and either asks out loud or in his own mind says, "Brother Brigham, what would you have done?" or "What advice would you give to me?"

Think of what has happened in the last few years. You all know so well all of the inspiration and the direction that have come to President Hinckley in the expansion of the Church—the building of temples and the remodeling of the old Hotel Utah into that marvelous building, now the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, and for this unusual structure, the Conference Center, that we're in today—probably nothing like it in the world. And for us who have for now a number of years worked with and by the side of and have listened to and been associated with President Hinckley, what a marvelous experience we've had and blessing in our lives as we have seen and felt and been part of the inspired expansion that has been moving forward.

### **Brigham Young's inspired leadership**

As we look at Brigham Young and reflect upon the inspiration and direction that came to that most unusual man, we recall how he was able to fill the tragic void caused by the death of the Prophet

Joseph Smith, how he stepped in and was able under inspiration and revelation to guide and direct the closing of Nauvoo and the planning of the trip west. We remember the continued work there at that time on the Nauvoo Temple and the way that was organized to move forward, with the wagon trains crossing the West and into the Salt Lake Valley into what would become the Zion where they could worship and teach and preach and build the meetinghouses and all that would be needed for this civilization and for this culture that we have, to expand and grow here.

Think of the inspiration that came to the prophet Brigham Young for those people not to just build up a big city in Salt Lake, but to move out into these other settlements. He had the genius to have people go out and look for the valleys and the areas away from Salt Lake City where the pioneers who would pour into this valley could go and settle and make their homes and build cities and communities and build their personalities and their characters and develop the talents that would be theirs. So rather than having a large city in Salt Lake, under his leadership some 360 communities were developed out in Wyoming and Nevada and Arizona and southern Idaho as well as in Utah.

As people moved out and set up in these little communities, they developed their talents and abilities by serving on school boards and on town councils or became leading people in a little town. They became citizens of that area, and they started building schools and expanding those communities. We see what has happened in these areas that Brigham Young envisioned and which he helped set in motion. Just think of how that has developed—of the developing of a settlement, for example, in Las Vegas, Nevada, so that people could go down to San Bernardino, California. The people could come by ship into San Pedro, California,

go to San Bernardino to be outfitted and helped with the equipment necessary to come into this valley, and then into the outlying communities, down into Sanpete County or up into Idaho or elsewhere.

### **Faithful pioneer ancestors**

I have become a product of that, because when my mother's family arrived here in Salt Lake City, they were sent out to Tooele to settle. Then later they were sent up into Idaho, where a sawmill and a gristmill needed to be built. My father's family had settled in Farmington, Utah, part of this colonization that I'm referring to—the colonization that made people stronger and gave them opportunities. Rather than being lost in a big city, they were asked to move to a smaller community where they could develop their ability and where there would be more schools and a need for more schoolteachers and where people with talent would develop their ability. Out of all of this, my family were asked to leave Farmington and Tooele, to sell their green acres, and go out into southern Idaho, where there was nothing at that time but sagebrush.

In a little settlement of that kind, my mother and father fell in love. By the time they were 20 years old and ready to be married, where would they be married? In the Logan Utah Temple. How would they get there? By buggy. How long would it take? Well, five or six or seven days. Highways and good roads? Of course not. They went by roads made by wagons going over the sagebrush and through the bushes and over the rocks. Where would they be married? Where would they be sealed? Only one place—the temple. They went by buggy.

That became part of my heritage. And so people grew up in these little towns. Then the Church decided to open some academies, and they opened some 30 of them out in these areas far away. One of those little academies was opened in our

town, and it became an area where many from neighboring areas would move into that little town to get a higher education. Of course, the higher education was only a high school, but it was referred to as an academy.

### **Blessings of prophetic leadership**

I'm referring to the inspiration that came to the prophet Brigham Young years ago in the settlement, in the development of this intermountain area now surrounding Salt Lake City. And think of who we are today and how this has grown and the blessing that has come into our lives to have President Hinckley as our prophet, seer, and revelator and leader and to envision what is happening and what will be happening ahead of us if we just have the faith to be able to continue to do what has been started. Think of what is on the way and being done.

### **Our need to develop greater faith**

President Hinckley often speaks to us about developing more faith with our people. That faith is a result of our living the principles of the gospel, living the way we should and raising our children as we should, and seeing them grow and develop their character and personality in a way that they become an example of what we believe in and what we have a hope to do and accomplish.

You'll all remember the man who had a son who was a lunatic. And he approached the Savior and asked if the Savior would bless the boy to drive that evil spirit from his son. And the man told the Savior, "I've asked your disciples to do this, but they haven't been able to do it." The Savior blessed that little boy. The evil spirit immediately departed, and the Savior's disciples came to him and said, "Why couldn't we do it? Why weren't we able to?" (See Matthew 17:14–21.) The Savior also had said, "O ye of little faith" (Matthew 16:8).

If ye had but the faith of a tiny—I'm trying to think of the name of that little tree. [President Hinckley says, "Mustard."] Mustard! Thank you, President. (I keep the President around to help me.) If you had but the faith of a mustard seed. Perhaps not many of you have seen a mustard seed. A few years ago in Jerusalem we were in a car with a driver, and he said, "Oh, there's a mustard tree." And I said, "Let's see it." We got out to look at that mustard tree, and it had a little pod on it, and I was able to open the pod, which was like those on a locust tree, and see those tiny little seeds, not much larger than a grain of pepper.

Just imagine the analogy that the Savior was teaching the people. If you only had as much faith as that little tiny mustard seed—and I held it in my hand, and I could hardly see it—if you had that much faith you would say to the mountain, "Move hence," and it would move, if you

had that much faith (see Matthew 17:20). "O ye of little faith," he told us.

So what we need is the faith of Brigham Young and the faith of Gordon B. Hinckley and the faith of people who are our prophets and leaders.

God lives. I know He's real, that He is our Father, and I know that He loves us. I know that. And I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I have felt of that influence. I'm a witness to it. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith and all of the historical accounts we have of what he did as the instrument of the Restoration are true and that the prophets down through the years and including President Hinckley are called of God. The work is true. I leave you my love, my witness, and my testimony that burns in my heart. All the days of my life I hope to be able to tell somebody and help somebody understand that this work is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a great privilege for me to stand here today and bear my testimony as to the truth of the gospel that has been restored. We have just listened to Elder David B. Haight—95 years of age. I just hope my memory is half as good as his at that age—if I live that long.

I rejoice when the Saints assemble. Whether we gather as families in humble homes or by the thousands in huge halls, the heavens rejoice when those who love and honor the name of Jesus Christ gather together to worship in His name.

We all are going through different life experiences. While some are filled with joy today, others feel as though their hearts could burst with sorrow. Some feel as though the world is their oyster; others feel as though they were the oyster itself, plucked from the ocean, cracked open, and robbed of all that is precious to them.

No matter your station, no matter your emotional or spiritual state of mind, I would like to offer counsel to you that may be of use, regardless of where you are in your sojourn through this mortal life.

Certainly we have much to be grateful for. And I think if we will consider the blessings we have, we will forget some of our worries. Certainly serenity and joy will come to you if you realize the blessings we have as a Church under the leadership of our wonderful President, President Gordon B. Hinckley. It will help us a great deal.

### A blind man's ascent of Mount Everest

Recently I read about Erik Weiheymayer, a 33-year-old man who dreamed of climbing Mount Everest, a feat that defies many of the world's most expert climbers. In fact, nearly 90 percent of those who at-

tempt the climb never reach the summit. Temperatures sink lower than 30 degrees below zero. Besides extreme cold, 100-mile-per-hour winds, deadly crevasses, and avalanches, the climber must overcome the challenges of high altitude, lack of oxygen, and perhaps unsanitary food and water. Since 1953, at least 165 climbers have died in the attempt to scale the 29,000-foot-high summit.

In spite of the risks, hundreds line up each year to make the ascent, Erik among them. But there is an important difference between Erik and every other climber who had attempted to ascend before: Erik is totally blind.

When Erik was 13 years of age, he lost his sight as a result of a hereditary disease of the retina. Although he could no longer do many of the things he wanted to, he was determined not to waste his life feeling depressed and useless. He then began to stretch his limits.

At age 16 he discovered rock climbing. By feeling the face of the rock, he found handholds and footholds that allowed him to climb. Sixteen years later, he began his ascent up Mount Everest. The story of his climb, as you might imagine, was filled with many harrowing and life-threatening challenges. But Erik eventually scaled the south summit and took his place with those who had gone before him, one of the few to stand on top of the highest mountain on the face of the earth.

When asked how he did it, Erik said, "I just kept thinking . . . keep your mind focused. Don't let all that doubt and fear and frustration sort of get in the way." Then, most important, he said, "Just take each day step by step."<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Erik conquered Everest by simply putting one foot in front of the other. And he continued to do this until he reached the top.

### **Overcoming our obstacles step by step**

Like Erik, we may have obstacles that would hold us back. We may even make

excuses why we can't do what we want to do. Perhaps when we are tempted to justify our own lack of achievement, we can remember Erik, who, in spite of having lost his sight, accomplished what many thought was impossible simply by continuing to put one foot in front of the other.

An old proverb states that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Sometimes we make the process more complicated than we need to. We will never make a journey of a thousand miles by fretting about how long it will take or how hard it will be. We make the journey by taking each day step by step and then repeating it again and again until we reach our destination.

### **Climbing higher spiritually step by step**

The same principle applies to how you and I can climb to higher spirituality.

Our Heavenly Father knows that we must begin our climb from where we are. "When you climb up a ladder," the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them."<sup>2</sup>

### **Steadiness, not speed, is most important**

Our Heavenly Father loves each one of us and understands that this process of climbing higher takes preparation, time, and commitment. He understands that we will make mistakes at times, that we will stumble, that we will become discouraged and perhaps even wish to give up and say to ourselves it is not worth the struggle.

We know it is worth the effort, for the prize, which is eternal life, is "the greatest of all the gifts of God."<sup>3</sup> And to qualify, we must take one step after another and

keep going to gain the spiritual heights we aspire to reach.

An eternal principle is revealed in holy writ: "It is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize."<sup>4</sup>

We don't have to be fast; we simply have to be steady and move in the right direction. We have to do the best we can, one step after another.

In my younger days I loved to run. Although it may be hard for you to believe it, I did. And I did win a few races. I'm not so fast anymore. In fact, I'm not sure how well I would do in a race if the only contestants were the members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

My ability to run is not so swift now. While I am looking forward to that future time when, with a resurrected body, I can once again sprint over a field and feel the wind blowing through my hair, I do not dwell on the fact that I cannot do it now. That would be unwise. Instead, I take the steps that I can take. Even with the limitations of age, I can still take one step at a time. To do what I can is all my Heavenly Father now requires of me. And it is all He requires of you, regardless of your disabilities, limitations, or insecurities.

### **Strive to be your best, not better than others**

John Wooden was perhaps the greatest college basketball coach in the history of the game. He had four full undefeated seasons. His teams won 10 national championships. At one point he had a streak of 88 consecutive wins.<sup>5</sup>

One of the first things Coach Wooden drilled into his players was something his father had taught him when he was a boy growing up on a farm. "Don't worry much about trying to be better than someone else," his father said. "Learn from others, yes. But don't just try to be better than they are. You have no control over that.

Instead try, and try very hard, to be the best that you can be. That you have control over."<sup>6</sup>

Let me cite a hypothetical example of a dear sister in any ward, the one who has perfect children who never cause a disturbance in church. She is the one working on her 20th generation in her family history, keeps an immaculate home, has memorized the book of Mark, and makes wool sweaters for the orphaned children in Romania. No disrespect, of course, intended for any of these worthy goals. Now, when you get tempted to throw your hands in the air and give up because of this dear sister, please remember you're not competing with her any more than I'm competing with the members of the Quorum of the Twelve in winning a 50-yard dash.

The only thing you need to worry about is striving to be the best you can be. And how do you do that? You keep your eye on the goals that matter most in life, and you move toward them step by step.

### **Guides to help us along the path**

I know many feel that the path is hard and the way is dark. But like Erik, the courageous mountain climber, we are not left without a guide.

We have scriptures that reveal the word of God to mankind through the ages. When we feast upon the word of God, we open our minds to eternal truths and our hearts to the gentle whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Truly God's word, through scriptures and modern-day prophets, is a "lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path."<sup>7</sup>

As we read about the great souls who have preceded us, we learn that they too had times of discouragement and sorrow. We learn that they persevered in spite of hardship, in spite of adversity, sometimes even in spite of their own weaknesses. We learn that they too continued to press forward, one step after another. We can be

like those righteous souls Lehi spoke of who “caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, . . . even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.”<sup>8</sup>

We also have a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. He provides counsel and prophetic direction for us in our day.

Through his counsel and our prayers, we can reach into the heavens and personally commune with the Infinite. Through faith, heaven itself can be moved in our behalf. Doors will be opened and answers received.

### **Joseph Smith endured in walking the path**

Think of Joseph Smith, who, as a young boy surrounded by confusing and contradictory voices, yearned to know which of all the churches was right and true. He too felt blind—surrounded by the darkness of his day. After reading the book of James in the New Testament, he believed the words of the ancient Apostle who said, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”<sup>9</sup> Joseph believed these words, and on a spring morning in 1820 he retired to a grove of trees to lift up his soul in prayer and ask his Heavenly Father for wisdom.

The answer to his prayer filled him with light and direction. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him. Their direction swept away the thick darkness that had seized him and threatened to destroy him. It forever swept away his confusion.

From that moment until his martyrdom nearly a quarter of a century later, Joseph Smith committed himself to the path shown him by the Father and the Son. Consider how painful his days were. Consider the suffering and the persecution he had to endure. Yet he continued,

step by step, never giving up, never doubting that if he only did what he could, his Heavenly Father would make up the rest.

### **Walk in the right direction, step by step**

My brothers and sisters, our time here is so precious and so short. How well I understand the prophet Jacob when he said, “Our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream.”<sup>10</sup>

All too soon our time is finished. While we can—while we have the time to complete our work—let us walk in the right direction, taking one step after another.

That is easy enough. We don’t have to be perfect today. We don’t have to be better than someone else. All we have to do is to be the very best we can.

### **God will be with you, guiding every step**

Though you may feel weary, though you sometimes may not be able to see the way, know that your Father in Heaven will never forsake His righteous followers. He will not leave you comfortless. He will be at your side, yes, guiding you every step of the way.

Listen to these beautiful words written by President Joseph Fielding Smith as he describes this life:

Does the journey seem long,  
The path rugged and steep?  
Are there briars and thorns on the way?  
Do sharp stones cut your feet  
As you struggle to rise  
To the heights thru the heat of the day?

Is your heart faint and sad,  
Your soul weary within,  
As you toil 'neath your burden of care?  
Does the load heavy seem  
You are forced now to lift?  
Is there no one your burden to share?

Let your heart be not faint  
Now the journey's begun;  
There is One who still beckons to you.

So look upward in joy  
And take hold of his hand;  
He will lead you to heights that are  
new—

A land holy and pure,  
Where all trouble doth end,  
And your life shall be free from all sin,  
Where no tears shall be shed,  
For no sorrows remain.

Take his hand and with him enter in.<sup>11</sup>

I hope that we will have the courage to begin climbing our own Mount Everest, that we may progress in life's journey step by step until we reach the best that is within us.

Our Heavenly Father lives and knows and loves each one of us. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all, and yes, the Prince of Peace. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, and President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, seer, and revelator on the earth today. I bear this testi-

mony, and it is my testimony to you that you will be happy and content if you only do your best. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. "Everest Grueling for Blind Man," *Deseret News*, 5 June 2001, A12; see also Karl Taro Greenfeld, "Blind to Failure," *Time*, 18 June 2001.
2. *The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon (1997), 519.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. Mosiah 4:27.
5. See <http://www.coachwooden.com/bio.shtml>
6. <http://www.coachwooden.com/bodysuccess.shtml>
7. Psalm 119:105.
8. 1 Nephi 8:24.
9. James 1:5.
10. Jacob 7:26.
11. "Does the Journey Seem Long?" *Hymns*, no. 127.

## Elder L. Whitney Clayton

### "Help thou mine unbelief"

On one occasion the Savior encountered a great multitude of people who were listening to a discussion between His disciples and the scribes. He then asked the scribes, "What question ye with them?"

A certain man, kneeling down to Him, answered that he had asked the disciples to cast an evil spirit out of his son, but "they could not." The father begged Him, saying, "But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

The Savior then rebuked the evil spirit and charged it to "come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him."<sup>1</sup>

All of us have come face-to-face with difficult, even desperate hours when with tears we have fallen on our knees and pleaded as did this father, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Just as the Savior stood ready to help this father whose son was "sore vexed,"<sup>2</sup> so is He ready to help our unbelief today so that with faith we can survive our mortal struggles and "come off conqueror."<sup>3</sup>

### Faith is developed by obedience

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. It is more than



mere belief.<sup>4</sup> Faith is a "hope for things which are not seen, which are true."<sup>5</sup> "Faith always moves its possessor to . . . physical and mental action."<sup>6</sup> "To have faith in Jesus Christ means to have such trust in him that we obey whatever he commands. There is no faith where there is no obedience."<sup>7</sup>

Faith comes from hearing the word of God and is a spiritual gift.<sup>8</sup> Faith increases when we not only hear, but act on the word of God as well, in obedience to the truths we have been taught.<sup>9</sup>

Mary's reply to the angel's announcement provides an excellent example. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest." Mary then obediently said to Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."<sup>10</sup>

On another occasion, "Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."<sup>11</sup>

After the Savior's Resurrection, Peter and other disciples went "a fishing." However, "that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." He told them to "cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."<sup>12</sup>

We find similar faith-developing obedience in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Following the angel Moroni's all-night-long visits with him in September 1823, Joseph went to work in the morning with his father. Having been awake nearly

all night, he "found [his] strength so exhausted as to render [him] entirely unable" to perform "the necessary labors of the day." His father told him to return home, and he "started with the intention of going to the house; but [his] strength entirely failed [him], and [he] fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything."

When he awoke, he "looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over [his] head, surrounded by light as before." Joseph was commanded to "go to [his] father and tell him of the vision and commandments which [he] had received." Although weary, he obediently "returned to [his] father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him." His father replied "that it was of God, and told [him] to go and do as commanded." Exhausted but obedient, Joseph then "left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told [him] the plates were deposited," a journey of several miles.<sup>13</sup>

### Doing the things that matter most

Each day we decide what we will do and what we will not do, among myriad alternatives. When we choose to obey the commandments cheerfully as our first priority, neither murmuring about nor measuring the things He commands, we become the handmaids of the Lord and fishers of men and cast our nets on the right side of our own ships. We simply go and do the things the Lord has commanded, even when we are weary, trusting that He will help us to do exactly as He asks.<sup>14</sup> As we do so, the Lord helps our unbelief, and our faith becomes powerful, vibrant, and unshakable. The Prophet Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail:

"Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance [or faith], to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."<sup>15</sup>

No matter who we are or where we live, there is much about our daily lives that is routine and repetitive. As we go about this dailiness, we must be deliberate about doing the things that matter most. These must-do things include making room first for the minimum daily requirements of faithful behavior: true obedience, humble prayer, serious scripture study, and selfless service to others. No other daily vitamins strengthen the muscles of our faith as fast as these actions. We also must remember that genuine fasting fosters strong faith. This is especially important as we faithfully seek to fix deeply embedded character flaws which go "not out but by prayer and fasting."<sup>16</sup>

### How to develop strong faith

Developing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a step-by-step, line-upon-line, and precept-upon-precept process. We promote the process of strengthening our faith when we do what is right; increased faith always follows as a consequence.<sup>17</sup> If we exercise our faith daily with prayer, study, and obedience, the Savior helps our unbelief, and our faith becomes a shield to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."<sup>18</sup> Alma taught that we may "withstand every temptation of the devil, with [our] faith on the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup> However, we can neither ignore nor reject the essential ingredients of faith and then expect to reap a rich harvest.

We see countless examples of faith developing in Church members today. As young men, young women, and mature couples accept calls to serve missions, as couples prepare themselves in virtue to be married in the holy temple, as parents train up children in the way they should go,<sup>20</sup> they strengthen their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we keep the Sabbath day holy, magnify our callings, pay tithes and offerings, welcome new members into Church circles, and invite friends and neighbors to learn gospel truths, we

strengthen our faith. When we choose to abandon our sins and repent willingly, and when we fall to our knees in prayer in good times as well as in turbulent times, we develop strong faith.

We then find occurring in our own lives an experience described in the Book of Mormon: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God."<sup>21</sup>

I know that the Savior lives and that He helps our unbelief. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Mark 9:14–29; Matthew 17:14–21.
2. Matthew 17:15.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
4. See Articles of Faith 1:4; Bible Dictionary, "Faith," 669–70.
5. Alma 32:21; see also Hebrews 11:1; Ether 12:6.
6. Bible Dictionary, 670.
7. *Gospel Principles* (1997), 118.
8. See Romans 10:17; Moroni 10:11; Bible Dictionary, 669–70.
9. See Bible Dictionary, 669–70.
10. Luke 1:31–32, 38.
11. Matthew 4:18–20.
12. John 21:3–4, 6.
13. Joseph Smith—History 1:48–50.
14. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.
16. Matthew 17:21; see also Mark 9:29.
17. See Bible Dictionary, 669.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 27:17.
19. Alma 37:33.
20. See Proverbs 22:6.
21. Helaman 3:35.

### President Monson

Thank you, Brethren. I have it on good authority that when Elder Joseph

B. Wirthlin played championship football at the collegiate level, his nickname was "Swiftly."

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Christoffel Golden Jr. and Walter F. Gon-

zález of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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## Elder Christoffel Golden Jr.

### Our Father's plan

In a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith sometime in June 1830, we are told of our Heavenly Father's declared intention: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>1</sup> According to this decree, the Father's desire is to provide all of us with the opportunity to receive a fulness of joy, even the fulness that He possesses in His perfected and glorified state.<sup>2</sup>

### Premortal life

During these momentous latter days, we declare that God our Eternal Father lives. We testify that we existed in His presence, prior to this life, as His spirit children. During our premortal existence we were tutored in conditions that provided us with the opportunity to develop our talents and abilities. In that blessed premortal abode, we were "left to choose good or evil." Alma states that we chose good by exercising "great faith" and performing "good works." Thus, we kept our first estate, while our Father, in turn, fore-ordained us to receive certain privileges in this lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

### Mortal life

Likewise, latter-day revelation reveals that our Heavenly Father ordained a great plan of happiness for all of His spirit children who had kept their first estate.<sup>4</sup> It

embraced the prospect that we could one day become like our Father in Heaven and possess all of the attributes and rights He now enjoys. The Apostle Peter reminded the Saints that our Lord's "divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," so that "ye might be partakers of the divine nature."<sup>5</sup> Peter's statement may be considered bold, and we admit that it would take a lifetime, and more, to accomplish; nevertheless, his thoughts find resonance in the Savior's charge, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."<sup>6</sup>

The Father's plan also required all who had kept their first estate to be tried and tested in a mortal or second estate. In this environment, we are required to act for ourselves and prove to ourselves and to God whether we would keep all of His commandments and overcome sin and opposition.<sup>7</sup>

### The Fall and the Atonement

Since the Fall of Adam and because of the nature of mortal mankind, man developed a predisposition to violate the laws of God and thereby become enslaved to the demands of justice. Nevertheless, because of our Heavenly Father's foreknowledge and through the great plan of happiness, He devised a plan of mercy. It furnished a way for the exacting requirements of justice to be appeased through an infinite Atonement.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus Christ, as the chosen of the Father from the beginning,<sup>9</sup> possessed all the qualifications and attributes required to harmonize the laws of justice and mercy through His Atonement.<sup>10</sup>

The Atonement, King Benjamin taught, allows man to put off the natural man as we yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, it is our testimony that all who come unto Christ by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel are able to exercise faith unto "everlasting salvation and eternal life."<sup>12</sup>

### The Restoration

We also testify that compliance with all of the conditions of the great plan of happiness, after the Great Apostasy, was not possible until our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, reestablished the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>13</sup>

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, declared, "The Prophet Joseph's account of these events is true, that the Father bore witness of the divinity of His Son, that the Son instructed the boy prophet, and that there followed a train of events which led to the organization of 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.'"<sup>14</sup>

It is the heartfelt desire of all the faithful to keep their second estate. We are not left alone to find our way back home. The Lord has set up His kingdom on the earth wherein the elect of God can be gathered.

### Resources to help us return to God

In the Lord's loving care, He has provided us with all of the essential resources required to forge our way through the many pitfalls placed before us by the evil one.<sup>15</sup>

These indispensable resources include the ordinances and covenants of the gospel, in which the power of the Atonement is manifest.<sup>16</sup> We also have the holy

scriptures, which provide us with a standard to discern truth from error.<sup>17</sup>

Importantly, we live in a blessed day in which the Lord has placed His watchmen, the living apostles and prophets, in our midst. They hold all the necessary keys and authority which are essential to administering the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.<sup>18</sup>

Above all, as baptized members of the church of Christ, we have the incomparable gift of the Holy Ghost. The Savior, on the eve of His suffering for our sins, told His disciples that "the Spirit . . . will guide you into all truth."<sup>19</sup>

### Blessings for the faithful

John the Revelator, in heavenly vision, saw the fulfillment of our Father's plan and recorded the condition of those who had come out of great tribulation and had washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. He saw how they who had overcome the world stood before the throne of God and served Him in His temple. The Lord was in their midst, while the faithful hungered and thirsted no more, and God wiped away all the tears from their eyes.<sup>20</sup>

We need not fear but with faith follow our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. Our call to all is to come and receive of the grace and mercy of the Lord, for He is mighty to save and will never forsake us!<sup>21</sup>

May the Lord bless us in this great endeavor, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. See Moses 7:67; Doctrine and Covenants 76:69–70.
3. See Alma 13:3–13; 1 Peter 1:20.
4. See Alma 42:8.
5. 2 Peter 1:3–4.
6. Matthew 5:48; see also 3 Nephi 12:48.
7. See Matthew 7:21; Revelation 3:21; Doctrine and Covenants 98:14–15.

8. See Alma 42:15.
9. See Moses 4:2.
10. See *Doctrines of the Gospel* (Church Educational System student manual, 1986), 22.
11. Mosiah 3:19.
12. Mosiah 5:15; see also Moroni 10:32.
13. See 1 Nephi 11:13–36; 2 Nephi 3:5–11.
14. “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 20–21; Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
15. See Moses 4:3–4; Doctrine and Covenants 93:39.
16. See John 3:5; Mosiah 5:1–2; Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–54.
17. See Alma 4:19; 31:5.
18. See Matthew 10:1–15; Doctrine and Covenants 1:14–15; 21:1–8.
19. John 16:13.
20. Revelation 7:14–17.
21. See Deuteronomy 7:7–18.

## Elder Walter F. González

### Writing gospel principles in our hearts

English is the language of the Restoration, and in this conference session English spoken with an accent symbolizes Church growth all over the world. I'm from South America, where the Church has grown tremendously. When I joined the Church 30 years ago, we had 108,000 members and 6 stakes. At that time we had no temple on our continent. Now we have 2,600,000 members and 560 stakes. Eleven temples are functioning, and two are under construction.

Nephi, the son of Lehi, said: “But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them” (2 Nephi 33:3).

This heartfelt cry is being answered in our day through the Book of Mormon. Nephi was praying that the word he had “written in weakness would be made strong unto [us]; for it persuadeth [us] to do good; it maketh known unto [us] of [our] fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth [us] to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal” (2 Nephi 33:4).

I have seen how the doctrine and gospel principles are guiding more and more members in South America. Our task both in South America and every-

where else continues to be seeking for the principles found in the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and writing them “not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3). Such establishing of gospel principles requires time. Time is required both to be exposed to the truths of the gospel and to apply them in our lives.

For most South American members, our exposure to gospel principles started with devoting time to hearing the discussions and testimonies from the missionaries. We took time to listen, and now we cannot help but feel profound gratitude to the missionaries who served in our countries. Our deep gratitude is not only to the missionaries but also to the families from which they came. (Now thousands of South Americans are sending their own children to serve missions to share the glad tidings of the restored gospel.) Those of us who are first-generation Church members also feel great gratitude for our nonmember parents, who took time to teach us righteous principles that prepared us to recognize and welcome the gospel message.

### Need to apply, not just know, principles

Missionaries initiated the task of learning doctrine and gospel principles; however, maintaining the gospel in our

hearts is an ongoing task which requires time. Knowledge alone is not enough. We must take time to apply the principles in our lives. For example, Nephi knew that the Lord answers our prayers. He applied his knowledge centuries ago and thus brought everlasting blessings upon us today. If we read carefully, we see that Nephi prayed with great faith unto God because he knew that God was going to hear his cry (see 2 Nephi 33:3). How grateful we are for Nephi's taking time to apply his knowledge. How grateful we are that Nephi wrote this knowledge in his heart "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

Like scholarship, discipleship also requires time. Sometimes we recognize that a principle is true, but we don't change our priorities to make time to live the principle. In so doing, we miss valuable opportunities to develop a change of heart as we are taught by the Holy Ghost.

Consider for a moment the example of Enos, who delayed the application of the knowledge he received from his father. He eventually took time to live up to that knowledge; a number of blessings flowed to us because he did. Enos tells us that it was when he went to hunt beasts in the forest that his father's teachings about eternal life and the joy of the Saints deeply touched his heart, so he decided to devote time to praying (see Enos 1:3-4). In divine response to his prayer, the Lord covenanted with Enos that He would bring the records forth unto the Lamanites in His own due time (see Enos 1:16). God answers our prayers. Enos took this principle from the stone tablets and wrote it in the fleshy tablets of his heart, thus obtaining a higher level of knowledge. This brought blessings upon both him and us in this dispensation.

### **Overcome hindrances to living the gospel**

A number of things hinder our good intentions of devoting time to learning and especially to living a gospel principle. For example, the abundance of information about any specific subject which comes from various media can be overwhelming. Such an abundance of information may cause some to be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Each of us can evaluate ourselves, determine which things are preventing us from taking time to live a gospel principle, then repent and make the necessary adjustments so that we can have time to apply that gospel principle in our lives. If we do so, the Lord has promised that we'll have an increased understanding of His truths as Enos did. The Savior declared, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

### **Living the gospel brings joy and peace**

Making time in our lives to learn, to ponder, and especially to practice gospel principles will bring us the joy and peace which come from the Spirit. The Church will continue to blossom in South America and other parts of the world because more and more members will continue to write gospel principles not with ink, but with the Holy Ghost; not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshy tablets of their hearts. I testify that scriptural truths can develop from intellectual appreciation to our becoming Christlike as we take time to incorporate those truths into our lives. I know the Savior is the Living Christ. Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Miraculous growth of the Church today

Surely and steadily The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moves across the earth. In Daniel's language it is "the stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands."<sup>1</sup> Isaiah described what he foresaw as "a marvellous work and a wonder."<sup>2</sup> It is a wonder! The restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ is filled with miracles, revelations, manifestations of every kind. Many of those have come in our lifetime.

I was 17 years old before there was any stake of Zion anywhere outside North America. There are now well over 1,000 stakes on those distant continents and isles of the sea. We now have 125 temples operating or announced, more than half of which (64) are outside the United States. Again, I was nearly 15 before there was even one temple beyond the states and provinces of the USA and Canada.

We have lived to see the revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy males of appropriate age, a blessing which has accelerated the work in many parts of the world. We have lived to see the publication of our scriptures, wholly or in part, in nearly 100 languages. We have lived to see the long-awaited creation of the Quorums of the Seventy, with great men drawn from many nations and, in turn, deployed to serve in many nations. Most recently President Hinckley has announced a Perpetual Education Fund that has the potential to bless many in even the most distant locations of the earth eventually. And so the internationalizing of the Church goes on.

### Ending of assessments and fund raising

I give this brief summary to highlight another miracle, another revelation, if you will, that may have been overlooked by the general membership of the Church.

In a way it was intended to be transparent to the public eye. I speak of the decision made by the Brethren just over a decade ago to cease placing any special assessments or other fund-raising obligations upon the members of the Church at home or abroad.

Inasmuch as this decision was made amidst the very international growth I have just described, how could this be done financially? How could we go to more and more distant locations at the very moment we were removing all ancillary assessments from our people? Logic in the situation might have suggested exactly the opposite course of action.

How was it done? I will tell you how it was done—with the wholehearted belief on the part of the presiding Brethren that the Lord's principles of tithing and freewill offerings would be honored by even the newest member of the Church and that loyalty to such divine principles would see us through.

I was not in the Quorum of the Twelve when that momentous decision was made, but I can imagine the discussions that were held and the act of faith required within the presiding councils of the Church. What if the Brethren were to cease assessments and the Saints did *not* pay their tithes and offerings—what then? So far as I know, that thought was never seriously entertained. They went forward in faith—faith in God, faith in revealed principle, faith in us. They never looked back. That was a magnificent (if nearly unnoticed) day in the maturing of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### Five reasons to faithfully pay tithing

But to honor that decision, we must be equally mature as individual members of the Church. May I, then, suggest five reasons why all of us, rich or poor, long-

time member or newest convert, should faithfully pay our tithes and offerings.

### *To teach your children and grandchildren*

First, do so for the sake of your children and grandchildren, the rising generation, who could now, if we are not careful, grow up in the Church with absolutely no understanding as to how their temples, chapels, seminaries, and socials are provided. Teach your children that many of the blessings of the Church are available to them because you and they give tithes and offerings to the Church. Teach them that those blessings could come virtually no other way.

Then take your children to tithing settlement with you, just as President Howard W. Hunter's grandson was taken with his father several years ago. In that experience the bishop indicated his pleasure in young Brother Hunter's wanting to pay a full tithing. In the process of receiving the coins, he asked the lad if he thought the gospel were true. As the boy handed over his full tithing of 14 cents, this seven-year-old said he guessed the gospel was true but "it sure costs a lot of money."<sup>3</sup> Well, the buildings, programs, and materials I have mentioned do have an attached cost. That is not an unimportant lesson for our children to learn in their youth.

### *To claim the Lord's promised blessings*

Second, pay your tithing to rightfully claim the blessings promised those who do so. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."<sup>4</sup>

After she had lost her husband in the martyrdom at Nauvoo and made her way west with five fatherless children, Mary Fielding Smith continued in her poverty to pay tithing. When someone at the tithing office inappropriately suggested one day that she should not contribute a tenth

of the only potatoes she had been able to raise that year, she cried out to the man:

"William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold His blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. [I need a blessing.] By keeping this and other laws, I expect . . . to be able to provide for my family."<sup>5</sup>

I can't list *all* the ways that blessings will come from obedience to this principle, but I testify *many* will come in spiritual ways that go well beyond economics. In my life, for example, I have seen God's promise fulfilled that He would "rebuken the devourer for [my sake]."<sup>6</sup> That blessing of protection against evil has been poured out upon me and on my loved ones beyond any capacity I have to adequately acknowledge. But I believe that divine safety has come, at least in part, because of our determination, individually and as a family, to pay tithing.

### *To keep material possessions in perspective*

Third, pay your tithing as a declaration that possession of material goods and the accumulation of worldly wealth are *not* the uppermost goals of your existence. As one young husband and father, living on a student budget, recently told me:

"Perhaps our most pivotal moments as Latter-day Saints come when we have to swim directly against the current of the culture in which we live. Tithing provides just such a moment. Living in a world that emphasizes material acquisition and cultivates distrust for anyone or anything that has designs on our money, we shed that self-absorption to give freely, trustingly, and generously. By this act, we say—indeed—we are different, that we are God's peculiar people. In a society that tells us money is our most important asset, we declare emphatically it is not."<sup>7</sup>



President Spencer W. Kimball once spoke of a man who prided himself on his vast acreage and remarkable holdings—groves and vineyards, herds and fields, ponds and homes and possessions of every kind. He prided himself on these but to the end of his life was unwilling to tithe on them or even acknowledge that they were gifts from God. President Kimball then spoke at the man's funeral, noting that this land baron was laid to rest in an oblong piece of soil measuring "the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one."<sup>8</sup> In answer to the age-old question "How much did he leave?" he reassured the answer will always be, "All of it." So we would do well to lay up treasures in heaven, where not taxes but doctrines give meaning to words like *estate*, *inheritance*, *testament*, and *will*.<sup>9</sup>

#### *To give God His rightful due*

Fourth, pay your tithes and offerings out of honesty and integrity because they are God's rightful due. Surely one of the most piercing lines in all of scripture is Jehovah's thundering inquiry, "Will a man rob God?" And we ask, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" He answers, "In tithes and offerings."<sup>10</sup>

Paying tithing is *not* a token gift we are somehow charitably bestowing upon God. Paying tithing is discharging a debt. Elder James E. Talmage once described this as a contract between us and the Lord. He imagined the Lord saying:

"You have need of many things in this world—food, clothing, and shelter for your family . . . , the common comforts of life. . . . You shall have the means of acquiring these things; but remember they are mine, and I require of you the payment of a rental upon that which I give into your hands. However, your life will not be one of uniform increase . . . , [so] instead of doing as mortal landlords do—requir[ing] you to . . . pay in advance, whatever your fortunes or . . . prospects

may be—you shall pay me . . . [only] when you have received; and you shall pay me in accordance with what you receive. If it so be that in one year your income is abundant, then . . . [your 10 percent will be a] little more; and if it be so that the next year is one of distress and your income is not what it was, then . . . [your 10 percent will be] less. . . . [Whatever your circumstance, the tithe will be fair.]"

"Have you ever found a landlord on earth who was willing to make that kind of [equitable] contract with you?" Elder Talmage asks. "When I consider the liberality of it all," he says, "I feel in my heart that I could scarcely raise my countenance to . . . Heaven . . . if I tried to defraud [God] out of that [which is rightfully His]."<sup>11</sup>

#### *To express love to God*

This leads to a fifth reason to pay our tithes and offerings. We should pay them as a personal expression of love to a generous and merciful Father in Heaven. Through His grace, God has dealt bread to the hungry and clothing to the poor. At various times in our lives, that will include all of us, either temporally or spiritually. For every one of us the gospel has broken forth as the light of the morning, driving back the darkness of ignorance and sorrow, fear and despair. In nation after nation His children have called, and the Lord has answered. Through the movement of His gospel across the world, God is relieving the burdens of the weary and setting free those that are oppressed. His loving goodness has made our lives, rich or poor, near or far, "like a watered garden, . . . [from] a spring of water . . . [that faileth] not."<sup>12</sup>

I express my deepest gratitude for every blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially that greatest of all gifts, the exemplary life and atoning death of God's Only Begotten Son. I know I can never repay heaven for any of this benevolence,

but there are many ways I need to *try* to show my thankfulness. One of those ways is in the payment of tithes and freewill offerings. I *want* to give something back, but I never want it to be (in King David's words) "that which doth cost me nothing."<sup>13</sup>

I testify that the principle of tithing is of God, taught to us in such scriptural simplicity that we cannot doubt its divinity. May we all claim its blessings forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Daniel 2:45.
2. Isaiah 29:14.
3. Quoted by David B. Haight in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 42.
4. Malachi 3:10.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 48.
6. Malachi 3:11.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 74; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 82.
9. See Matthew 6:19–21.
10. Malachi 3:8.
11. *The Lord's Tenth* (pamphlet, 1968), 10–11.

12. Isaiah 58:11; see also Isaiah 58:6–10.
13. 2 Samuel 24:24.

#### President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately thereafter.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Utah County for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Testimony." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

### Elder M. Russell Ballard

#### "Who is my neighbour?"

It may very well have been a beautiful, crisp autumn day like this. The Savior was sitting, teaching some of His disciples, when a man identified only as "a certain lawyer" stood and asked Him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus knew the man's heart and understood the question was a thinly veiled attempt to get Him to say something contrary to the law of Moses.

The Savior responded to the question with two questions of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

As you might expect, the lawyer was able to recite the law: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Thou hast answered right," the Savior said, "This do, and thou shalt live."

But the lawyer wasn't satisfied with that. Knowing that there were strict rules and beliefs among the Jews regarding association with those not of the faith, he pressed the Lord for more information, hoping to trap Him in controversy: "And who is my neighbour?" he asked.

It was time, once again, to teach. Jesus drew upon one of His favorite and most effective teaching techniques: a parable, perhaps one of the most beloved and

well-known parables in all of Christendom.

You know the parable, how a man from Jerusalem was on his way to Jericho and fell among thieves and was left half dead. A certain priest passed by on the other side; neither did a Levite stop to help. Then Jesus taught:

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

Then Jesus asked the lawyer one more question: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

The lawyer replied, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Then Jesus delivered His final instruction to the lawyer—and to all who have read the parable of the good Samaritan: "Go, and do thou likewise" (see Luke 10:25–37).

### Love neighbors despite differences

Every time I read this parable I am impressed with its power and simplicity. But have you ever wondered why the Savior chose to make the hero of this story a Samaritan? There was considerable antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Christ. Under normal circumstances these two groups avoided association with each other. It would still be a good, instructive parable if the man who fell among thieves had been rescued by a brother Jew.

His deliberate use of Jews and Samaritans clearly teaches that we are all neighbors and that we should love, esteem, respect, and serve one another despite our deepest differences—including religious, political, and cultural differences.

That instruction continues today to be part of the teachings of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In enumerating the key doctrines of the restored Church, Joseph Smith said that while "we claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience," we also "allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11).

### True disciples reach out with love

Thankfully, many of our members understand this doctrine and live it during the course of their daily lives. I recently read a news account of a tragic death in a community here in Utah. A grieving young widow was quoted:

"We've been overwhelmed by support. We're not Mormon, but the local ward here has been all over us with meals and help and words of comfort. It's been a total outpouring of love, and we appreciate it" (quoted in Dick Harmon, "Former Ute's Death Leaves Wife Coping, Wondering," *Daily Herald* [Provo, Utah], 11 Aug. 2001, A3).

That's just as it should be. If we are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will reach out with love and understanding to all of our neighbors at all times, particularly in times of need. A recent *Church News* carried a story of two women who are dear friends, a "Jewish physician from New York and [a] stay-at-home [Latter-day Saint] mom of six from Utah, both a long way from home in Dallas [Texas]." Our member reported:

"If our friendship had been put through a computer matching service, I doubt we would have made it past the first hurdle. . . .

" . . . A woman with a busy medical practice, I assumed, would have little desire to discuss the color of the hospitality napkins for PTA.

"Funny thing about assumptions—they can cut away the very roots of something that could flourish and grow if given a chance. I am forever grateful that as-

sumptions were cast aside" (Shauna Erickson, "Unlikely Friends Sharing a Lifetime," *Church News*, 18 Aug. 2001, 10).

Perceptions and assumptions can be very dangerous and unfair. There are some of our members who may fail to reach out with friendly smiles, warm handshakes, and loving service to all of their neighbors. At the same time, there may be those who move into our neighborhoods who are not of our faith who come with negative preconceptions about the Church and its members. Surely good neighbors should put forth every effort to understand each other and to be kind to one another regardless of religion, nationality, race, or culture.

### Practice the doctrine of inclusion

Occasionally I hear of members of-fending those of other faiths by overlooking them and leaving them out. This can occur especially in communities where our members are the majority. I have heard about narrow-minded parents who tell children that they cannot play with a particular child in the neighborhood simply because his or her family does not belong to our Church. This kind of behavior is not in keeping with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot comprehend why any member of our Church would allow these kinds of things to happen. I have been a member of this Church my entire life. I have been a full-time missionary, twice a bishop, a mission president, a Seventy, and now an Apostle. I have never taught—nor have I ever heard taught—a doctrine of exclusion. I have never heard the members of this Church urged to be anything but loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent to our friends and neighbors of other faiths.

The Lord expects a great deal from us. Parents, please teach your children and practice yourselves the principle of inclusion of others and not exclusion because of religious, political, or cultural differences.

While it is true that we declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith and we urge our members to share their faith and testimonies with others, it has never been the policy of the Church that those who choose not to listen or to accept our message should be shunned or ignored. Indeed, the opposite is true. President Gordon B. Hinckley has repeatedly reminded us of this special obligation that we have as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I quote just two:

"Each of us is an individual. Each of us is different. There must be respect for those differences" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 661).

"We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse. Concerning these you and I may disagree. But we can do so with respect and civility" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 665).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we understand that we are perceived by some to be "a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). Our doctrines and beliefs are important to us. We embrace them and cherish them. I am not suggesting for a moment that we shouldn't. On the contrary, our peculiarity and the uniqueness of the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are indispensable elements in offering the people of the world a clear choice. Neither am I suggesting that we should associate in any relationship that would place us or our families at spiritual risk. We must understand, however, that not everyone is going to accept our doctrine of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the most part, our neighbors not of our faith are good, honorable people—every bit as good and honorable as we strive to be. They care about their families, just like we do. They want to make the world

a better place, just like we do. They are kind and loving and generous and faithful, just like we seek to be. Nearly 25 years ago the First Presidency declared:

"Our message . . . is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father" (First Presidency statement, 15 Feb. 1978).

That is our doctrine—a doctrine of inclusion. That is what we believe. That is what we have been taught. Of all people on this earth, we should be the most loving, the kindest, and the most tolerant because of that doctrine.

### **How to avoid making others feel excluded**

May I suggest three simple things we can do to avoid making others in our neighborhoods feel excluded?

First, get to know your neighbors. Learn about their families, their work, their views. Get together with them, if they are willing, and do so without being pushy and without any ulterior motives. Friendship should never be offered as a means to an end; it can and should be an end unto itself. I received a letter from a woman who recently moved to Utah, a small part of which I quote:

"I must tell you, Elder Ballard, that when I greet my neighbors, or if I wave to them, they do not acknowledge my greeting. If I pass them while taking my morning or evening walk, my salutation is not returned. Other people of color consistently express similar negative responses to friendly gestures."

If members of the Church are among her neighbors, surely they must know that this should not happen. Let us cultivate meaningful relationships of mutual trust and understanding with people from different backgrounds and beliefs.

Second, I believe it would be good if we eliminated a couple of phrases from

our vocabulary: *nonmember* and *non-Mormon*. Such phrases can be demeaning and even belittling. Personally, I don't consider myself to be a "non-Catholic" or a "non-Jew." I am a Christian. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is how I prefer to be identified—for who and what I am, as opposed to being identified for what I am not. Let us extend that same courtesy to those who live among us. If a collective description is needed, then "neighbors" seems to work well in most cases.

And third, if neighbors become testy or frustrated because of some disagreement with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or with some law we support for moral reasons, please don't suggest to them—even in a humorous way—that they consider moving someplace else. I cannot comprehend how any member of our Church can even think such a thing! Our pioneer ancestors were driven from place to place by uninformed and intolerant neighbors. They experienced extraordinary hardship and persecution because they thought, acted, and believed differently from others. If our history teaches us nothing else, it should teach us to respect the rights of all people to peacefully coexist with one another.

### **Stand together for the common good**

I now speak to all those who are not of our faith. If there are issues of concern, let us talk about them. We want to be helpful. Please understand, however, that our doctrines and teachings are set by the Lord, so sometimes we will have to agree to disagree with you, but we can do so without being disagreeable. In our communities we can and must work together in an atmosphere of courtesy, respect, and civility. Here in Utah, a group of concerned citizens formed the Alliance for Unity. This effort has been endorsed by our Church, as well as other churches and organizations. One of its purposes is "to seek to help build a community where dif-

fering viewpoints are acknowledged and valued" ("Alliance for Unity: Statement of Purpose" [accompanying First Presidency letter of 20 Sept. 2001]). Perhaps there has never been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another.

### **"Love one another"**

Just hours before He began the painful physical and spiritual processes of the Atonement, the Savior met with His Apostles to partake of the Feast of the Passover—His Last Supper—and to give them the final instructions He would give them in mortality. Among these teachings is the stirring, life-changing declaration:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).

That is what Jesus taught His disciples, including "a certain lawyer," through the parable of the good Samaritan. And that is what He is teaching us today through living prophets and apostles. Love one another. Be kind to one another despite our deepest differences. Treat one another with respect and civility. I know and testify that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and I know that He expects all of us to follow His admonition to be better neighbors, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Testimony."

Elder Sheldon F. Child offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Come, Rejoice." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

The choir will then sing "There Is a Green Hill Far Away." After the choir has sung, Elder Robert D. Hales of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Presidency of the Seventy. We will then be pleased to hear from Elders Steven E. Snow and Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."  
Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

The choir sang "There Is a Green Hill Far Away."

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## Elder Robert D. Hales

What a joy it is to stand before the priesthood and address the royal army of God. It is important that we know who we are—sons of God who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood, restored in this dispensation. It is important that we know what we are trying to achieve in life—that is, to return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father with our families. Because we are so blessed, it is also important that we learn and do our duty to God.

### New Duty to God program

For many years the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have had great concerns for the welfare of our youth in our troubled times. On September 28, 2001, the First Presidency sent a letter to priesthood leaders in the United States and Canada which stated:

"In January 2000, we introduced an Aaronic Priesthood Achievement program in areas outside the United States and Canada where Scouting was not available. The purpose . . . is to help young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, a full-time mission, marriage, and fatherhood. . . . [That international program remains in force and] has now been adapted for use in the United States and Canada to include the important role of Scouting in the development of young men . . . [and will be known as] *Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*.

"Three guidebooks—*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* for deacons, teachers, and priests—explain the program. Young men who complete the requirements outlined in all of these guidebooks will receive the Duty to God Award.

"We also announce a new simplified *Young Women Personal Progress* book and a revised *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. These materials have been updated to help youth develop greater faith and courage in today's world. In addition, we announce a *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth* to help parents and leaders strengthen our youth. This guidebook also outlines the important and supportive role of Mutual.

"We desire all young men to strive to earn the Eagle Scout and Duty to God Awards. We desire all young women to strive to earn the Young Womanhood Recognition. As youth work on these goals, they will develop skills and attributes that will lead them to the temple and prepare them for a lifetime of service to their families and the Lord.

"Copies of these materials will be sent to each stake for distribution to wards by December 2001, for implementation in January 2002." Thus ended the First Presidency's historic letter.

### Importance of strengthening youth

We live in a very difficult era in the history of the world, when Satan is going

to and fro on the earth among the children of God, doing all manner of evil to thwart the desires of a righteous God. The scriptures teach us that Satan's evil designs upon the peoples of the earth will intensify as the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ draws near at hand (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10; D&C 10:33; 52:14; 86:3–10).

There has never been a time in these latter days like today, when the message is being brought forward so strongly by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to have parents along with bishops and priesthood and auxiliary leaders make sure you young men understand who you are and what you can become—not only here in mortality but for the eternities that will follow.

### Earning the Duty to God Award

The Duty to God Award will assist young men to meet the future challenges of life and to achieve the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have explained, "We hope you will earn the Duty to God Award and that it will become a symbol of your preparation to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood" (*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God [Deacon] [2001]*, 4).

As you earn the Duty to God Award, you will complete goals in the following areas:

- Be faithful in your priesthood duties and standards.
- Be involved in family activities.
- Participate in quorum activities.
- Complete a Duty to God service project.
- Accomplish personal goals in each of four categories, the center being priesthood duties: spiritual development; physical development; educational, personal, and career development; and citizenship and social development.

If you will fulfill the requirements for these priesthood duties and personal at-

tributes, you will prepare yourselves for the Melchizedek Priesthood responsibilities and future challenges in your life. I promise you that your achievement of the Duty to God Award will provide you with a living testimony that will sustain you throughout your life.

Where available, Scouting can also help you in this effort. We encourage you to participate in Scouting. Many of the Scouting requirements can fill goals and requirements of the Duty to God certificates.

Scouting is part of the Aaronic Priesthood activity program. The Duty to God Award is a priesthood award, having requirements that will help you develop spiritually and fulfill your priesthood duties.

### Fulfilling your duty to God

Some of the great blessings of these programs that have been developed are that as the youth of the Church, you will have a clear understanding of who you are, you will be accountable for your actions, you will take responsibility for the conduct of your life, and you will be able to set goals so that you might achieve what you were sent to earth to achieve. Our plea is that you strive to do your very best.

Young men, get on your knees each day and express to God the desires of your heart. He is the source of all wisdom and will give you answers to your prayers. Be humble and willing to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. Read the scriptures daily. Strengthen your testimony. Pay tithes and fast offerings. Remember and keep the covenants you made when you were baptized, and renew those covenants each week when you partake of the sacrament. Keeping your baptismal covenants now will help you prepare for the temple covenants you will make in the future.

This is the essence of your duty to God. By fulfilling your duty to God, you



will bring blessings not only to your own life but to the lives of others.

Giving service to others is one of the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. As a requirement for the Duty to God Award, at least once each year you will have a service project that will provide an opportunity for significant service to your family, the Church, or the community. As you help and serve others, you will learn that the following scripture is a very essential part of the gospel: "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me" (D&C 42:38).

I hope the parents, and the bishops—who are the presidents of the Aaronic Priesthood—will understand that the young men and young women for whom they have responsibility have been prepared to come to earth at this particular time for a sacred and glorious purpose. It is a great blessing to be able to qualify for and then receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. You young men have noble callings to become righteous men, to grow in strength, and to influence others for good. You young men are the future of the Church.

### **A decade of decision**

We have all progressed since we came to earth from the presence of our Heavenly Father. Our first decade in this life was a great learning experience. We were cared for and nurtured. We learned to walk and to talk and control this mortal body. We learned about agency—that choices have consequences. Many of us were baptized at eight years of age, which the scriptures tell us is the age of accountability, when we have the ability to know right from wrong, to know who we are—children of God—why we are here on earth, and what we are trying to accomplish (see D&C 68:25, 27).

From our baptism to the age of 12, our families, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and teachers have taught us gospel principles and standards that prepare

us to hold the priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood is called the preparatory priesthood. This second decade of our lives is a preparatory period. It is a time in which we prepare to make the great decisions that lie ahead. We prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to take upon us our temple covenants, and to fulfill all of our priesthood responsibilities so that we can fulfill our duty to God.

The choices you make today will directly influence the number and kinds of opportunities you will have in the future. Each daily decision will either limit or broaden your opportunities. As you make righteous decisions during this preparatory period, you will be ready to make righteous decisions in the future.

Just think, in the next decade of your life—the decade of your 20s—what decisions will be made: temple worthiness, missionary service, education, career, an eternal companion, and a family. This decade of decision is not a time to fear. It is a time to enjoy the blessings for which you have prepared. "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

One of the greatest gifts you were given at baptism was to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. With the gift of the Holy Ghost, you can have inspired guidance to make these important decisions.

During the preparatory period of your lives it is so important that you cultivate spiritual growth, physical growth, education, personal development, career preparation, citizenship, and social skills. These qualities are all part of your priesthood duties and will help in the decisions that lie ahead for the next decades of your life.

### **Discipleship and duty to God**

An important part of fulfilling our duty to God at any age is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, which means that we accept His invitation to "come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). To follow the Savior requires us to know who He is—the Son

of God—to take His name upon us, to remember His atoning sacrifice, and to keep His commandments. We made these covenants at baptism, and we renew our baptismal covenants each time we partake of the sacrament.

We learn from the Savior in His prayers to His Father in Heaven great lessons of discipleship and duty to God. In His intercessory prayer He teaches, *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”* (John 17:4; italics added).

When Jesus Christ suffered agony in the Garden of Gethsemane for the sins of all mankind, He prayed, *“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”* (Matthew 26:39; italics added).

Discipleship and duty to God are shown in the lives of prophets throughout the scriptures. The lessons we learn from these prophets can be applied in our lives.

Young Joseph Smith said, *“I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him”* (Joseph Smith—History 1:50; italics added).

Elijah *“went and did according unto the word of the Lord”* (1 Kings 17:5; italics added).

*“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he”* (Genesis 6:22; italics added).

Joshua taught his people, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. . . . And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey”* (Joshua 24:15, 24; italics added).

Alma said, *“O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God”* (Alma 37:35; italics added).

### **Be a wonderful force for good**

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have counseled each holder of the Aaronic Priesthood:

*“You live in a day of great challenges and opportunities. You have been called to make a difference in the world. As a son of God, with the power of the Aaronic Priesthood, you can be a wonderful force for good.*

*“You can provide service, giving of your time, talents, and energies without thought of reward. You can fulfill priesthood duties, such as [preparing, passing, and] blessing the sacrament[, gathering fast offerings, helping others,] and serving as a home teacher. You can lift others by your example. You can strengthen yourself, building faith and testimony, living the gospel while you learn it and share it.*

*“You have a responsibility to learn what Heavenly Father wants you to do and then to do your best to follow His will. . . .*

*“The Lord believes in you and has an important mission for you to do. He will help you as you turn to Him in prayer. Listen for the promptings of the Spirit. Obey the commandments. Make and keep covenants that will prepare you for the temple. Work with your parents and leaders as you set goals and strive to achieve them. You will feel a great sense of accomplishment as you fulfill your duty and prepare for the exciting challenges of the future”* (Aaronic Priesthood: *Fulfilling Our Duty to God [Priest]* [2001], 4–5).

Brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, set your goals now and start working toward earning your Duty to God Award and Eagle Scout Award. You will be blessed for your efforts.

### **Awaken to a sense of your duty to God**

I express my love for the youth of the Church. I have great respect and admiration for the righteous choices you are making each day. You are so faithful in these troubled times despite the many challenges which face you. You are preparing yourselves to be future fathers and priesthood leaders of the Church.

It is so important that all of us understand that we live in the last dispensation of the fulness of time—that we are preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and that the adversary in these last days will be able to loose more evils upon the world. Our prayers are that all the youth of the Church will have the strength to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary and that we as parents and priesthood leaders—yes, we as the shepherds—can help our children remain true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I testify to the truthfulness of this work and the restoration of the priesthood in these latter days. I promise you that you will be blessed for your faithfulness and declare with the prophet Alma, “I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God” (Alma 7:22). That each Aaronic Priesthood holder will fulfill his duty to God and return with honor to his Heavenly Father is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

### Samuel's fulfillment of his duty to God

As a young man I was impressed with the Old Testament story of Samuel, whose life had been dedicated to God by his grateful mother, Hannah. While still a lad, he went to live and serve in the temple. One night he was called three times by the Lord and each time answered, “Here am I,”<sup>1</sup> thinking that he had been summoned by his high priest teacher, Eli. Wise Eli, knowing that little “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him,”<sup>2</sup> understood that the Lord had called the young boy. He, therefore, taught Samuel how to respond, and when he was next called by the Lord, Samuel answered, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”<sup>3</sup>

As we follow the life of Samuel, we recognize that he did fulfill his duty to God and that “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, Samuel himself became a great prophet and leader.

### Resources to help fulfill your duty to God

I hope you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood today understand that, as

Samuel, you also have a sacred duty to God. Samuel had a sainted mother, Hannah, and a great priesthood leader, Eli. Most of you young men, likewise, have wonderful parents and inspired priesthood leaders who care for you and stand ready to assist both you and your parents in your quest to fulfill your duty to God.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said this of you and your generation of young people:

“I have . . . great love for the young men and young women of this Church. . . . How we love you and pray constantly for the genius to help you. Your lives are filled with difficult decisions and with dreams and hopes and longings to find that which will bring you peace and happiness. . . .

“ . . . I make you a promise that God will not forsake you if you will walk in His paths with the guidance of His commandments.”<sup>5</sup>

With this promise of the prophet in mind, let me remind you, as was mentioned by Elder Hales and the letter from the First Presidency, of Church resources that are being made available to assist you in fulfilling your duty to God. The Aaronic Priesthood purposes help you to:

- Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live its teachings.

- Serve faithfully in priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood offices.

- Give meaningful service.

- Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.

- Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.

- Obtain as much education as possible.

- Prepare to become a worthy husband and father.

- Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

The Duty to God Award program will help you achieve these purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. To qualify for the Duty to God Award, you will need to achieve and complete Aaronic Priesthood purposes; participate in family activities, specific quorum activities, and a Duty to God service project; keep a personal journal; and complete personal goals in each of four categories:

- Spiritual development

- Physical development

- Educational, personal, and career development

- Citizenship and social development

Where Scouting is available, you will note that many of the Scouting requirements can fill necessary expectations for the Duty to God Award. Both Duty to God and Scouting activities teach us to “be prepared” in “every needful thing.”<sup>6</sup> The Duty to God Award and the Eagle Scout Award (or a similar award) are complementary, not competitive.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve love you and desire to strengthen you in these increasingly difficult times. With this love and desire, they have provided for you a revised *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, as well as additional materials for Young Men, Young Women, parents, and leaders.

## Developing important characteristics

As you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood strive to achieve the Duty to God Award even as the Young Women work on their Personal Progress efforts, you will join with them in standing as witnesses of God as well. This witness is expressed by what you say and also by how you live and keep the commandments.

You know that receiving the Duty to God Award is not the ultimate goal in itself, but rather the incorporation into your lives of attributes that will help you focus more clearly on your duty to God. These characteristics will keep you on track to be worthy and able to meet the sacred tasks and opportunities before you. They will help you to be happy, clean, and strong now and also to prepare for eternally important events such as receiving the blessings of the holy temple, serving missions, and ultimately being sealed to a worthy companion in the house of the Lord.

Alma, as he taught in the land of Gideon, made this clear in timeless language: “And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.”<sup>7</sup>

You who have received the priesthood will wish to walk after this “holy order” to which you have been called and ordained. You recognize that with every promised blessing there are associated responsibilities. By fulfilling these responsibilities, you are given opportunities to serve others and develop yourself spiritually. These are essential steps in your progress to become more like Jesus.

## Jesus’ example in doing His duty to God

The Savior, who suffered all things for us,<sup>8</sup> faced challenges similar to some we face in our Aaronic Priesthood years.

You remember Jesus' experience at about the age when most of us become deacons. He had gone with His family and others to the temple. When it came time to return home, He was not with Mary and Joseph. They must have assumed that Jesus was with other trusted friends or extended family members. Only when His absence persisted did they become alarmed. As dutiful parents, Mary and Joseph did what your parents may have done in similar circumstances: they went looking for Him. When they located Jesus in the temple, only parents and grandparents might fully appreciate the mixed sense of relief they felt that He was safe, but they also were perhaps a little surprised by His reaction. Have any of you ever had a similar experience? We all know the dialogue that ensued:

"And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"<sup>9</sup>

Jesus might have said, "Don't you know that I am doing my duty to God?"

### **We are the Lord's agents, on His errand**

President Harold B. Lee taught that the meaning of Jesus' question is found in section 64 of the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>10</sup> Said President Lee:

"When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand. That is what it means to magnify the priesthood. Think of the Master asking each of you, as this young boy did of Joseph and Mary, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Whatever you do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, holding the priesthood and doing your duty to God is not only a very serious responsibility but also a remarkable privilege.

Sometimes you might feel that your parents and leaders respond like Mary and Joseph did. After Jesus answered by asking His important question about His Father's business, Luke records, "They understood not the saying which he spake unto them."<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, please pay close attention to what Jesus did! It is an example for what we must do if we are really to fulfill our duty to God. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>13</sup>

You must remember that your duty to God is very clearly linked to your duties to your own family members, particularly your parents. It is in being properly subject or submissive not only to God, but also to parents and priesthood leaders, that we can truly fulfill our duty to God. May we all be as Samuel, who said to the Lord, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See 1 Samuel 3:4–8.
2. 1 Samuel 3:7.
3. 1 Samuel 3:10.
4. 1 Samuel 3:19.
5. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4, 6; or *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. Alma 7:22.
8. See Alma 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
9. Luke 2:48–49.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
11. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
12. Luke 2:50.
13. Luke 2:51–52.
14. 1 Samuel 3:10.

## Elder Steven E. Snow

### Ignoring the beauty in our own backyard

Growing up in southern Utah, some of us sought employment at the many gasoline service stations that lined Highway 91 as it made its way through downtown St. George. My younger brother Paul, then 18, worked at Tom's Service, a station located about three blocks from our home.

One summer day a car with New York license plates pulled in the station and asked for a fill-up. (For you brethren under the age of 30, in those days someone actually came out and filled your car with gas, washed your windows, and checked your oil.) While Paul was washing the windshield, the driver asked him how far it was to the Grand Canyon. Paul replied that it was 170 miles.

"I've waited all my life to see the Grand Canyon," the man exclaimed. "What's it like out there?"

"I don't know," Paul answered. "I've never been there."

"You mean to tell me," the man responded, "that you live two and a half hours from one of the seven wonders of the world and you've never been there!"

"That's right," Paul said.

After a moment, the man replied, "Well, I guess I can understand that. My wife and I have lived in Manhattan for over 20 years, and we've never visited the Statue of Liberty."

"I've been there," Paul said.

Isn't it ironic, brethren, that we will often travel many miles to see the wonders of nature or the creations of man, but yet ignore the beauty in our own backyard?

It is human nature, I suppose, to seek elsewhere for our happiness. Pursuit of career goals, wealth, and material rewards can cloud our perspective and often leads to a lack of appreciation for the bounteous blessings of our present circumstances.

### "Let thy heart be full of thanks"

It is precarious to dwell on why we have not been given more. It is, however, beneficial and humbling to dwell on why we have been given so much.

An old proverb states, "The greater wealth is contentment with a little."

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Alma instructed his son Helaman, giving him counsel that all fathers should teach their children: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

Alma says, "Let thy heart be full of thanks unto God." The Lord desires that we give thanks. In Thessalonians we read, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

### Express gratitude in all prayers

As holders of the priesthood we should constantly strive to increase our gratitude. Gratitude may be increased by constantly reflecting on our blessings and giving thanks for them in our daily prayers.

President David O. McKay has said: "The young man who closes the door behind him, who draws the curtains, and there in silence pleads with God for help, should first pour out his soul in gratitude for health, for friends, for loved ones, for the gospel, for the manifestations of God's existence. He should first count his many blessings and name them one by one" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, 8).

A constant expression of gratitude should be included in all our prayers. Often prayers are given for specific blessings which we, in our incomplete understanding, believe we need. While the Lord does answer prayers according to His will, He certainly must be pleased when we offer humble prayers of gratitude.

Brethren, the next time we pray, instead of presenting the Lord petition after petition for some action in our behalf, give Him thoughtful thanks for all with which He has blessed us.

President Joseph F. Smith has instructed us that "the spirit of gratitude is always pleasant and satisfying because it carries with it a sense of helpfulness to others; it begets love and friendship, and engenders divine influence. Gratitude is said to be the memory of the heart" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 262).

### **Pioneers' gratitude in spite of difficulty**

In October 1879, a group of 237 Latter-day Saints from several small southwestern Utah settlements was called to blaze a new route and colonize what is today known as San Juan County in southeastern Utah. The journey was to have taken six weeks but instead took nearly six months. Their struggles and heroics are well documented, particularly their seemingly impossible task of crossing the Colorado River at a place called Hole-in-the-Rock. Those who have visited this

place marvel that wagons and teams could have been lowered through this narrow crack in the red rock canyon walls to reach the Colorado River far below. Once the Colorado was crossed, however, many other severe tests awaited them on the trail to San Juan County. Tired and worn out, early in April 1880 they faced their final obstacle, Comb Ridge. The Comb is a ridge of solid sandstone forming a steep wall nearly 1,000 feet high.

One hundred and twenty years later, our family climbed Comb Ridge on a bright spring day. The ridge is steep and treacherous. It was difficult to imagine that wagons, teams, men, women, and children could make such an ascent. But beneath our feet were the scars from the wagon wheels, left as evidence of their struggles so long ago. How did they feel after enduring so much? Were they bitter after the many months of toil and privation? Did they criticize their leaders for sending them on such an arduous journey, asking them to give up so much? Our questions were answered as we reached the top of Comb Ridge. There inscribed in the red sandstone so long ago were the words, "We thank Thee, O God."

Brethren, I pray that we might keep our hearts full of thanks and appreciation for what we have and not dwell on what is not ours. As holders of the priesthood, let us adopt an attitude of gratitude in all we do in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Keith K. Hilbig**

### **Your link in the priesthood chain**

Within this vast congregation of priesthood bearers assembled here and throughout the world sit several generations—tens of thousands of sons, fathers, grandfathers, even great-grandfathers—all of whom have faith in Christ, seek to keep His commandments, and desire to serve Him.

Some are part of a long tradition of priesthood men stretching back in time. Others are the very first men in their respective families to bear the priesthood of God. But all have the opportunity—and responsibility—either to create or to continue a chain of worthy men who honor the priesthood and render service in the kingdom, thereby linking families to-

gether from generation to generation. It is *your* individual link in that priesthood chain of which I would speak tonight.

In each dispensation faithful men have been given the priesthood to further the Lord's purposes. The scriptures recount the passing of priesthood authority from prophet to prophet, beginning with Adam.

We are figuratively part of that priesthood chain stretching back to the beginnings of the earth. However, each of us is now literally engaged in the critical task of creating our own strong priesthood link so as to be joined with our own forefathers and to our own posterity.

If one fails to obtain or to honor the Melchizedek Priesthood, his link will be missing, and eternal life will be unattainable (see D&C 76:79; 84:41–42)—hence, our great effort as a church to teach the message of the Restoration to all who are willing to listen and to prepare all who are desirous for the blessings of the priesthood and the temple.

### **Foreordained to hold the priesthood**

Our privilege to bear the priesthood of God tonight has its beginnings in our premortal existence. The prophet Alma explained that men ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood on earth have been “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling” (Alma 13:3).

The Lord has long intended you to be a creator or a continuer of the chain of faithful bearers in your priesthood family. It was your faith and wise exercise of free agency—in the premortal existence and here in mortality—which permitted you to receive the holy calling of the priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated in 1844, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 365).

Thus, whether as the first in your family or as the fifth generation to hold the priesthood, we have each come to earth with a personal heritage of faithfulness and foreordination. Such knowledge gives us a firm resolve to always honor the priesthood and thereby to create or continue a multigenerational family in the Church and in the celestial kingdom.

### **Examples of priesthood service**

We often define *priesthood* as the power and authority to act in the name of God upon the earth. But service to our Savior, our family, and our fellowman also defines our priesthood. The Savior intends that we exercise our priesthood primarily for the benefit of others. We cannot bless or baptize ourselves or provide the ordinances of the temple to ourselves. Rather, every priesthood bearer must rely upon others to lovingly exercise their priesthood authority and power to help each of us progress spiritually.

I was able to learn the importance of priesthood service not only by observing my grandfather, father, and brother magnify their callings but also from the brethren in my ward who were priesthood models to me.

When I was a newly ordained teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, my first home teaching companion was Henry Wilkening, a high priest who was nearly 60 years my senior. He was a German immigrant, a shoemaker by trade, small in stature, but an energetic and faithful shepherd to the families assigned to us. I trotted behind him (for he seemed to walk and to climb



stairs much faster than I could) during our monthly visits, which took us into sobering environments new to my sheltered experience. He expected me to present part of each lesson and to make all the appointments, but mostly I listened and watched as he aided brothers and sisters with various spiritual and social, economic and emotional needs previously unknown to me as a 14-year-old.

I began to realize how much good could be done by a single faithful priesthood bearer. I watched Brother Wilkening forging a strong priesthood link for himself through his loving service to those families in need—and to me in my youth.

The many priesthood men I observed while growing up taught me that providing priesthood service to others is not dependent upon a particular title or specific calling or formal position in the kingdom. Rather, the opportunity arises from and is inherent within the fact that one has received the priesthood of God.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. wisely taught at the April 1951 general conference: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

## **Service strengthens priesthood links**

When we serve righteously with all our heart, whatever the responsibility apportioned to us, we are strengthening our priesthood link and connecting it ever more securely to those who have preceded and who will follow us.

I bear solemn testimony of the Savior's divinity and atoning sacrifice and of the restoration of His priesthood which we are privileged to bear—and pray that every son and father participating in this meeting will determine this night to serve the Lord by faithfully honoring the priesthood and firmly connecting his personal link to the priesthood chain which will bind him, his forefathers, and his posterity together throughout eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **President Hinckley**

Thank you, brethren, for those inspirational messages.

Our next speaker will be President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, we shall all sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us.

# **President James E. Faust**

## **Be committed to doing the basics**

My beloved brethren of the priesthood of God all over the world, I am pleased to be counted as one of you. This evening I would like to challenge the priesthood of the Church to be more committed in doing those things which build faith, character, and spirituality. These are the routine priesthood obligations we should be doing daily, weekly, monthly—year in and year out. The work

of the Church depends upon basics such as paying tithes; taking care of family and priesthood duties; caring for the poor and the needy; having daily prayer, scripture study, and family home evening; home teaching; participation in quorum activity; and attending the temple. If called upon by the President of the Church, we would be ready, able, and willing to do "some great thing," such as working on the Nauvoo temple, but many are not quite so anxious to do some of these basics.

### **"Some great thing"**

We are all familiar with the Old Testament story of Naaman, the captain of the Syrian hosts, who was a leper. A little Israelite servant told Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him. Naaman came with his chariot and horses to the house of Elisha, who sent a messenger to instruct Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."<sup>1</sup>

You younger boys know how it is when you show your hands to your mother: she'll tell you to go and wash! But Naaman was not a young boy. He was the captain of the Syrian hosts, and he was offended by Elisha's instruction to wash in the Jordan. So he "went away in a rage."<sup>2</sup> One of Naaman's servants with a wise head remonstrated with him and said: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"<sup>3</sup>

Naaman then repented and followed the counsel of the prophet. The leprosy disappeared, and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."<sup>4</sup> "Some great thing" in this instance was extraordinarily simple and easy to do.

### **Falling away of Oliver Cowdery**

We have in the modern history of the Church contrasting examples of men who were highly favored of the Lord. One, Hyrum Smith, remained totally faithful and committed, even to the giving of his life, while the other, Oliver Cowdery, despite having witnessed "some great things" in the history of the Restoration, became blinded by his personal ambition and lost his exalted place in the leadership of the Church.

Oliver Cowdery shared with the Prophet Joseph Smith many of the profound events of the Restoration, such as

their baptism under the authority of John the Baptist, the conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood, the marvelous appearances in the Kirtland Temple, and writing with his own pen "the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]."<sup>5</sup> No one except the Prophet Joseph was more honored with the ministering of angels than Oliver Cowdery.

But when the Prophet Joseph fell on hard times, Oliver was critical of him and became estranged from him. Despite the efforts of the Prophet to reach out the hand of fellowship to him, he became hostile to the Prophet and the Church and was excommunicated on April 12, 1838.

### **Oliver Cowdery's return**

A few years after the death of the Prophet, Oliver repented and expressed interest in coming back to the Church. In response, Brigham Young wrote on November 22, 1847, inviting him to "return to our father's house, from whence thou hast wandered, . . . and renew thy testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon."<sup>6</sup> Oliver appeared before the high priests quorum and said:

"Brethren for a number of years I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back. I wish to come humbly and be one in your midst.—I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you.—I am out of the church. I am not a member of the church. I wish to become a member of the church again. I wish to come in at the door. I know the door. I have not come here to seek precedence. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of this body—knowing as I do that their decisions are right and should be obeyed."<sup>7</sup>

He also bore his testimony in these words: "Friends and brethren my name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this church I stood identified with [you.] I . . . handled with my hands the gold plates from which [the Book of

Mormon] was translated. I also beheld the interpreters. That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the prophet."<sup>8</sup> Even though Oliver came back, he lost his exalted place in the Church.

### **Hyrum Smith's steadfastness**

In contrast, President Heber J. Grant said of Hyrum Smith: "There is no better example of an older brother's love than that exhibited in the life of Hyrum Smith for the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . They were as united and as affectionate and as loving as mortal men could be. . . . There never was one particle of . . . jealousy in the heart of Hyrum Smith. No mortal man could have been more loyal, more true, more faithful in life or in death than was Hyrum Smith to the Prophet of the living God."<sup>9</sup>

He responded to every need and request from his younger brother Joseph, who led the Church and received the revelations which we have today. Hyrum was steadfast day to day, month by month, year in and year out.

After their brother Alvin's death, Hyrum finished building the white frame home for their parents. After Joseph had received the golden plates, Hyrum provided the wooden box to store and protect them. When the plates had been translated, Joseph entrusted Hyrum with the printer's copy of the manuscript. Hyrum, often accompanied by Oliver Cowdery, carried pages to and from the typesetter daily.<sup>10</sup>

Hyrum worked as a farmer and laborer to support his family, but after the Church was organized in 1830 he accepted the call to preside over the Colesville Branch. He took his wife and family and went to live with the Newel Knight family, spending much of his time "preaching the gospel wherever [he] could find any who would listen."<sup>11</sup> Ever a good missionary, he not only preached near his home but

also went to the eastern seaboard and southward in the United States. In 1831 he went with John Murdock to Missouri and back, preaching along the way.<sup>12</sup>

When the construction of the Kirtland Temple was envisioned in 1833, Hyrum immediately took his scythe and cleared weeds from the temple site and began digging the foundation. In 1834 when Zion's Camp was organized, Hyrum assisted Lyman Wight in recruiting members of the camp and led a group of Saints from Michigan to Missouri.

Being thus proved in the little things, Hyrum became an Assistant President of the Church in December 1834. He served under the direction of his younger brother, the Prophet Joseph. He was ever a source of strength and comfort to his brother, whether in Church service or in Liberty Jail. As persecutions came and Joseph fled the mob at Nauvoo in 1844, Hyrum went with him. As they stood on the bank of the river, contemplating whether to return, Joseph turned to Hyrum and said, "You are the oldest, what shall we do?"

"Let us go back and give ourselves up and see the thing out,"<sup>13</sup> Hyrum replied.

They returned to Nauvoo and were taken to Carthage, where they died as martyrs within minutes of one another. Hyrum had been faithful to his trust even to the laying down of his life. In all respects he was a disciple of the Savior. But his day-to-day striving made him truly great. In contrast, Oliver Cowdery was great when handling the plates and being attended to by angels, but when called upon to faithfully endure day-to-day trials and challenges, Oliver faltered and fell away from the Church.

### **Do small things, not only great ones**

We do not prove our love for the Savior only by doing "some great thing." If the prophet personally asked you to go on a mission to some strange and exotic place, would you go? You would probably make every effort to go. But what about

paying tithing? What about doing your home teaching? We show our love for the Savior by doing the many small acts of faith, devotion, and kindness to others that define our character. This was well demonstrated by the life of Dr. George R. Hill III, former General Authority, who died a few months ago.

Elder Hill was a world authority on coal and a renowned scientist. He received multiple awards and honors for his scientific achievements. He was dean of the College of Mines and Mineral Resources and Envirotech professor of engineering at the University of Utah. But as a person, Elder Hill was humble, self-effacing, and totally dedicated. He served as the bishop of three different wards and as a regional representative before being called as a General Authority. After his release as a General Authority, he became a counselor in a ward bishopric. His last callings, at a time when he was in failing health, were as stake cannery director and member of a ward choir. He filled these last callings with the same commitment as he had all the others. He did whatever he was called upon to do—it did not have to be “some great thing.”

As a friend of mine once said: “When we sacrifice our talents or our earthly or academic honors or our increasingly limited time on the altar to God, the act of sacrifice binds our hearts to Him, and we feel our love for Him increase. When we render any service in the kingdom—be it teaching a . . . lesson or dry pack canning at Welfare Square—it will be of much less value to us if we only see it as a ‘To Do’ item. . . . But if we visualize ourselves laying on the altar to God our talents or our time commitment, such as in attending an inconvenient church meeting, then our sacrifice becomes personal and devotional to Him.”<sup>14</sup>

### **“I wasn’t there for the weeds”**

A story shared by our beloved associate Elder Henry B. Eyring illustrates

this principle of commitment still further. This story is about his father, the great scientist Henry Eyring, who served on the Bonneville Stake high council. He was responsible for the welfare farm, which included a field of onions that needed to be weeded. At that time he was nearly 80 and suffering from painful bone cancer. He assigned himself to do weeding even though the pain was so great that he pulled himself along on his stomach with his elbows. The pain was too great for him to kneel. Yet he smiled, laughed, and talked happily with the others who were there that day weeding that field of onions. I now quote what Elder Eyring said of this incident:

“After all the work was finished and the onions were all weeded, someone [said to] him, ‘Henry, good heavens! You didn’t pull *those* weeds, did you? Those weeds were sprayed two days ago, and they were going to die anyway.’

“Dad just roared. He thought that was the funniest thing. He thought it was a great joke on himself. He had worked through the day in the wrong weeds. They had been sprayed and would have died anyway.

“. . . I [asked] him, ‘Dad, how could you make a joke out of that?’ . . .

“He said something to me that I will never forget. . . . He said, ‘Hal, I wasn’t there for the weeds.’”<sup>15</sup>

### **Be faithful in doing ordinary things**

Small things can have great potential. Television, which is a great blessing to mankind, was conceived by a teenager in Idaho as he was plowing straight furrows in his father’s field with a disc harrow. He envisioned that he could transmit straight lines from one image dissector to be reproduced in another.<sup>16</sup> Often we cannot see the potential in doing seemingly small things. This 14-year-old boy was doing ordinary day-to-day work when this extraordinary idea came to him. As Nephi once commented, “And thus we see that by

small means the Lord can bring about great things.”<sup>17</sup>

You young men are a chosen generation for whom the future holds great promise. The future may require you to compete with young men in a worldwide market. You need special training. You may be selected for training not because of some extraordinary achievement or great thing, but because you got your Eagle Scout Award, your Duty to God Award, graduated from seminary, or served a mission.

In the parable of talents, the one who had increased his talents was told, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”<sup>18</sup> May we all be faithful in doing the day-to-day, ordinary things that prove our worthiness, for they will lead us to and qualify us for great things. I bear witness of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Kings 5:10.
2. 2 Kings 5:12.
3. 2 Kings 5:13.
4. 2 Kings 5:14.
5. Reuben Miller, journal, 1848–1849, Family and Church History Department Archives, 21 Oct. 1848; punctuation and spelling modernized.
6. Letter from Brigham Young to Oliver Cowdery, 22 Nov. 1847, cited by Susan Easton Black in *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* (1997), 76.
7. Miller, journal, Nov. 1848.
8. Miller, journal, 21 Oct. 1848.
9. Heber J. Grant, “Hyrum Smith and His Distinguished Posterity,” *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1918, 854–55.
10. See Ronald K. Esplin, “Hyrum Smith: The Mildness of a Lamb, the Integrity of Job,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2000, 32.
11. “Newel Knight’s Journal,” from “Scraps of Biography” in *Classic Experiences and Adventures* (1969), 65.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 52:8–10.
13. See Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith—Patriarch* (1963), 387.
14. James S. Jardine, “Consecration and Learning,” in Henry B. Eyring, ed., *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar* (1995), 79–80.
15. See Elder Henry B. Eyring, “Waiting upon the Lord,” *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, 22.
16. Richard Folkers, “Philo Farnsworth: ‘Dr. X’s’ Instant Images,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 17 Aug. 1998, 44.
17. 1 Nephi 16:29.
18. Matthew 25:23.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### “Let every man learn his duty”

My dear brethren, it is an awesome responsibility, and yet a precious privilege, to respond to the assignment to speak to you this evening. The excitement, the anticipation of general conference, including the general priesthood meeting—whether in person or by satellite or television—brings joy to our hearts.

The Lord has made it clear what our responsibilities are and has given to us in

the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants a solemn charge: “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”<sup>1</sup>

### A challenging conference assignment

At times the performance of duty, the response to a divine call, or the reaction to a spiritual prompting is not overwhelming. On occasion, however, the duty to

respond is downright overpowering. I experienced such a situation prior to the general conference of April 1966. That's 35 years ago, but I remember it vividly.

I had received my assignment to speak at one of the conference sessions and had prepared and committed to memory a message entitled "Meeting Your Goliath." This was based on the account of the famous battle waged by David and Goliath of olden times.

Then I received a telephone call from President David O. McKay. The conversation went about like this: "Brother Monson, this is President McKay calling. How are you?"

I took a deep breath and answered, "Oh, I'm fine, President, and looking forward to conference."

"That's why I'm calling, Brother Monson. The Saturday morning session will be rebroadcast on Sunday as our Easter message to the world. I will be speaking to an Easter theme and would like you to join me and speak during that important session to that type of theme."

"Of course, President. I will be happy to do so."

That's when the extent of this brief conversation really dawned on me. All of a sudden "Meeting Your Goliath" didn't quite measure up to an Easter message. I knew I must begin to prepare all over again. There was so little time. Indeed, my "Goliath" stood before me.

That night I cleared the kitchen table and placed my typewriter on the tabletop along with a ream of bond paper, with a trusty wastepaper basket by my side to hold all the false starts that accompany such an assignment of preparation. I began at about 7:00 P.M. and had not written a satisfactory line by 1:00 A.M. The wastebasket was filled, but my mind certainly was not. What was I to do? The clock was running—indeed, it was racing. I paused to pray.

Soon thereafter there came to my mind the sadness of my neighbors Mark

and Wilma Shumway in the recent loss of their youngest child. I thought to myself, "Perhaps I could speak directly to them and peripherally to all others, for who hasn't lost a dear one and had occasion to grieve?" My fingers raced over the typewriter keyboard but could barely keep up with my thoughts.

As the first dim light of morning peered through our kitchen window, I had finished the message. The task remained to learn it and then deliver it to the world. Rarely have I struggled so hard to fill a prophetic assignment. However, Heavenly Father had heard my prayer. I shall never forget the experience.

Two landmark passages of scripture filled my soul as the conference session concluded. They are both familiar to you, brethren. They have no expiration date attached to them. First, from Nephi of old: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."<sup>2</sup>

Second is the promise of the Lord Himself to you and to me from the Doctrine and Covenants: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>3</sup>

### **Our duty to save souls**

Many of us assembled tonight hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, while others bear the Aaronic Priesthood. All of us have a solemn duty to honor the priesthood and labor to bring many precious souls unto the Lord. We remember His declaration: "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God."<sup>4</sup> Are we doing all we should? Do we remember the words of President John Taylor: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."<sup>5</sup>

### **Bishop Warner goes to the rescue**

The desire to help another, the quest for the lost sheep, may not always yield success at once. On occasion, progress is slow—even indiscernible. Such was the experience of my longtime friend Gill Warner. He was a newly called bishop when Douglas, a member of his ward serving in the mission field, transgressed and was deprived of his Church membership. Father was saddened; Mother was totally devastated. Douglas soon thereafter moved from the state. The years hurried by, but Bishop Warner, now a member of a high council, never ceased to wonder what had become of Douglas.

In 1975 I attended the stake conference of Brother Warner's stake and held a priesthood leadership meeting early on Sunday morning. I spoke of the Church discipline system and the need to labor earnestly and lovingly to rescue any who had strayed. Gill Warner raised his hand and outlined the story of Douglas. He concluded by posing a question to me: "Do I have any responsibility to work with Douglas to help bring him back to Church membership?"

Gill reminded me later that my response to his question was direct and given without hesitation. I said, "As his former bishop and one who knew and loved him, I would think you would wish to do all you could to bring him back."

Unbeknownst to Gill Warner, Douglas's mother had, the previous week, fasted and prayed that a man would be raised up to help save her son. Gill discovered this when, following the meeting, he felt prompted to call her to report his determination to be of help.

Gill began his odyssey of redemption. Douglas was contacted by him. Old times, happy times, were remembered. Testimony was expressed, love was conveyed, and confidence instilled. The pace was excruciatingly slow. Discouragement frequently entered the scene; but step-by-

step Douglas made headway. At long last prayers were answered, efforts rewarded, and victory attained. Douglas was approved for baptism.

The baptismal date was set, family members gathered, and former bishop Gill Warner flew to the city where Douglas lived and performed the ordinance.

Bishop Warner, through the love of his heart and with a sense of responsibility to a former priest in the Aaronic Priesthood—even the quorum over which he presided—went to the rescue, that not one would be lost.

### **Other faithful bishops**

There may be others, but I have personally known three bishops who, when they presided over their wards, there were in the priests quorum 48 or more young men, or in other words, a full scripturally defined quorum of priests. These three bishops were Alvin R. Dyer, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Alfred B. Smith. Were they overwhelmed by their task? Not at all. Through their diligent efforts and with the help of caring parents and the blessings of the Lord, these bishops guided each member of their respective priests quorum—almost without exception—to the ordination of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, service in the mission field, and marriage in the temple of the Lord. While Brother Dyer and Brother Smith have gone to their eternal reward, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is present with us tonight. Elder Wirthlin, your service and leadership with these young men, now grown older, will never be forgotten.

### **"Be ready always"**

As a 12-year-old boy I had the privilege to serve as the secretary of my deacons quorum. I recall with joy the many assignments we members of that quorum had the opportunity to fill. Passing the sa-

cred sacrament, collecting the monthly fast offerings, and looking after one another come readily to mind. The most frightening one, however, happened at the leadership session of our ward conference. The member of our stake presidency presiding was William F. Perschon. He called on a number of the ward officers to speak. Then, without the slightest warning, President Perschon stood and said, "We will now hear from Thomas S. Monson, secretary of the deacons quorum, to give us an accounting of his service and bear his testimony." I don't recall a thing I said, but I have never forgotten the experience.

Brethren, remember the Apostle Peter's admonition, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>6</sup>

### **Encouraging Fritz Hoerold, the sailor**

During World War II, as a teenager I was privileged to serve as president of the teachers quorum. I was asked to learn and then apply the counsel from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 86: "The duty of the president over the office of the teachers is to preside over . . . the teachers, and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants." I tried my best to live up to this defined duty.

In that quorum was a young man, Fritz Hoerold. He was short in stature but tall on courage. Soon after Fritz turned 17, he enlisted in the United States Navy and was off to training. He then found himself on a large battleship in a number of those bloody engagements in the Pacific. His ship was severely damaged, and many sailors were killed or wounded.

Fritz returned home on leave following such an engagement and came back to our teachers quorum. The quorum adviser invited him to speak to us. My, he looked resplendent in his Navy blues with appropriate war ribbons attached. I re-

member that I asked Fritz to tell us any thoughts he had for our benefit. After all, we were about the same age. With a wry smile he responded, "Don't volunteer for anything!"

I didn't see Fritz again from that time when we were 17 until, a few years ago, I read a magazine article concerning those same battles at sea. I wondered if Fritz Hoerold were even still alive and, if so, if he lived somewhere in Salt Lake City. Through a telephone call I found him and sent the magazine to him. He and his wife expressed their thanks. Having learned that Fritz had not as yet been ordained an elder and hence had never been to the temple, I wrote a letter encouraging him to qualify for the blessings of the temple. On two occasions we happened to see one another at restaurants. His dear wife, Joyce, always urged me, "Keep working with this man of mine." His daughters voiced their approval of their mother's urging. I kept up my encouragement.

Just a few weeks ago I saw in the newspaper obituary columns that Joyce, Fritz's wife, had passed away. How I wished that I had been more successful with my private project to get Fritz to the temple. I noted the time and place of Sister Hoerold's funeral service, rescheduled other appointments, and went to the service. Immediately upon seeing me, Fritz made a beeline to my side. We both shed a few tears. He asked me to be the final speaker.

When I arose to speak, I looked at Fritz and his family and said, "Fritz, I am here today as the president of the teachers quorum of which you and I were once members." I proffered how he and his family could become a "forever family" through temple ordinances—ordinances at which I pledged to officiate when that time came.

I concluded my remarks, choking back the tears of emotion, by saying to Fritz in the hearing and view of his family and all in attendance, "Fritz, my dear



friend and fellow sailor, you have courage; you have determination. You put your life on the line for your country in a time of peril. Now, Fritz, you must heed the call of the bos'n's whistle: 'All aboard—anchor's aweigh'—for your journey to exaltation. Joyce is there waiting for you. I know your dear children and grandchildren are praying for you. Fritz, as your teachers quorum president of long ago, I will strive with all my heart and soul to make certain you don't miss the ship that will carry you and your loved ones to celestial glory."

I gave to him a Navy salute. Fritz stood and returned the salute.

Brethren, may each of us be obedient to the easily remembered couplet "Do your duty, that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest." For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Be worthy of the priesthood you hold

Now, my dear brethren, as I face this great body of men in this hall and realize there are tens of thousands more scattered across the world, all of one mind and of one heart and all carrying the authority of the priesthood of the Living God, I am subdued and humbled. I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This body is unique in all the world. There is nothing else like it. You comprise the legions of the Lord, men ready to do battle with the adversary of truth, men willing to stand up and be counted, men who carry testimonies of the truth, men who have sacrificed and given much for this great cause. May the Lord bless you and sustain you and magnify you. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9).

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
6. 1 Peter 3:15.

### President Hinckley

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express our gratitude to this wonderful choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." The benediction will then be given by Elder Richard B. Wirthlin, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

Brethren, let us be worthy of the priesthood which we hold. Let us live nearer to the Lord. Let us be good husbands and fathers.

Any man who is a tyrant in his own home is unworthy of the priesthood. He cannot be a fit instrument in the hands of the Lord when he does not show respect and kindness and love toward the companion of his choice.

Likewise, any man who is a bad example for his children, who cannot control his temper, or who is involved in dishonest or immoral practices will find the power of his priesthood nullified.

I remind you "that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

"That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:36-37).

Brethren, let us be good men as those favored of the Lord with a bestowal of His divine power upon us.

### **Need for the Perpetual Education Fund**

Now, to a different but related matter. Last April in our priesthood meeting, I announced a new program. I spoke of the large numbers of our missionaries from South America, Mexico, the Philippines, and other areas. They respond to calls and serve with their North American brothers and sisters. They develop strong testimonies. They learn a new way of life. They are highly effective because they speak their native tongues and know the cultures of their native lands. They enjoy a wonderful season of hard and dedicated work.

Then they are released to go back home. Their families are living in poverty, and many of them fall back into the same situation from which they came, unable to move because of a lack of skills and the consequent difficulty in finding good employment.

I spoke to you of the Perpetual Emigration Fund, which was established in the pioneer era of the Church to assist the poor in coming from England and Europe. A revolving fund was established from which small loans were made, which made it possible for 30,000 to emigrate from their native lands and gather in Zion.

I told you we would apply the same principle and create what would be known as the Perpetual Education Fund. Out of

the funds which would be donated by our people, and not from tithing funds, we would create a corpus, the earnings from which would be used to assist our young brethren and sisters in attending school to qualify themselves for better employment. They would develop skills whereby they could earn sufficient to take good care of their families and rise above the poverty level that they and their prior generations had known.

### **Progress of the Perpetual Education Fund**

We had nothing in the fund at the time it was planned. But moving forward in faith, we established an organization, modest in its dimensions, to implement that which we felt was necessary. I am pleased to report that the money has come in, tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars, even millions. This has come from generous members of the Church who love the Lord and wish to assist the less fortunate of His people in rising in the economic world. We now have a substantial sum. It is not all that we need. We hope that these contributions will continue. The size of the corpus will determine the number who can be helped.

Now, six months later, I wish to give you a report of what has been accomplished. First, we called Elder John K. Carmack, who served so well in the First Quorum of the Seventy and who became an emeritus Seventy with this conference. He is an accomplished attorney, a man of sound judgment in business, a man of great ability. He has been appointed managing director, and though he is retired from the work of the Seventy, he will give his full time to the prosecution of this endeavor.

Elder Richard E. Cook of the Seventy, who likewise has become emeritus, will join him in looking after the finances. Elder Cook was formerly assistant controller of the Ford Motor Company, a man experienced in worldwide finance, a most

capable executive, and a man who loves the Lord and the Lord's children.

We have worn out these brethren on one side, and now have turned them over to wear them out on the other side.

They have associated with them Brother Rex Allen, an expert in organization and training, and Brother Chad Evans, who has vast experience in programs of advanced education.

All contribute their time and expertise without compensation.

The program is up and running. These brethren have been very careful to get it off to a proper start with sound governing principles. We have restricted the area in which it will operate initially, but this area will be expanded as we have the means to do so.

These brethren have gone to work to utilize the existing organization of the Church. The program is priesthood based, and that is why it will succeed. It begins with the bishops and the stake presidents. It involves the Church Educational System, the Employment Services offices, and others who work together in a marvelous spirit of cooperation.

### **Examples of how the program is helping**

The program was first implemented in Peru, Chile, and Mexico—areas where the number of returned missionaries is large and the need is great. The local leaders have been enthusiastic and committed. The beneficiaries are learning true principles of self-reliance. Their vision of their potential is greatly broadened. They are selecting good local schools for training and are using, to the extent possible, their personal, family, and other local resources. They are appreciative and willing and deeply grateful for the opportunity afforded them. Let me give you two or three vignettes.

The first is that of a young man who served in the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission. He lives with his faithful mother and

nieces in a poor neighborhood. Their little home has a concrete floor and one light-bulb; the roof leaks, and the window is broken. He was a successful missionary. He says:

"My mission was the best thing that I have been able to do in my life. I learned to be obedient to the commandments and to be patient in my afflictions. I also learned some English and to manage my money, my time, and my skills better.

"Then, when I finished my mission, going home was difficult. My American companions went back to a university. But there is a lot of poverty in our country. It is very difficult to get an education. My mother does her best, but she can't help us. She has suffered so much, and I am her hope.

"When I learned of the Perpetual Education Fund, I felt so happy. The prophet recognized our efforts. I was filled with joy. . . . There was a possibility I could study, become self-reliant, have a family, help my mother.

"I will study accounting at a local school where I can study and work. It is a short course, just three years long. I have to keep working as a janitor, but that is OK. Once I graduate and get a job in accounting, I will work toward higher education in international business.

"This is our opportunity, and we cannot fail. The Lord trusts us. I have read many times in the Book of Mormon the words the Lord told the prophets, that as we keep the commandments, we would prosper in the land. This is being fulfilled. I am so grateful to God for this great opportunity to receive what my brothers and sisters did not have, to help my family, to accomplish my goals. And I am excited to repay the loan to see others be so blessed. I know the Lord will bless me as I do it."

Now, isn't that wonderful? Now another. A young man in Mexico City was approved to receive a loan of approximately \$1,000 to make it possible for him to attend school to become a diesel me-

chanic. He has said: "My promise is to give my best in order to feel satisfied with my efforts. I know this program is valuable and important. Because of this, I am trying to take maximum advantage of this for the future. I will be able to serve and help the poor and help counsel my family members. I thank my Father in Heaven for this beautiful and inspired program."

A loan was recently approved for another young man from Mexico City, who served in the Nevada Las Vegas Mission. He desires to become a dental technician. His training will require 15 months of dedicated work. He says, "My promise upon finishing my studies at the technical school with the help of the Perpetual Education Fund is to repay the loan so that other returned missionaries can enjoy these blessings."

And so we have begun this work of making it possible for our faithful and able young men and women to climb the ladder which will assure them of economic success. With greatly improved opportunities, they will step out of the cycle of poverty which they and those before them have known for so long. They have served missions, and they will continue to serve in the Church. They will become leaders in this great work in their native lands. They will pay their tithes and offerings, which will make it possible for the Church to expand its work across the world.

### **Anticipated growth of the program**

We anticipate that by the end of this year we will have about 1,200 in the program. Three years from now, we estimate there will be more than 3,000. The opportunities are there. The need is urgent. We may fail in a few cases. But the vast majority will perform as we expect, both young men and young women.

Our only limitation will be the amount we have in the fund. We again invite all

who wish to participate to make a contribution, large or small. We can then extend this great work which will make it possible for those of faith and latent ability to rise to economic independence as faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **An example to show the tremendous need**

Can you grasp the meaning of the tremendous work of this Church? Let me paint you a scenario. A pair of missionaries knock on the door of a little home somewhere in Peru. A woman answers. She does not quite understand what the missionaries want. But she invites them in. They arrange to come when her husband and other members of the family are there.

The missionaries teach them. Touched by the power of the Spirit, they respond to the message of eternal truth. They are baptized.

The family is active in the Church. They pay an honest but very meager tithing. They have a son or daughter in that family who is in his or her late teens. At the right time, the son or the daughter is called to serve a mission. The family does all it can to support him or her, and the remainder is made up from the missionary fund, which comes of the contributions of the Saints.

The son or daughter works with a companion from the United States or Canada. He or she learns English, while the companion's Spanish is greatly improved. They work together with love and appreciation and respect, one for another, representatives of two great divergent cultures.

Upon completion of their missions, the North American returns home and goes back to school. The Peruvian returns home and is hopeful only of finding work of a menial nature. The pay is ever so small. The future is dismal. He or she does

not have the needed skills to rise above such employment. And then comes this bright ray of hope. Well, brethren, you know the picture. I need not labor it further. The way before us is clear, the need is tremendous, and the Lord has pointed the way.

### **A fund to help aspiring teachers**

Elder Carmack recently came across an old account book. He brought it to me. We discovered that way back in 1903, a small fund was established to help aspiring schoolteachers qualify for greater opportunities through small loans to assist them while going to school.

It was continued for 30 years until it was finally dropped during the Depression.

I was amazed at the names contained in that old ledger book. Two became university presidents. Others became well-known and highly qualified educators. The ledger shows repayments of \$10.00, of \$25.00, of \$3.10 interest, and such things. One of the beneficiaries of that program became a bishop, then a stake president, then an Apostle, and eventually a counselor in the First Presidency.

### **Reach down to lift another**

Brethren, we need to care for one another more diligently. We need to make a little more effort to assist those who are down at the bottom of the ladder. We need to give encouragement and a lifting hand to men and women of faith and integrity and ability, who can climb that ladder with a little help.

That principle applies not only with reference to our present undertaking in this fund, but in a more general way. Let us open our hearts; let us reach down and lift up; let us open our purses; let us show a greater love for our fellowmen.

The Lord has blessed us so abundantly. And the needs are so great. He has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

I read from the book of Acts:

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

"And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:2-8).

Now note that Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up.

Peter had to reach down to lift the lame man. We must also reach down.

God bless you, my dear brethren, young and old. Keep the faith. Minister with love. Rear your families in the way of the Lord. "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 7, 2001. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. The choir sang "The Morning Breaks" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" and will now favor us with "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord." Following the choir, the invocation will be offered by Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy.

After the invocation, the choir will sing "If You Could Hie to Kolob." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then be our first speaker. He will be followed by President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

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The choir sang "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord."

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

The choir sang "If You Could Hie to Kolob."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

As I stand before you this morning, my thoughts return to the time of my youth when in Sunday School we often sang the lovely hymn:

Welcome, welcome, Sabbath morning;  
Now we rest from ev'ry care.  
Welcome, welcome is thy dawning,  
Holy Sabbath, day of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

This Sabbath day I pray for an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the invitation to address you.

### Responses to events of September 11

All of us have been dramatically affected by the tragic events of that fateful day, September 11, 2001. Suddenly, without warning, devastating destruction left death in its wake and snuffed out the lives of enormous numbers of men, women, and children. Evaporated were well-laid plans for pleasant futures. Substituted therefor were tears of sorrow and cries of pain from wounded souls.

Countless are the reports we have heard during the past three and a half weeks of those who were touched in some way—either directly or indirectly—by the events of that day. I should like to share with you the comments of a Church member, Rebecca Sindar, who was on a flight from Salt Lake City to Dallas on the morning of Tuesday, September 11. The flight was interrupted, as were all flights in the air at the time of the tragedies, and the plane grounded in Amarillo, Texas. Sister Sindar reports:

"We all left the plane and found televisions in the airport, where we crowded around to see the broadcast of what had happened. People were lined up to call loved ones to assure them we were safely on the ground. I shall always remember the 12 or so missionaries who were on their way to the mission field on our flight. They made phone calls, and then we saw them huddled in a circle in a corner of the airport, kneeling in prayer together. How I wish I could have captured that moment to share with the mothers and fathers of those sweet young men as they saw the need for prayer right away."

### Dispelling the darkness of death

My brothers and sisters, death eventually comes to all mankind. It comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children. Death is one fact that no one can escape or deny.

Frequently death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and gaiety. Death lays its heavy hand upon those dear to us and at times leaves us baffled and wondering. In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But for the most part, we think of it as the enemy of human happiness.

The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life," spoke the Master. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>2</sup>

This reassurance—yes, even holy confirmation—of life beyond the grave could well provide the peace promised by the Savior when He assured His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>3</sup>

Out of the darkness and the horror of Calvary came the voice of the Lamb, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."<sup>4</sup> And the dark was no longer dark, for He was with His Father. He had come from God, and to Him He had returned. So also those who walk with God in this earthly pilgrimage know from blessed experience that He will not abandon His children who trust in Him. In the night of death, His presence will be "better than [a] light and safer than a known way."<sup>5</sup>

### Testimonies of the Savior's Resurrection

Saul, on the road to Damascus, had a vision of the risen, exalted Christ. Later, as Paul, defender of truth and fearless missionary in the service of the Master, he bore witness of the risen Lord as he declared to the Saints at Corinth:

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

"... He was buried, and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

"... He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. . . .

"After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

"And last of all he was seen of me."<sup>6</sup>

In our dispensation this same testimony was spoken boldly by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he and Sidney Rigdon testified:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God."<sup>7</sup>

This is the knowledge that sustains. This is the truth that comforts. This is the assurance that guides those bowed down with grief out of the shadows and into the light. It is available to all.

### What are we doing with today?

How fragile life; how certain death. We do not know when we will be required to leave this mortal existence. And so I ask, "What are we doing with today?" If we live only for tomorrow, we'll have a lot of empty yesterdays today. Have we been guilty of declaring, "I've been thinking about making some course corrections in my life. I plan to take the first step—tomorrow"? With such thinking, tomorrow is forever. Such tomorrows rarely come unless we do something about them today. As the familiar hymn teaches:

There are chances for work all around  
just now,

Opportunities right in our way.

Do not let them pass by, saying, "Sometime I'll try,"

But go and do something today.<sup>8</sup>

Let us ask ourselves the questions: "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?"<sup>9</sup> What a formula for happiness! What a prescription for contentment, for inner

peace—to have inspired gratitude in another human being.

Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

### Jacob Marley regrets lost opportunities

As we remember that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God,"<sup>10</sup> we will not find ourselves in the unenviable position of Jacob Marley's ghost, who spoke to Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' immortal *A Christmas Carol*. Marley spoke sadly of opportunities lost. Said he: "Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I. Oh! such was I!"

Marley added: "Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!"

Fortunately, as we know, Ebenezer Scrooge changed his life for the better. I love his line, "I am not the man I was."<sup>11</sup>

Why is the story *A Christmas Carol* so popular? Why is it ever new? I personally feel it is inspired of God. It brings out the best within human nature. It gives hope. It motivates change. We can turn from the paths which would lead us down and, with a song in our hearts, follow a star and walk toward the light. We can quicken our step, bolster our courage, and bask in the sunlight of truth. We can hear more clearly the laughter of little children. We can dry the tear of the weeping. We can comfort the dying by sharing the promise



of eternal life. If we lift one weary hand which hangs down, if we bring peace to one struggling soul, if we give as did the Master, we can—by showing the way—become a guiding star for some lost mariner.

Because life is fragile and death inevitable, we must make the most of each day.

### **A grandma regrets “war” with neighbor**

There are many ways in which we can misuse our opportunities. Some time ago I read a tender story written by Louise Dickinson Rich which vividly illustrates this truth. She wrote:

“My grandmother had an enemy named Mrs. Wilcox. Grandma and Mrs. Wilcox moved, as brides, into next-door houses on . . . Main Street of the tiny town in which they were to live out their lives. I don’t know what started the war [between them]—and I don’t think that by the time I came along, over 30 years later, they remembered themselves what started it. . . .

“ . . . This was no polite sparring match. This was . . . total war. Nothing in town escaped repercussion. The 300-year-old church, which had lived through the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War, almost went down when Grandma and Mrs. Wilcox fought the Battle of the Ladies’ Aid. Grandma won that engagement, but it was a hollow victory. Mrs. Wilcox, since she couldn’t be president, resigned . . . in a huff. . . . What’s the fun of running a thing if you can’t force your . . . enemy to ‘eat crow’?

Mrs. Wilcox won the Battle of the Public Library, getting her niece Gertrude appointed librarian instead of my Aunt Phyllis. The day Gertrude took over was the day Grandma stopped reading library books. [They became] ‘filthy gemy things’ . . . overnight.

“The Battle of the High School was a draw. The principal got a better job and left before Mrs. Wilcox succeeded in hav-

ing him ousted, or Grandma in having him given life tenure in office.

“ . . . When, as children, we visited my grandmother, part of the fun was making faces at Mrs. Wilcox’s . . . grandchildren. . . . One banner day, we put a snake into the Wilcox rain barrel. My grandmother made token protests, but we sensed tacit sympathy. . . .

“Don’t think for a minute that this was a one-sided campaign. Mrs. Wilcox had grandchildren, too. . . . Grandma didn’t get off scot free. . . . Never a windy wash-day went by [that the clothesline didn’t mysteriously break, with the clothes falling in the dirt].

“I don’t know how Grandma could have borne her troubles so long if it hadn’t been for the household page of her daily Boston newspaper. This household page was a wonderful institution. Besides the usual cooking hints and cleaning advice, it had a department composed of letters from readers to each other. The idea was that if you had a problem—or even only some steam to blow off—you wrote a letter to the paper, signing some fancy name like Arbutus. That was Grandma’s pen name. Then some of the other ladies who had the same problem wrote back and told you what they had done about it, signing themselves One Who Knows or Xanthippe or whatever. Very often, the problem disposed of, you kept on for years writing to each other through the columns of the paper, telling each other about your children and your canning and your new dining room suite. That’s what happened to Grandma. She and a woman called Sea Gull corresponded for a quarter of a century. Sea Gull was Grandma’s true . . . friend.

“When I was about 16, Mrs. Wilcox died. In a small town, no matter how much you have hated your next-door neighbor, it is only common decency to run over and see what practical service you can do the bereaved.

"Grandma, neat in a percale apron to show that she meant what she said about being put to work, crossed the two lawns to the Wilcox house, where the Wilcox daughters set her to cleaning the already immaculate front parlor for the funeral. And there on the parlor table in the place of honor was a huge scrapbook, and in the scrapbook, pasted neatly in parallel columns were [Grandma's] letters to Sea Gull over the years and Sea Gull's letters to her. [Though neither woman had known it,] Grandma's worst enemy had been her best friend.

"That was the only time I remembered seeing my grandmother cry. I didn't know then exactly what she was crying about, but I do now. She was crying for all the wasted years that could never be salvaged."<sup>12</sup>

### Live so we have no regrets

My brothers and sisters, may we resolve from this day forward to fill our hearts with love. May we go the extra mile to include in our lives any who are lonely or downhearted or who are suffering in any way. May we "[cheer] up the sad and [make] someone feel glad."<sup>13</sup> May we live

so that when that final summons is heard, we may have no serious regrets, no unfinished business, but will be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "Welcome, Welcome, Sabbath Morning," *Hymns*, no. 280.
2. John 11:25-26.
3. John 14:27.
4. Luke 23:46.
5. Minnie Louise Haskins, "The Gate of the Year," in James Dalton Morrison, ed. *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.
6. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22-24.
8. "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
9. *Hymns*, no. 223.
10. Mosiah 2:17.
11. In *Works of Charles Dickens* (1982), 543, 581.
12. "The True Story of Arbutus and Sea Gull," in Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1996), 201-4.
13. *Hymns*, no. 223.
14. 2 Timothy 4:7.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

I hold in my hand a first-edition copy of the Book of Mormon. It was printed in 1830 on a hand-operated letter press at the E. B. Grandin Company in the village of Palmyra, New York.

In June of 1829, Joseph Smith, then 23 years old, called on 23-year-old Mr. Grandin in company with Martin Harris, a local farmer. Mr. Grandin had three months earlier advertised his intent to publish books. Joseph Smith provided pages of a handwritten manuscript.

If the content of the book did not doom it to remain obscure, the account of where it came from certainly would. Imagine an angel directing a teenage boy to the woods where he found buried a stone vault and a set of golden plates.

The writings on the plates were translated by use of a Urim and Thummim, which is referred to a number of times in the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> and described by Hebrew scholars as an instrument "whereby the revelation was given and truth declared."<sup>2</sup>

Before the book was off the press, pages of it were stolen and printed in the local newspaper, accompanied by ridicule. Opposition was destined to excite mobs to kill the Prophet Joseph Smith and drive those who believed him into the wilderness.

From that very unlikely beginning to this day, 108,936,922 copies of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ have been printed. It has been published in 62 languages, with selections of it in another 37 languages, and 22 more translations are in process.

Now 60,000 full-time missionaries in 142 countries pay their own way to devote two years of their lives to testify that the Book of Mormon is true.

### **Herbert Schreiter and Manfred Schütze**

For generations it has inspired those who read it. Herbert Schreiter had read his German translation of the Book of Mormon. In it he read:

"When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."<sup>3</sup>

Herbert Schreiter tested the promise and joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1946, released as a prisoner of war, Herbert returned to his wife and three little daughters in Leipzig, Germany. Soon thereafter, he went as a missionary to Bernburg, Germany. Alone, without a companion, he sat cold and hungry in a room, wondering how he should begin.

He thought of what he had to offer the war-devastated people. He printed by hand a placard which read, "Will there be a further life after death?" and posted it on a wall.

About that same time, a family from a small village in Poland came to Bernburg.

Manfred Schütze was four years old. His father had been killed in the war. His mother, with his grandparents and his mother's sister, also a widow, and her two little girls, were forced to evacuate their village with only 30 minutes' notice. They grabbed what they could and headed west. Manfred and his mother pulled and pushed a small cart. At times the ailing grandfather rode in the cart. One Polish officer looked at the pathetic little Manfred and began to weep.

At the border, soldiers ransacked their belongings and threw their bedding into the river. Manfred and his mother were then separated from the family. His mother wondered if they might have gone to Bernburg, where her grandmother was born, perhaps to relatives there. After weeks of unbelievable suffering, they arrived in Bernburg and found the family.

The seven of them lived together in one small room. But their troubles were not over. The mother of the two little girls died. The grieving grandmother cried out for a preacher, and asked, "Will I see my family again?"

The preacher answered, "My dear lady, there is no such thing as the Resurrection. They who are dead are dead!"

They wrapped the body in a paper bag for burial.

On the way from the grave, the grandfather talked of taking their own lives, as many others had done. Just then they saw the placard that Elder Schreiter had posted on the building—"Is there further life after death?"—with an invitation from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At a meeting they learned of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

The book explains:

- The purpose of mortal life and death;<sup>4</sup>
- The certainty of life after death;<sup>5</sup>

- What happens when the spirit leaves the body;<sup>6</sup>
- The description of the Resurrection;<sup>7</sup>
- How to receive and retain a remission of your sins;<sup>8</sup>
- What hold justice or mercy may have on you;<sup>9</sup>
- What to pray for;<sup>10</sup>
- Priesthood;<sup>11</sup>
- Covenants and ordinances;<sup>12</sup>
- The office and ministry of angels;<sup>13</sup>
- The still, small voice of personal revelation;<sup>14</sup>
- And preeminently, the mission of Jesus Christ;<sup>15</sup>
- And many other jewels that make up the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They joined the Church. Soon their lives changed. The grandfather found work as a baker and could provide bread for his family and also for Elder Schreiter, who had given them "the bread of life."<sup>16</sup>

Then help came from the Church in the United States. Manfred grew up eating grain out of little sacks with a picture of a beehive on them and peaches from California. He wore clothes from the welfare supplies of the Church.

Soon after I was released from the air force, I went to the welfare mill at Kaysville, Utah, to help fill bags of wheat for shipment to the starving people in Europe. I like to think one of the bags of grain that I filled myself went to Manfred Schütze and his mother. If not, it went to others in equal need.

Elder Dieter Uchtdorf, who sits with us on the stand today as one of the Seventy, remembers to this very day the smell of the grain and the feel of it in his little-boy hands. Perhaps one of the bags I filled reached his family.

### First attempts to read the book

When I was about 10, I made my first attempt to read the Book of Mormon.

The first part was easy-flowing New Testament language. Then I came to the writings of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. I could not understand them; I found them difficult to read. I laid the book aside.

I made other attempts to read the Book of Mormon. I did not read it all until I was on a troop ship with other bomber crew members, headed for the war in the Pacific. I determined that I would read the Book of Mormon and find out for myself whether it is true or not. Carefully I read and reread the book. I tested the promise that it contained. That was a life-changing event. After that, I never set the book aside.

### A young man stands up for the book

Many young people have done better than I did.

A 15-year-old son of a mission president attended high school with very few members of the Church.

One day the class was given a true-or-false test. Matthew was confident that he knew the answers to all except for question 15. It read, "Joseph Smith, the alleged Mormon prophet, wrote the Book of Mormon. True or false?"

He could not answer it either way, so, being a clever teenager, he rewrote the question. He crossed out the word *alleged* and replaced the word *wrote* with *translated*. It then read, "Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, translated the Book of Mormon." He marked it true and handed it in.

The next day the teacher sternly asked why he had changed the question. He smiled and said, "Because Joseph Smith did not *write* the Book of Mormon; he *translated* it. And he was not an *alleged* prophet; he was a prophet."

He was then invited to tell the class how he knew that.<sup>17</sup>

### Treasured scriptures

In England my wife and I became acquainted with Dorothy James, the widow of a clergyman who lived at the Close of Winchester Cathedral. She brought out a family Bible which had been lost for many years.

Years before, the possessions of a family member had been sold. The new owner found the Bible in a small desk that had remained unopened for over 20 years. There were also some letters written by a child named Beaumont James. He was able to find the James family and return the long-lost family Bible.

On the title page my wife read the following handwritten note: "This Bible has been in our family since the time of Thomas James in 1683 who was a lineal descendant of Thomas James first librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, who was buried in New College Chapel August 1629. [Signed] C. T. C. James, 1880."

The margins and the open pages were completely filled with notations written in English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. One entry particularly touched her. From the bottom of the title page she read, "The fairest Impression of the Bible is to have it well printed on the Readers heart."

And then this quote from Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in the tables of stone, but in fleshly table of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).<sup>18</sup>

My Book of Mormon also has many notes in the margins and is heavily underlined. I was in Florida once with President Hinckley. He turned from the pulpit and asked for a copy of the scriptures. I handed him my copy. He thumbed through it for a few seconds, turned and handed it back, saying, "I can't read this. You have got everything crossed out!"

### Book of Mormon heals starving spirits

Amos prophesied of "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."<sup>19</sup>

In a world ever more dangerous than the world of little Manfred Schütze and Dieter Uchtdorf, the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ has the nourishing power to heal starving spirits of the world.

Manfred Schütze is now a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy and supervises our seminaries in Eastern Europe. His mother, now 88, still attends the temple at Freiberg, where Herbert Schreiter once served as a counselor to the president.

### Testimonies in many languages

With Elder Walter F. González, a new member of the Seventy from Uruguay, I attended a conference in Moroni, Utah, a town with a Book of Mormon name. There is no doctor or dentist in Moroni. They must leave town to shop for groceries. Their students are bused to a consolidated high school across the valley.

We held a meeting with 236 present. Lest Elder González see only ordinary rural farmers, I gave this sentence of testimony: "I know the gospel is true and that Jesus is the Christ." I asked if someone could repeat it in Spanish. Several hands went up. Could someone repeat it in another language? It was repeated in:

Japanese  
Spanish  
German  
Portuguese  
Russian  
Chinese  
Tongan  
Italian  
Tagalog  
Dutch  
Finnish  
Maori

Polish  
Korean

French—15 languages.

Again in English: I know the gospel is true and that Jesus is the Christ.

### **“We preach of Christ”**

I love this Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Study it and one can understand both the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Bible. I know it is true.

In this 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, printed by 23-year-old Egbert B. Grandin for 23-year-old Joseph Smith Jr., I read from page 105:

“We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>20</sup>

And that, I assure you, is exactly what we do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65.
2. John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 10 vols. (1867–81), “Urim and Thummim,” 10:676.
3. Moroni 10:4–5.

4. See 2 Nephi 2:21; 33:9; Alma 12:24; 34:32; 42:4.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:3–7; Mosiah 16:8; 3 Nephi 11.
6. See Alma 34:34; 40:11–14, 21.
7. See 2 Nephi 9:12; Alma 40:23; 41:2; 3 Nephi 11:1–16.
8. See Mosiah 4:1–3, 12, 26; Alma 4:14.
9. See Alma 34:15–16; 41:14; 42:15–16, 22–25.
10. See 2 Nephi 4:35; 32:8–9; Enos 1:9; Alma 13:28; 34:17–27; 37:36–37; 3 Nephi 18:19–21; Moroni 7:26.
11. See 2 Nephi 6:2; Mosiah 18:18; Alma 6:1; 13; 3 Nephi 11:21; 18:37; Moroni 2:2; 3:4.
12. See 2 Nephi 11:5; Mosiah 5:5; 18:13; Alma 13:8, 16.
13. See 2 Nephi 32:2–3; Omni 1:25; Moroni 7:25, 37.
14. See 1 Nephi 16:9; 17:44–45; Enos 1:10; Alma 32:23; Helaman 5:30; 3 Nephi 11:3.
15. See 1 Nephi 11:13–33; 2 Nephi 2:6–10; Mosiah 3:5–12; Alma 7:7–13; 3 Nephi 27:13–16.
16. John 6:35.
17. See George D. Durrant, “Helping Your Children Be Missionaries,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1977, 67.
18. As quoted in Donna Smith Packer, *On Footings from the Past: The Packers in England* (1988), 329.
19. Amos 8:11.
20. The Book of Mormon (1830), 105; see also 2 Nephi 25:26.

## **Bishop H. David Burton**

### **Stand tall on the side of righteousness**

A man of wisdom often offered this simple piece of advice: “David, stand tall.” My dad did not expect that I would add inches to my stature or rise up on my tiptoes. He meant that I should be courageous in my decision, not compromising principles, not violating spiritual values, and not shrinking from responsibility.

When I have followed his advice, life has been very good. When I have failed to stand tall, life has usually been unpleasant.

I recently asked my two young grandsons what it would mean to them if Heavenly Father asked them to stand tall. I noticed one inadvertently raised himself to his tippy-toes so as to seem a little taller. And then they quickly said in unison, “He wants us to do what is right.”

Out of the deep anguish and turmoil of September 11th have come many instances of men, women, and nations standing tall. Foes and friends have come together against a common enemy. Uncommon acts of bravery have become commonplace. Humanitarian response seems to know no bounds. Men and women, regardless of race or creed, have reached out to victims and their families. Countless prayers have been offered. The forces for good are standing tall against the forces of terror and senseless mayhem.

It is said that a fence-sitter eventually has to come down on one side or the other. If we are sitting on the top of life's fences, now is the time to muster the courage to stand tall on the side of righteousness and shun the shackles of sin.

### **Jesus stood tall against temptation**

The life, ministry, and teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ, provide a template for introspective assessment. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of one who always stood tall. He is the one who personifies integrity, strength, and courage. I would like to use three examples from the Savior's ministry.

First, after His baptism, Jesus was prompted to remove Himself to commune with His Father. For 40 days He chose not to eat, in order that His mortal body might be subjected to His divine spirit. In this weakened state, He was visited by the tempter, who suggested that the Savior use His great power to perform extraordinary feats.

To the tempter's request that He turn stones to bread to relieve His hunger, the Savior stood tall by replying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). To the notion that He throw himself from a high place to be saved by the hands of angels, He triumphantly stated, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). To the proposition that the Savior fall on

His knees and worship the devil in exchange for the wealth and splendor of earthly glory, He valiantly replied, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

### **Stand tall against love of material things**

The tempter's insidious ways continue unabated. The quest for "things" has enticed some to depart from principle. Failure to distinguish between needs and wants has muddled men's minds. Families are starving for the affection, recognition, and leadership of parents. Many are resorting to unethical, immoral, and, on occasion, illegal methods to acquire more and more material goods.

If you find yourself entrapped in the pursuit of material things, now is the time to courageously stand tall. If you worship the items money can buy more than you cherish the love of God, now is the time to stand tall. If you have been blessed with abundance beyond your needs, now is the time to stand tall in sharing with those whose needs remain unfulfilled.

### **Stand tall against profanity and vulgarity**

The second example—on one occasion the Savior called together His followers and said, "Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:10–11).

As a normal part of everyday language, many people take the name of God in vain. Among our youth, vulgar and crude terms seem to come easily as they describe their feelings. My young friends, now is the time to stand tall in eliminating these words from your vocabulary. You know the words to which I refer. Unfortunately, you hear them used over and over again in your schools, music, and sports.

Will it take courage to stand tall? Of course it will. Can you muster the courage? Of course you can. Seek strength

from your Heavenly Father to overcome it. The Savior said, "Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing" (D&C 19:38). It has been said, "You reach the greatest heights while on your knees" ("Standing Tall," *New Era*, Oct. 2001, 19).

Profanity and crudeness do not exalt; they defile. My wife and I have attended hundreds of youth sporting events. Too often we hear profanity expressed by coaches and other adults who should be role models. Adults need to stand tall in eliminating crude and profane language.

### **Stand tall in dressing modestly**

You have heard the phrase "Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear your words." Our actions indeed speak volumes about us. We need to stand tall in following the counsel of the prophets to attire ourselves modestly. "Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight [form-fitting] clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire" (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 12). Clothing that is modest, neat, and clean uplifts. Immodest clothing degrades. If there is any question, ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord's presence?" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 13).

Mothers, you can be our examples and conscience in this important matter. But remember, young people can detect hypocrisy as easily as they can smell the wonderful aroma of freshly baked bread. Parents, counsel your sons and daughters and then join with them in standing tall against immodesty.

### **Stand tall in reaching out to neighbors**

Third, you will recall that in response to the lawyer's question about who is our neighbor, the Savior recounted that a certain man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among thieves and was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. The first to

come his way was a priest, who looked away and passed by on the other side of the road. Likewise, the next to discover his plight stopped to look but passed without rendering aid. The third, a Samaritan, bound up his wounds and made arrangements for his care. Then Jesus asked which of them was the neighbor. The lawyer responded that the neighbor was he who showed mercy. In response the Savior said, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37; see verses 30–37).

As we reach out to our neighbors, are we sensitive not only to their needs but also to their feelings? Is our neighborliness selective and confined to those of our faith, or is it all-inclusive regardless of faith, color, or any other perceived differences?

To the Savior there was no reservation in the definition of *neighbor*. Sometimes our unique Church language can be misinterpreted and appear insensitive or even condescending to our neighbors. As Elder Ballard suggested yesterday, I too feel uncomfortable with the term *non-member*. When we refer to others as non-members, they might wonder if we feel they are not members of our community, city, or even the human race. We are quick to say we are accepting and inclusive in our neighborly relationships, but to some we too often come across as barely tolerating. Love of neighbor comes only after love of self and God. Let us stand tall in extending unequivocal love and respect to our neighbors.

### **Is it worth it to stand tall?**

A dear family friend passed away a few years ago. He and his wife enjoyed hiking together in the mountains. One fall afternoon they hiked several miles up a steep mountainside to a beautiful waterfall. While descending the trail, several hikers making the climb upward asked the question, "Is it worth it?" Our friends' reply was always in the affirmative. Later, they observed that the effort was worth it



only if you enjoyed the fresh air, alpine beauty, exercise, and loving companionship.

Feeling intense pressure from peers and the need to be accepted, some may ask the question, "Is it worth the effort to stand tall?" To that question I respond, "If life eternal is important to you and if you want to experience real joy in this life, then standing tall is worth the determination and tireless daily effort it requires."

May we all stand tall on the side of righteousness, I pray in the sacred name of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Sister Sharon G. Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will then address us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "Did You Think to Pray?"

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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## Sister Sharon G. Larsen

### "They that be with us are more"

As parents and leaders of youth, it might be easy to lose our faith and wring our hands with worry for them and the world they are living in.

Our circumstances today are not without precedence or hope. When Enoch was the prophet, the heavens wept because of the wickedness of the world (see Moses 7:28-37). There is no doubt the heavens are weeping today.

Elisha the prophet was surrounded by the whole Syrian army determined to kill him. He reassured his worried and only companion, who was busy counting Syrian heads, that when we are on the Lord's side, regardless of numbers or worldly power, we are in the majority. I testify that the consoling words of Elisha to his young friend are still true today: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). The Lord will surround and protect our young people with chariots of fire, as He did for Elisha, in the form of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, leaders, and friends who will vigorously love them and lead them.

### Despite their strength, youth need help

The past four years I have been immersed in the work of Young Women. As we cross the world visiting with them, we learn to some degree about their hopes and dreams and fears and disappointments. I echo President Hinckley's words: this is "the best generation this Church has ever had" (*Church News*, 15 Feb. 1997, 3). As a whole, these young people are valiantly and energetically taking a stand for goodness and decency.

Strong and good as they are, our young people need our help. And help is available: The Young Women Personal Progress program, the Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program, the *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth*, and the revised *For the Strength of Youth* will help parents and leaders be actively and directly involved in holding back the sliding scale of morality. Our youth want more than landlords. They want people who will love them and lead them.

### A father's expressions of love

A vital part of that loving is listening. I know what listening really is because I have had the blessed experience.

I used to farm with my dad. I didn't always enjoy it, but when lunchtime came we would sit in the shade of the tall poplar trees, eat our lunch, and talk. My dad didn't use this as a golden teaching moment to lay down the law and straighten out his daughter. We just talked—about anything and everything.

This was the time I could ask questions. I felt so safe I could even ask questions that might provoke him. I remember asking him, "Why did you embarrass me in front of my friends last week when I had stayed out too late and you came and got me?"

His answer leads to another aspect of love. He wasn't being arbitrary. There were certain standards of behavior I was expected to live. He said, "Having you out late worried me. Above all, I want you safe." I realized that his love for me was stronger than his desire for sleep or the inconvenience of getting dressed and driving down the road looking for me.

Whether in a hayfield or other casual places, those times together can fill the reservoir for other times that may not be as idyllic and serene. Relationships stay intact with this kind of investment—in spite of hard doctrine and correction—or maybe because of it.

Love is listening when *they* are ready to talk—midnight, 6:00 A.M. on their way to seminary, or when you're busy with your urgencies. Have you seen the Church spot on television showing a darkened bedroom? The door opens, and in walks a little girl with a book under her arm. She goes over to where her dad is sound asleep and asks, "Daddy, will you read me a story?" The dad doesn't open his eyes; he just mumbles in his sleep, "Oh, honey, Daddy is so tired. Ask Mommy." The little girl patters over to where her mother is sleeping and asks, "Mommy, can Daddy read me a story?" You see the dad's eyes pop open, and the next picture shows all three of them together, and Dad is reading a story.

## Importance of leading by example

Loving may come naturally, but leading is a polished skill that maybe we don't take seriously enough. We lead by example more strongly than any other way. That is a heavy burden for parents and leaders of youth.

Can our young people tell by the way we live and talk and pray that we love the Lord? Do they know that their Father in Heaven is a God of love by the way they feel when they are with us? Can they feel secure that we will not be moved by every wind of doctrine or the craftiness of social pressure and worldly acceptance? (see Ephesians 4:14).

If we are going to lead in righteousness, there can't be any question where we stand. Small uncertainties on our part can produce large uncertainties in our youth.

I wonder sometimes if we as mothers are the ones who make our children feel the pressure to be popular and accepted. Educating our desires so our standards are the Lord's standards sends a clear message that in the Lord's kingdom there are no double standards.

Following President Hinckley's talk to the youth last November, a young woman reported to her mother that her Young Women leader had removed her second set of earrings. These scrutinizing young people notice. They notice how short your shorts are or if you had to tuck and pin to wear that blouse; they notice what you wear (or don't wear) when you are working in your yard; they notice which line you are standing in at the movie theater.

## Commitment yields eternal dividends

We have made covenants with the Lord, and leading often tests the level of our commitment to those covenants.

A young mother said, "It takes an enormous amount of time and energy to be a good parent. It is easier to let my children fall asleep in front of the television while I clean up the house and then put

them to bed than it is to read the scriptures to them, have prayers and stories, and tuck them in. But they look forward to this evening ritual, and I know this investment, even when I'm too tired to move, will pay eternal dividends." Consistent leading helps youth make wise choices, and our trust in them increases.

I remember when I was about 16 years old overhearing Mom talking to Dad. She was concerned about some choices I was making. I was not guilty of any sin more serious than the immaturity of youth, but Mom was worried. What Dad said seared into my heart. "Don't worry," he said to Mom. "I trust Sharon, and I know she'll do the right thing." Those hours in the hayfield paid off then and there. From that moment on I was bound to those loving, trusting parents.

One of the greatest tests for parents and leaders is to love the one who seems to be unlovable. This is tough duty. It stretches the heartstrings and wrenches the soul. When heartbroken parents pray for help, it often comes in the form of angel aunts or uncles, grandmas or grandpas, good friends, and leaders surrounding our loved one. They can reinforce our very message that may put our child on the track we've been praying for.

## Harvest time for parents

Loving wisely and leading purposefully will help stem the tide of wickedness as we prepare the next generation for the exhilarating delights of parenthood. We never forget the joys of our 12-year-old when he first passes the sacrament or hearing the sacramental prayer given in the voice of our son. How do you explain the feeling of hearing your daughter bear her testimony of the Savior or watching her receive her Young Womanhood medalion?

We catch a glimpse of heaven when we are in the temple with our child who is kneeling across the altar with a worthy companion. They are prepared to start a life together of promise and accomplishments that we have helped to nurture. This is harvest time.

I close with my testimony that we are not alone in this sacred trust of parenting, loving, and leading. There is no greater joy. It is worth every sacrifice, every inconvenient minute, every ounce of patience, personal discipline, and endurance. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Dangerous rapids on the Colorado River

Years ago when Sister Nelson and I had several teenage daughters, we took our family on a vacation far away from telephones and boyfriends. We went on a raft trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. As we started our journey, we had no idea how dangerous this trip could be.

The first day was beautiful. But on the second day, when we approached Horn Creek rapids and saw that precipitous drop ahead, I was terrified. Floating

on a rubber raft, our precious family was about to plunge over a waterfall! Instinctively I put one arm around my wife and the other around our youngest daughter. To protect them, I tried to hold them close to me. But as we reached the precipice, the bended raft became a giant sling and shot me into the air. I landed into the roiling rapids of the river. I had a hard time coming up. Each time I tried to find air, I hit the underside of the raft. My family couldn't see me, but I could hear them shouting, "Daddy! Where's Daddy?"

I finally found the side of the raft and rose to the surface. The family pulled my nearly drowned body out of the water. We were thankful to be safely reunited.

The next several days were pleasant and delightful. Then came the last day, when we were to go over Lava Falls, known as the most dangerous drop of the journey. When I saw what was ahead, I immediately asked to beach the raft and hold an emergency family council meeting, knowing that if we were to survive this experience, we needed to plan carefully. I reasoned with our family, "No matter what happens, the rubber raft will remain on top of the water. If we cling with all our might to ropes secured to the raft, we can make it. Even if the raft should capsize, we will be all right if we hang tightly to the ropes."

I turned to our little seven-year-old daughter and said, "All of the others will cling to a rope. But you will need to hold on to your daddy. Sit behind me. Put your arms around me and hold me tightly while I hold the rope."

That we did. We crossed those steep, rough rapids—hanging on for dear life—and all of us made it safely.<sup>1</sup>

### The lesson

Brothers and sisters, I nearly lost my life learning a lesson that I now give to you. As we go through life, even through very rough waters, a father's instinctive impulse to cling tightly to his wife or to his children may not be the best way to accomplish his objective. Instead, if he will lovingly cling to the Savior and the iron rod of the gospel, his family will want to cling to him and to the Savior.

This lesson is surely not limited to fathers. Regardless of gender, marital status, or age, individuals can choose to link themselves directly to the Savior, hold fast to the rod of His truth, and lead by the light of that truth. By so doing, they become examples of righteousness to whom others will want to cling.

### The commandment

With the Lord, families are essential. He created the earth that we could gain physical bodies and form families.<sup>2</sup> He established His Church to exalt families. He provides temples so that families can be together forever.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, He expects fathers to preside over, provide for, and protect their families.<sup>4</sup> But the Master has asked for much more. Etched in sacred scripture is the commandment to "set in order thy house."<sup>5</sup> Once we as parents understand the importance and meaning of that commandment, we need to learn how to do it.

### How to set your house in order

To set our house in an order pleasing to the Lord, we need to do it His way. We are to employ His attributes of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness."<sup>6</sup> Each father should remember that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."<sup>7</sup>

Parents are to be living examples of "kindness, and pure knowledge, which . . . greatly enlarge the soul."<sup>8</sup> Each mother and father should lay aside selfish interests and avoid any thought of hypocrisy, physical force, or evil speaking.<sup>9</sup> Parents soon learn that each child has an inborn yearning to be free. Each individual wants to make his or her own way. No one wants to be restrained, even by a well-intentioned parent. But all of us can cling to the Lord.

Ages ago, Job taught that concept. He said, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go."<sup>10</sup> Nephi also taught, "Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and . . . hold fast unto it, . . . would never perish."<sup>11</sup>

These tenets are timeless as the gospel and endless as eternity. Ponder these additional scriptural admonitions:

From the Old Testament Proverbs we read, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."<sup>12</sup>

From the New Testament: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught."<sup>13</sup>

From the Book of Mormon we learn about multitudes who were "continually holding fast to the rod of iron,"<sup>14</sup> which Nephi likened to "the word of God."<sup>15</sup> Anchored in truth, that iron rod is immovable and immutable.

### Other divine mandates

Not only are parents to cling to the word of the Lord, but they have a divine mandate to teach it to their children. Scriptural direction is very clear:

"Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . that teach them *not* to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents."<sup>16</sup>

That commandment places responsibility and accountability for the teaching of children squarely upon the shoulders of the parents. The proclamation to the world regarding the family warns that individuals "who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."<sup>17</sup> Today I solemnly reaffirm that reality.

In discharging these duties, we need both the Church and the family. They work hand in hand to strengthen each other. The Church exists to exalt the family. And the family is the fundamental unit of the Church.

These interrelationships are evident as we study the early history of the Church. In 1833 the Lord rebuked young leaders of His Church because of parental shortcomings. The Lord said:

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

"But verily I say unto you, . . .

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments. . . .

"And now a commandment I give unto you [that] you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

" . . . First set in order thy house."<sup>18</sup>

This revelation represents one of the many powerful validations of the integrity of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He did not delete from scripture words of stinging rebuke, even though some were directed to himself.<sup>19</sup>

In our day the First Presidency has again stressed parental priority. From their recent letter to the Saints, I quote: "We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."<sup>20</sup>

### What should parents teach?

With this sacred charge in mind, let us consider what we should teach. Scriptures direct parents to teach faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>21</sup> Parents are to teach the plan of salvation<sup>22</sup> and the importance of living in complete accord with the commandments of God.<sup>23</sup> Otherwise, their children will surely suffer in ignorance of God's redeeming and liberating law.<sup>24</sup> Parents should also teach by example how to consecrate their lives—using their time, talents, tithing, and substance<sup>25</sup> to establish the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.<sup>26</sup> Living in that manner will literally bless their posterity. A scripture states, "Thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family."<sup>27</sup>

## Opposition to the family

Parents and children should realize that strong opposition will always come against the work and will of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Because the work (and glory) of God is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life as a family,<sup>29</sup> it logically follows that the work of the adversary will strike directly at the heart of the home—the family. Relentlessly Lucifer attacks the sanctity of life and the joy of parenthood.

Because the evil one is ever at work, our vigilance cannot be relaxed—not even for a moment. A small and seemingly innocent invitation can turn into a tall temptation that can lead to tragic transgression. Night and day, at home or away, we must shun sin and “hold fast that which is good.”<sup>30</sup>

The seditious evils of pornography, abortion, and addiction to harmful substances serve as termites to erode the undergirding strength of a happy home and a faithful family. We cannot yield to any iniquity without putting our families at risk.

Satan wants us to be miserable just as he is.<sup>31</sup> He would animate our carnal appetites and entice us to live in spiritual darkness and doubt the reality of life after death. The Apostle Paul observed, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”<sup>32</sup>

## Perpetuation of family blessings

An understanding of God’s great plan of happiness, however, fortifies our faith in the future. His plan provides answers to ageless questions: Are all our sympathies and love for each other only temporary—to be lost in death? No! Can family life endure beyond this period of mortal probation? Yes! God has revealed the eternal nature of celestial marriage and the family as the source of our greatest joy.

Brethren and sisters, material possessions and honors of the world do not en-

dure. But your union as wife, husband, and family can. The only duration of family life that satisfies the loftiest longings of the human soul is forever. No sacrifice is too great to have the blessings of an eternal marriage. To qualify, one needs only to deny oneself of ungodliness and honor the ordinances of the temple. By making and keeping sacred temple covenants, we evidence our love for God, for our companion, and our real regard for our posterity—even those yet unborn. Our family is the focus of our greatest work and joy in this life; so will it be throughout all eternity, when we can “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, . . . powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory.”<sup>33</sup>

These priceless blessings can be ours if we set our houses in order now and faithfully cling to the gospel. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson and Rebecca M. Taylor, “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Mar. 1997, 6–7.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:47–48.
4. See 1 Timothy 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:44; see also 2 Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1.
6. 1 Timothy 6:11.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:42.
9. See 1 Peter 2:1.
10. Job 27:6.
11. 1 Nephi 15:24.
12. Proverbs 4:13.
13. 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Other related scriptures include “Hold fast the . . . sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13), and “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23).
14. 1 Nephi 8:30.
15. 1 Nephi 11:25.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; italics added.
17. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40–44.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:47.
20. That letter, dated February 11, 1999, and signed by Presidents Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust, also described what parents might do:  
 "We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (also in "Policies, Announcements, and Appointments," *Ensign*, June 1999, 80).
21. See Moroni 8:10; Doctrine and Covenants 19:31; 68:25–34; 138:33; Articles of Faith 1:4.
22. See Moses 6:58–62.
23. See Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 6:7; Mosiah 4:14.
24. See 2 Nephi 2:26; Mosiah 1:3; 5:8; Doctrine and Covenants 98:8.
25. See Mosiah 4:21–26; 18:27; Alma 1:27.
26. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
28. See Moroni 7:12–19.
29. See Moses 1:39.
30. 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
31. See 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27.
32. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.

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The choir sang "Did You Think to Pray?"

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### President Hinckley

"Don't forget to pray." As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules and to be careful.

We express our appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music.

Following my remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The benediction will then be offered by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The perilous times in which we live

My beloved brethren and sisters, I accept this opportunity in humility. I pray that I may be guided by the Spirit of the Lord in that which I say.

I have just been handed a note that says that a U.S. missile attack is under way. I need not remind you that we live in perilous times. I desire to speak concerning these times and our circumstances as members of this Church.

You are acutely aware of the events of September 11, less than a month ago. Out of that vicious and ugly attack we are plunged into a state of war. It is the first

war of the 21st century. The last century has been described as the most wartorn in human history. Now we are off on another dangerous undertaking, the unfolding of which and the end thereof we do not know. For the first time since we became a nation, the United States has been seriously attacked on its mainland soil. But this was not an attack on the United States alone. It was an attack on men and nations of goodwill everywhere. It was well planned, boldly executed, and the results were disastrous. It is estimated that more than 5,000 innocent people died. Among these were many from other na-

tions. It was cruel and cunning, an act of consummate evil.

Recently, in company with a few national religious leaders, I was invited to the White House to meet with the president. In talking to us he was frank and straightforward.

That same evening he spoke to the Congress and the nation in unmistakable language concerning the resolve of America and its friends to hunt down the terrorists who were responsible for the planning of this terrible thing and any who harbored such.

Now we are at war. Great forces have been mobilized and will continue to be. Political alliances are being forged. We do not know how long this conflict will last. We do not know what it will cost in lives and treasure. We do not know the manner in which it will be carried out. It could impact the work of the Church in various ways.

Our national economy has been made to suffer. It was already in trouble, and this has compounded the problem. Many are losing their employment. Among our own people, this could affect welfare needs and also the tithing of the Church. It could affect our missionary program.

We are now a global organization. We have members in more than 150 nations. Administering this vast worldwide program could conceivably become more difficult.

### **Forces of evil must be brought down**

Those of us who are American citizens stand solidly with the president of our nation. The terrible forces of evil must be confronted and held accountable for their actions. This is not a matter of Christian against Muslim. I am pleased that food is being dropped to the hungry people of a targeted nation. We value our Muslim neighbors across the world and hope that those who live by the tenets of their faith will not suffer. I ask particularly that our own people do not become

a party in any way to the persecution of the innocent. Rather, let us be friendly and helpful, protective and supportive. It is the terrorist organizations that must be ferreted out and brought down.

We of this Church know something of such groups. The Book of Mormon speaks of the Gadianton robbers, a vicious, oath-bound, and secret organization bent on evil and destruction. In their day they did all in their power, by whatever means available, to bring down the Church, to woo the people with sophistry, and to take control of the society. We see the same thing in the present situation.

We are people of peace. We are followers of the Christ, who was and is the Prince of Peace. But there are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty (see Alma 48:10).

On the Larry King television broadcast the other night, I was asked what I think of those who, in the name of their religion, carry out such infamous activities. I replied:

"Religion offers no shield for wickedness, for evil, for those kinds of things. The God in whom I believe does not foster this kind of action. He is a God of mercy. He is a God of love. He is a God of peace and reassurance, and I look to Him in times such as this as a comfort and a source of strength."

Members of the Church in this and other nations are now involved with many others in a great international undertaking. On television we see those of the military leaving their loved ones, knowing not whether they will return. It is affecting the homes of our people. Unitedly, as a Church, we must get on our knees and invoke the powers of the Almighty in behalf of those who will carry the burdens of this campaign.

No one knows how long it will last. No one knows precisely where it will be



fought. No one knows what it may entail before it is over. We have launched an undertaking the size and nature of which we cannot see at this time.

### **Get free from debt and be prepared**

Occasions of this kind pull us up sharply to a realization that life is fragile, peace is fragile, civilization itself is fragile. The economy is particularly vulnerable. We have been counseled again and again concerning self-reliance, concerning debt, concerning thrift. So many of our people are heavily in debt for things that are not entirely necessary. When I was a young man, my father counseled me to build a modest home, sufficient for the needs of my family, and to make it beautiful and attractive and pleasant and secure. He counseled me to pay off the mortgage as quickly as I could so that, come what may, there would be a roof over the heads of my wife and children. I was reared on that kind of doctrine. I urge you as members of this Church to get free of debt where possible and to have a little laid aside against a rainy day.

We cannot provide against every contingency. But we can provide against many contingencies. Let the present situation remind us that this we should do.

As we have been continuously counseled for more than 60 years, let us have some food set aside that would sustain us for a time in case of need. But let us not panic or go to extremes. Let us be prudent in every respect. And, above all, my brothers and sisters, let us move forward with faith in the Living God and His Beloved Son.

### **Optimism despite grim warnings**

Great are the promises concerning this land of America. We are told unequivocally that it "is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land,

who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12). This is the crux of the entire matter—obedience to the commandments of God.

The Constitution under which we live, and which has not only blessed us but has become a model for other constitutions, is our God-inspired national safeguard ensuring freedom and liberty, justice and equality before the law.

I do not know what the future holds. I do not wish to sound negative, but I wish to remind you of the warnings of scripture and the teachings of the prophets which we have had constantly before us.

I cannot forget the great lesson of Pharaoh's dream of the fat and lean kine and of the full and withered stalks of corn.

I cannot dismiss from my mind the grim warnings of the Lord as set forth in the 24th chapter of Matthew.

I am familiar, as are you, with the declarations of modern revelation that the time will come when the earth will be cleansed and there will be indescribable distress, with weeping and mourning and lamentation (see D&C 112:24).

Now, I do not wish to be an alarmist. I do not wish to be a prophet of doom. I am optimistic. I do not believe the time is here when an all-consuming calamity will overtake us. I earnestly pray that it may not. There is so much of the Lord's work yet to be done. We, and our children after us, must do it.

### **Church resources managed prudently**

I can assure you that we who are responsible for the management of the affairs of the Church will be prudent and careful as we have tried to be in the past. The tithes of the Church are sacred. They are appropriated in the manner set forth by the Lord Himself. We have become a very large and complex organization. We carry on many extensive and costly programs. But I can assure you that we will not exceed our income. We will not place the Church in debt. We will tailor what we do to the resources that are available.

How grateful I am for the law of tithing. It is the Lord's law of finance. It is set forth in a few words in the 119th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It comes of His wisdom. To every man and woman, to every boy and girl, to every child in this Church who pays an honest tithing, be it large or small, I express gratitude for the faith that is in your hearts. I remind you, and those who do not pay tithing but who should, that the Lord has promised marvelous blessings (see Malachi 3:10–12). He has also promised that “he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming” (D&C 64:23).

I express appreciation to those who pay a fast offering. This costs the giver nothing other than going without two meals a month. It becomes the backbone of our welfare program, designed to assist those in distress.

### **Conflict began in the War in Heaven**

Now, all of us know that war, contention, hatred, suffering of the worst kind are not new. The conflict we see today is but another expression of the conflict that began with the War in Heaven. I quote from the book of Revelation:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Revelation 12:7–10).

That must have been a terrible conflict. The forces of evil were pitted against the forces of good. The great deceiver, the son of the morning, was defeated and

banished, and took with him a third of the hosts of heaven.

The book of Moses and the book of Abraham shed further light concerning this great contest. Satan would have taken from man his agency and taken unto himself all credit and honor and glory. Opposed to this was the plan of the Father, which the Son said He would fulfill, under which He came to earth and gave His life to atone for the sins of mankind.

From the day of Cain to the present, the adversary has been the great mastermind of the terrible conflicts that have brought so much suffering.

Treachery and terrorism began with him. And they will continue until the Son of God returns to rule and reign with peace and righteousness among the sons and daughters of God.

### **Death is not the end**

Through centuries of time, men and women, so very, very many, have lived and died. Some may die in the conflict that lies ahead. To us, and we bear solemn testimony of this, death will not be the end. There is life beyond this as surely as there is life here. Through the great plan which became the very essence of the War in Heaven, men shall go on living.

Job asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). He replied:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

“Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:25–27).

### **We can feel peace, not fear**

Now, brothers and sisters, we must do our duty, whatever that duty might be. Peace may be denied for a season. Some of our liberties may be curtailed. We may

be inconvenienced. We may even be called on to suffer in one way or another. But God our Eternal Father will watch over this nation and all of the civilized world who look to Him. He has declared, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12). Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God.

Let us be prayerful. Let us pray for righteousness. Let us pray for the forces of good. Let us reach out to help men and women of goodwill, whatever their religious persuasion and wherever they live. Let us stand firm against evil, both at home and abroad. Let us live worthy of the blessings of heaven, reforming our lives where necessary and looking to Him, the Father of us all. He has said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Are these perilous times? They are. But there is no need to fear. We can have peace in our hearts and peace in our homes. We can be an influence for good in this world, every one of us.

May the God of heaven, the Almighty, bless us, help us, as we walk our various ways in the uncertain days that lie ahead. May we look to Him with unfailing faith. May we worthily place our reliance on His Beloved Son, who is our great Redeemer, whether it be in life or in death, is my prayer in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder R. Conrad Schultz offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 7, 2001. This session was conducted by President James E. Faust.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating

in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "High on the Mountain Top." After the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Following the singing, El-

ders L. Tom Perry and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### The returned missionary

This afternoon I want to address my remarks to a special group. During the last many years, hundreds of thousands of you have returned from serving full-time missions. Each of you heeded the same call the Savior gave to His disciples:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19–20).

It was your privilege to go to the many parts of the world to carry the Savior's message—an invitation to come unto Him and enjoy the fruits of His gospel. You were privileged to live in different cultures and learn different languages. It was also a time of building your own personal testimony of the mission of Jesus Christ.

I have always been honored to visit with you returned missionaries over the years. Many of you long to return and visit the people you had the privilege of serving. You are anxious to share moments of your experiences in the mission field. In your wedding announcements and your employment résumés, you insert a line that identifies you as a returned missionary. While you no longer wear a missionary's badge, you seem anxious to identify yourselves as one who has served the Lord as a missionary. Moreover, you have fond memories because you discovered the joy of gospel service.

I have also learned from many conversations with you that the adjustment associated with leaving the mission field and returning to the world you left behind is sometimes difficult. Perhaps it is hard to keep alive the spirit of missionary work when you are no longer serving as a full-time missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

May I offer just a few suggestions?

### Stay close to the Lord through prayer

One of the strongest recollections I have of being a missionary is how close I drew to the Lord through the practice of regular prayer. In my day the Mission Home was located on State Street in Salt Lake City. It was a large house that had been converted to a mission training center. It had large dormitory rooms with perhaps as many as 10 beds in a room. We checked in on Sunday night.

The week before I entered the mission field was an exciting time. There were a lot of parties and farewells. I am afraid that I was not properly rested and prepared for the training I was to receive at the Mission Home. As the evening of our first day in the Mission Home came to a close, I was weary. While waiting for the other missionaries to prepare themselves for bed, I stretched out on my bed and promptly fell asleep. My sleep, however, was interrupted by a feeling that I was surrounded. As the fog of sleep lifted, I heard the words of a prayer being said. I opened my eyes, and much to my surprise I found all the elders in my dormitory room kneeling around my bed, conclud-

ing the day with a prayer. I quickly closed my eyes and acted as if I was asleep. I was too embarrassed to get out of bed and join them. Even though my first experience with prayer as a missionary was an embarrassing one, it was the beginning of two wonderful years of frequently calling upon the Lord for guidance.

Throughout my mission I prayed with my companion each morning as we began a new day. The process was repeated each night before we retired. We offered a prayer before we studied, a prayer as we left our apartment to go out tracting, and, of course, special prayers when special guidance was needed to direct our missionary work. The frequency of our appeals to our Father in Heaven gave us strength and courage to press forward in the work to which we had been called. Answers would come, sometimes in astonishingly direct and positive ways. The guidance of the Holy Spirit seemed to be magnified the more times we appealed to the Lord for direction on a given day.

As I look back on my life following my mission, I realize that there were periods when I was able to maintain the same closeness to the Lord that I experienced in the mission field. There were also periods when the world seemed to creep in and I was less consistent and faithful with my prayers.

Wouldn't this be a good time for a little self-evaluation to determine if we still have the same relationship with our Father in Heaven that we enjoyed in the mission field? If the world has diverted us from the practice of prayer, we then have lost a great spiritual power. Maybe it is time that we rekindle our missionary spirit through more frequent, consistent, and mighty prayer.

### **Maintain the habit of scripture study**

The next fond memory I have as a missionary is that of daily engaging in

scripture study. The discipline of following a scripture-study plan of learning the gospel was a wonderful, rewarding experience. The knowledge of the teachings of the scriptures would unfold in a glorious way through individual study. As a missionary, I recall marveling at how completely the Lord had prepared a plan for His children here on earth, how in all dispensations of time He has inspired the minds of His prophets to record His dealings with them. His words are always positive and direct, revealing the blessings that come through following His law and His way.

We would also take an hour or more each day to study as companions together. Having two sets of eyes examine the doctrine of the kingdom seemed to multiply our understanding. We would read together, then share our insights.

Our minds were sharpened as we followed the daily practice of individual and companion study. The practice brought us closer together as companions and increased our understanding of the doctrines of the kingdom.

When we leave the mission field, we no longer have companions to help us discipline our study habits, but that does not mean that the practice should be discontinued. As we return home, how great it would be to hold daily family scripture study. If we leave home, couldn't we invite roommates and friends to study with us? The practice of holding regular study classes would help keep the doctrines of the kingdom clear in our minds and offset the persistent intrusion of worldly concerns. Of course, when we marry, we have eternal companions with whom we can study and share gospel teachings. The scriptures are always there to deepen our understanding of the purpose of life and what we need to do to make life more fulfilling and rewarding. Please keep alive the practice of regular individual and companion scripture study.

### **Rededicate yourselves to sharing the gospel**

Do you remember the joy that comes from teaching the gospel to someone who has been deprived of these teachings throughout his or her life, the excitement that comes when you teach the law of the Lord, and the blessings that are received from following Him? Could you ever forget the joy of your first baptism in the mission field?

In my day the chapels were not equipped with baptismal fonts. My first baptism was in the Scioto River in the state of Ohio. It was on a cool fall day, and the water seemed even colder than the air. I remember the shock of wading into the cold river while encouraging my investigator to follow me. The coldness of the air and the water, however, soon vanished as I administered the ordinance of baptism. Seeing the radiant face of the individual who came up out of the waters of baptism is an image I will never forget.

Opportunities to teach the gospel and baptize are not exclusive to those who wear the badge of a full-time missionary. I wonder why we allow the fire of missionary service to diminish when we return to the activities of our life in the world.

There has never been a time in the history of mankind when we have been better equipped to teach the gospel to our Father in Heaven's children here on earth. And they seem to need it more today than they ever have. We see a deterioration of faith. We see an increased love for worldliness and a depletion of moral values, both of which will cause increased heartache and despair. What we need is a royal army of returned missionaries re-enlisted into service. While they would not wear the badge of a full-time missionary, they could possess the same resolve and determination to bring the light of the gospel to a world struggling to find its way.

I call on you returned missionaries to rededicate yourselves, to become re-

infused with the desire and spirit of missionary service. I call on you to look the part, to be the part, and to act the part of a servant of our Father in Heaven. I pray for your renewed determination to proclaim the gospel, that you may become more actively engaged in this great work the Lord has called all of us to do. I want to promise you there are great blessings in store for you if you continue to press forward with the zeal you once possessed as a full-time missionary.

### **Reunion with first companion**

I had an experience a few years ago of receiving a call from my son, Lee. He told me that my first missionary companion was in his neighborhood, and he wanted to spend a few minutes with me. Lee and I went over to the home of my first companion's daughter, whom he was visiting. We had a special experience of being together after many years of not seeing one another.

As missionaries we were given the opportunity of opening up a new town in Ohio to missionary work. Because of this assignment, we were allowed to labor together for 10 months. He was my trainer, my first companion. He came from a family that had taught him the value of hard work. It was difficult for me to keep up with him, but as we served together we drew close together as companions.

Our companionship did not end with the 10-month assignment. World War II was raging, and when I returned home I had only a short time to adjust before I was drafted into military service. On my first Sunday in boot camp, I attended an LDS service. I saw the back of a head that was very familiar to me. It was my first missionary companion. We spent most of the next two and a half years together.

Although circumstances were very different for us in military service, we tried to continue the practices of missionary service. As often as we could, we prayed to-

gether. When circumstances allowed, we had scripture study together. I recall many companion study sessions under the light of a Coleman lantern in a shrapnel-scarred tent. Several times our reading of the scriptures was interrupted by the sound of an air raid siren. We would quickly turn off our lantern, then kneel together and close our study class with a prayer.

We were both set apart as group leaders, and we again had the opportunity to serve and teach together the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior. We were more successful in the military than we had been as full-time missionaries. Why? Because we were experienced returned missionaries.

My visit with my first missionary companion was the last opportunity I had to be with him. He was suffering from an incurable disease and died only a few months later. It was a wonderful experience to relive our missions together and then tell about our lives following our missionary service. We recounted our service in bishoprics, high councils, and stake presidencies, and, of course, we bragged about our children and our grandchildren. As we sat and thrilled at the opportunity of being together again, I couldn't help but think of the account in the 17th chapter of the book of Alma:

"And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla.

"Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

"But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:1-3).

### **A great army of returned missionaries**

I wish all of you could have an experience similar to the one I had with my first missionary companion, that you could pause and reflect on a time of service when you gave diligently of your time and your talents in building our Father in Heaven's kingdom. If you try to make it happen, I promise you that it will be one of the thrilling experiences of your life. You are a great army of returned missionaries. Go forward with new zeal and determination, and through your example shine the light of the gospel in this troubled world. This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. We belong to His Church. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Neal A. Maxwell**

### **Seventh commandment is a vital shield**

With you, my brothers and sisters, I have appreciated afresh the prophetic ministry of President Hinckley. I testify that he was foreordained a long, long time ago, and we are glad.

I share the reluctance Jacob expressed when he wrote of the problems of unchastity and infidelity, the breaching of what some number as the seventh commandment. Anxious because his audience had feelings "exceedingly tender and

chaste and delicate," Jacob did not wish to "enlarge the wounds of those who [were] already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds" (Jacob 2:7, 9). Nevertheless, Jacob's words about the harsh consequences of immorality are diagnostic as well as poetic: "Many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35). Today we move among so many of the walking wounded, and the casualty list grows.

Hence, reassuring gospel givens could rightly be stressed, such as how individuals who truly repent, though their "sins be as scarlet," may become "as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). But the rigors and the rich rewards of repentance are not the purposes of this talk. Nor is giving deserved praise to the many valiant youth and adults who practice chastity and fidelity—even when, for example, only a shrinking minority of American society now believes premartial relations are wrong. Commendations, therefore, to those who have *faith unto obedience* regarding the commandments, as well as salutations to those who have *"faith unto repentance"* (Alma 34:15; italics added) when commandments are violated.

Clearly, unchastity and infidelity bring serious consequences, such as the rippling, even haunting effects of illegitimacy and fatherlessness, along with disease and the shredding of families. So many marriages hang by a thread or have already snapped. This quiet but deep crisis coexists with vexing international crises in our time, including war. Jesus spoke of latter days when there would be "distress of nations, with perplexity" and how all things would be in commotion (Luke 21:25; see also D&C 88:91; 45:26).

Therefore, the keeping of the seventh commandment is such a vital *shield*! (see Exodus 20:14). By our lowering or losing that shield, the much-needed blessings of heaven are lost. No person or nation can prosper for long without those blessings.

## Lack of faith brings increased immorality

Strange, in a time otherwise obsessed with entitlements, how little concern there is over our becoming entitled to the blessings of heaven. Instead, a declining belief by some in ultimate immortality has only intensified proximate immorality, "leading away many . . . telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof" (Alma 30:18). A Japanese thinker, looking at our pleasure-centered Western society, said, almost confrontingly:

"If there is nothing beyond death, then what is wrong with giving oneself wholly to pleasure in the short time one has left to live? The loss of faith in the 'other world' has saddled modern Western society with a fatal moral problem" (Takeshi Umehara, "The Civilization of the Forest: Ancient Japan Shows Post-modernism the Way," in Nathan P. Gardels, ed., *At Century's End* [1995], 190).

Therefore, being good citizens includes being good, such as in knowing the clear difference between lusting after a neighbor and loving one's neighbor! Matthew Arnold wisely observed that while "Nature cares nothing [for] chastity, . . . human nature . . . cares about it a great deal" (*Philistinism in England and America*, vol. 10 of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super [1974], 160). To which I add: divine nature cares infinitely more!

## Starve the natural man

The influential tendencies of the natural man are unfriendly to the seventh commandment, and these involve the self-damaging "carnal, sensual, [and] devilish" (Mosiah 16:3; see also Mosiah 3:19; Moses 5:13). If these three words sound too harsh, consider, brothers and sisters, the awful goal the adversary pursues: "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Misery really does love company!



One of the best ways we can put "off the natural man" is to starve him (Mosiah 3:19). Weakened, he is more easily dislodged. Otherwise, he insists on getting his ticket punched at every stop on the temptation train. Sadly, corrective words do not usually help the natural man either because lust chokes the word (see Mark 4:19).

### Rationalizations for immorality

Unfortunately, breaking the seventh commandment is made easier when clever sophists persuade some that whatsoever individuals do is really "no crime" (Alma 30:17). Yet some have eager ears, actually itching to hear something less than the truth, so they follow those who try to smooth the sharp-edged, inconvenient commandments (see 2 Timothy 4:3). Nevertheless, the proverb remains true: "Whoso committeth adultery . . . lacketh understanding" (Proverbs 6:32).

The commandments are ignored by still others who are otherwise focused. Dostoevsky has one of his characters say, "The ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger" (Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett [1952], 130–31).

The adversary has also artificially inflated the concept of privacy, further lubricating the slide away from individual accountability! After all, a few mouse clicks on a computer can take one, privately and quickly, into enemy territory without having to go through passport control, the only remaining restraint then being the checkpoint of dulled conscience.

But God does not have two sets of Ten Commandments, one indoor and another outdoor! Nor are there two approved roads to repentance. True, a weekend of regret may produce some "sorrowing of the damned" but not the "mighty change" which only godly sorrow produces (Mor-

mon 2:13; Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:13–14; see also 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Yes, we are still free to choose. Yes, a war was even fought in heaven to preserve our moral agency. Yet down here, the great gift of agency is often surrendered without so much as a mild whimper!

### Preventing violations of the law of chastity

There are so many ways to keep the shielding seventh commandment firmly in place. Instructively, for instance, David's fall, at least in part, was facilitated because he was not where duty lay: "It came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that . . . David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 11:1). Then, as you know, came the lustful view from the roof and all the sadness that followed. Implicit, therefore, in the instruction "Stand ye in holy places" is to avoid indulgent tarrying (D&C 87:8; see also Matthew 24:15).

Those who live "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27) also wisely develop protective, spiritual manners. These manners are reflected in their proper dress, language, humor, and music, thereby sending the signal of determined discipleship (see Proverbs 23:7).

Moreover, the avoidance of later difficulty includes not carrying into marriage unrepented-of sins, causing spouses to start off "unequally yoked together" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Likewise, husbands and wives can deliberately avoid drifting apart by refusing to relax their loyalties and by not being caught in the strong currents leading to the waterfalls. Equally to be avoided is the stagnant swamp of self-pity. Therein, individuals can easily rationalize any remaining sense of accountability by pushing aside the restraints of both conscience and covenants, seeking to "justify [themselves] before men" for that which is an "abomination [before] God" (Luke 16:15).

Seeing through sensuality's deceptive spin is another vital preventive. For instance, some of those who flout the seventh commandment by their immoral lifestyles are like Cain's declaring, "I am free" (Moses 5:33), after breaking the sixth commandment by slaying Abel. Such erroneous thinking about freedom evokes Peter's warning words: "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Peter 2:19; see also 2 Nephi 2:26–30). Truc, strident souls may even fake laughter amid bondage and sin, but another proverb applies: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Proverbs 14:13).

### Deceptive labels attached to evil

In an age rightly concerned with truth in advertising, how intellectually insulting are certain deceptive labels: *Ecstasy* should read *misery*; *Rave* is really a *mournful mutter* emanating from sensuality gone amok. For instance, some foolishly think a little lewd dancing is harmless. These individuals do not "sin ignorantly" (3 Nephi 6:18). By imitating and by underestimating the enemy, they end up compromising themselves while confusing and disappointing their friends!

Ever wonder why the sensual scene so often features flashing but fading lights? Or why all the reinforcing glitz? Or why all the loudness masquerading as music? Because, fearful of the dawn, evil cannot stand the steady scrutiny of bright truth, nor can it endure the quiet reflections of soul-searching!

Thus the drumbeat of desensitization deadens the tastebuds of the soul by responding *illegitimately* to the *legitimate* need for belonging and for love, as predators and victims sadly become "past feeling" (1 Nephi 17:45; see also Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

### Lust is no substitute for love

Henry Fairlie wrote of how "the lustful person will usually be found to have a

terrible hollowness at the center of his life" (Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* [1978], 187). Still, some naive youth talk about "filling their canteens," which will be empty except for the residual sand and gravel of toxic memories. Fairlie also wrote, "Lust is not interested in its partners, but only in the gratification of its own craving. . . . Lust dies at the next dawn, and when it returns in the evening, to search where it may, it is with its own past erased" (*The Seven Deadly Sins Today*, 175).

However costumed or made up, lust is no substitute for love; actually, brothers and sisters, it chokes out the development of real love, causing "the love of many [to] wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). No wonder we are told to "bridle all [our] passions, that [we] may be filled with love" (Alma 38:12). Otherwise, oozing passions fill the available soul space, and double occupancy is not possible.

### Societal trends that accelerate immorality

Previously, society has often had helpful, though subtle, balancing and restraining mechanisms—including families and churches and schools—to checkrein excessive individual behavior. But too often some of these mechanisms are either missing, malfunctioning, or equivocating.

Moreover, these foregoing trends are further accelerated by the fashionable non-judgmentalism which excuses whatever wrong individuals do—as long as they do anything else commendable. After all, didn't Mussolini make the trains run on time? Violators of the seventh commandment may still make useful contributions, but they pay a hidden, personal cost (see Alma 28:13). Of King Morianton we read, "He did [deal justly with his] people, but not [with] himself because of his many whoredoms" (Ether 10:11). Apparently a fair, no-respecter-of-persons leader, Morianton did not respect himself! His self-inflicted wounds were masked by the outward ornamentation of riches and buildings (see Ether 10:12).

### **The unrepentant will suffer as Jesus did**

So sobering is all of the foregoing that what follows needs to be said, and I do not hesitate to say it. The revelations tell us that commensurate with their own sins, unrepentant sinners must suffer even as Jesus did for ours, as they one day personally experience the full justice of God (see D&C 19:16–18). Additionally, those who in various ways persistently foster and intensify this often drug-drenched drama of immorality—whether as promoters, enablers, facilitators, or profiteers—will also then face and then feel all the misery they have caused countless others!

### **Take a stand—alone if necessary**

Finally, brothers and sisters, in certain times and circumstances, discipleship requires us to be willing to stand alone! Our willingness to do so, here and now, is consistent with Christ's kneeling alone,

there and then, in Gethsemane. In the final atoning process, "none were with [Him]" (D&C 133:50; see also Matthew 26:38–45).

As we take our stand, the faithful will not be alone, however. Of necessity, the angel who stood by Christ in Gethsemane to strengthen Him left Him (see Luke 22:43). If we hold aloft the shield of faith in God and faith in His commandments, His angels will be "round about [us], to bear [us] up" and "have charge over [us]" (D&C 84:88; 109:22). Of this promise I testify. And now, therefore, in terms of the weather in our souls, brothers and sisters, I testify that we set the dial. We so determine the degree of our happiness in this and the next world. I likewise testify that our compliance with God's commandments, including the seventh, invites God to place His hand on ours as we set the dial. It is the hand of Him who desires to give us all that He hath (see D&C 84:38). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Robert F. Orton**

### **The first and great commandment**

The attention of people around the world has been drawn, during the past four weeks, to the willful, intentional, and destructive acts of terrorism and hatred.

Hatred is the antithesis of love. Lucifer is its chief proponent and perpetrator and has been since his approach to the plan of salvation was rejected by the Father. It was he who influenced Judas to deliver Jesus to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver (see Matthew 26:14–15). It is he, the enemy of all righteousness and the father of contention, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

On the other hand, it was that same Jesus whom Judas delivered to the chief priests who said, "Love your enemies, . . . and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you" (3 Nephi 12:44;

see also Matthew 5:44). And it was He who pleaded for the soldiers who crucified Him, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

I thought for many years that love was an attribute. But it is more. It is a commandment. In His dialogue with the lawyer, a Pharisee, Jesus said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40; see also Galatians 5:14).

President Hinckley has said that "love is like the Polar Star. In a changing world,

it is a constant. It is . . . the very essence of the gospel." "Without love . . . there is little else to commend the gospel to us as a way of life" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 319, 317).

The Apostle John said that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Thus, on Him, as the embodiment of love, hang all the law and the prophets.

The Apostle Paul taught that faith, which is the first principle of the gospel, works by love (see Galatians 5:6). What a valuable doctrine to understand! Love is the driving force behind faith. Just as a fire at home on a cold winter night makes it warm, so love of God and neighbor gives us faith, with which anything is possible.

### **Love neighbors to show love for God**

Most of us profess to love God. The challenge, I have observed, is loving our neighbor. The term *neighbor* includes family, people with whom we work, those whom we see in geographical proximity to our home and at church, and even the enemy, though we do not condone what the latter does. If we do not love all of these, our brothers and sisters, can we truly say that we love God? The Apostle John declared that "he who loveth God love his brother also," and added, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:21, 20). Love of God and neighbor must therefore be inseparably connected.

Our eternal progression leans heavily on the degree to which we love. Webster defines *love* as the "unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another; an affection based on admiration, benevolence or common interests" (*Longman Webster English College Dictionary*, overseas edition). And Mormon treats as synonymous the terms "pure love of Christ" and "charity" (see Moroni 7:47). We can best demonstrate our love to God by keeping His commandments. And we

can show our love to God and neighbor by charitable acts of service.

### **Love changes the lives of two men**

Permit me two illustrations. In the Transylvanian Alps of Romania, a man, with his wife and two children, was baptized into the Church. He became the leader of his branch; however, due to economic and family pressures, he became inactive for a time. Upon his return to activity, he reported that as he had stepped out of the water at the time of his baptism, someone whispered in his ear, "I love you." No one had ever told him that before. His recollection of that expression of love, and the loving and charitable acts and expressions of members of his branch, brought him back.

Several years ago a young man became involved in the ways of the world. For a time, his parents had no influence on him. Two high priests who were neighbors and members of his ward but who had no specific calling to serve him, together with an uncle and others, put their arms around and befriended him. They nursed him back into activity and encouraged him to prepare for a mission. They told him that they loved him and demonstrated that love by their conduct toward him. This changed the young man's life. It takes an abundance of love and a cooperative effort to raise a child.

### **We come to love those we serve**

"No one can assist in this work [unless] he shall be humble and full of love" (D&C 12:8). "By love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Just as service is a natural consequence of love, so is love a natural consequence of service. Husbands, serve your wives. Wives, serve your husbands. Husbands and wives, serve your children. And to all we say, serve God and neighbor. As we do so, we will come to love the object of our devotion and thus be

obedient to the first and great commandment of love.

### **No disputations, contention, or hatred**

Following His Resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the Americas. After teaching about baptism, He warned against anger and contention, saying:

“And there shall be no disputations among you. . . . For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:22, 29).

Brothers and sisters, if we are obedient to the commandment of love, there will be no disputations, contention, or hatred between or among us. We will not speak ill of one another but will treat each other with kindness and respect, realizing that each of us is a child of God. There will be no Nephites, Lamanites, or other “-ites” among us, and every man, woman, and child will deal justly one with another.

### **Continue to give and love**

Early one morning in Bucharest, as I jogged through Cismigiu Park, I observed an old tree which was struggling to give new branches—to give new life. The symbol of life is to give. We give so much to family and friends and to community and Church that at times we, as the old tree, may think that life is too difficult—that constantly giving is a burden too heavy to bear. We may think that it would be eas-

ier to give up and to do only that which the natural man does. But we should not and will not quit. Why? Because we must continue to give, just like Christ and the old tree gave. As we give just a little bit, let us think of Him who gave His life that we might live.

Jesus, near the end of His mortal life, revisited the doctrine of love when He instructed His adherents that as He had loved them, so they also should love one another. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

I conclude that, given the purpose of our existence, if we do not love God and neighbor, whatever else we do will be of little eternal consequence.

I testify of the divinity of Christ and the reality of His mission to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. That we might love as He loved and continues to love, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Wayne S. Peterson and H. Ross Workman of the Seventy will address us. We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “Let Us All Press On.”

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## **Elder Wayne S. Peterson**

### **A friendly response to childish behavior**

Many years ago while on vacation with my family, I had an experience that

taught me a great lesson. On a Saturday my wife and I decided to take the children for a drive and to do some shopping. During the drive the children fell asleep, and

not wanting to wake them, I volunteered to stay in the car while my wife ran into the store.

While waiting, I glanced at the car parked in front of me. It was full of children, and they were looking at me. My eyes caught the eyes of a small boy, six or seven years old. As our eyes met, he immediately stuck his tongue out at me.

My first reaction was to stick my tongue out at him. I thought, "What have I done to deserve this?" Fortunately, before I reacted I remembered a principle taught in general conference the week before by Elder Marvin J. Ashton (see Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 36–38; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 59–60). He taught how important it was to act instead of react to the events around us. So I waved at the little boy. He stuck his tongue out at me again. I smiled and waved again. This time he waved back.

Soon he was joined in his enthusiastic waving by a little brother and sister. I responded by waving this way and that until my arm became tired. Then I rested it on the steering wheel and continued with every creative wave I could muster, all the time hoping their parents would quickly return or that my wife would soon come back.

The parents finally did come, and as they pulled away, my newfound friends continued to wave for as long as I could see them.

That was a simple experience, but it demonstrated that in most encounters we can *determine* the kind of experience we are going to have by how we respond. I was grateful that I chose to act in a friendly way rather than react to my young friend's childish behavior. In doing so I avoided the negative feelings I would have felt had I followed my natural instinct.

### **Living the Golden Rule can be difficult**

In His instructions to the Nephites, the Savior taught, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do

to you, do ye even so to them" (3 Nephi 14:12).

Imagine the effect it would have in the world if everyone practiced this Golden Rule. But to do so seems contrary to human nature. King Benjamin declared that "the natural man is an enemy to God," and will remain such until he "yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man" and learns to be "submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love" (Mosiah 3:19).

In today's fast-paced world there seems to be a greater tendency for people to act aggressively toward each other. Some are quick to take offense and respond angrily to real or imagined affronts. We've all experienced or heard reports of road rage or other examples of rude, insensitive behavior.

Unfortunately, some of this spills over into our homes, creating friction and tension among family members.

### **We are free to choose our response**

It may seem natural to react to a situation by giving back what is given to us. But it doesn't have to be that way. Reflecting on his horrendous wartime experiences, Viktor Frankl recalled: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. [1984], 86; italics added).

That is noble behavior and a high expectation, but Jesus expects no less of us. "Love your enemies," He said, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

A favorite hymn reinforces this teaching:

School thy feelings, O my brother;  
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.  
Do not its emotions smother,  
But let wisdom's voice control.  
["School Thy Feelings," *Hymns*,  
no. 336]

The decisions we make and the way we behave are what ultimately shape our character. Charles A. Hall aptly described that process in these lines: "We sow our thoughts, and we reap our actions; we sow our actions, and we reap our habits; we sow our habits, and we reap our characters; we sow our characters, and we reap our destiny" (quoted in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Home Book of Quotations* [1934], 845).

### Be kind and loving at home

It is in the home that our behavior is most significant. It is the place where our actions have the greatest impact, for good or for ill. Sometimes we are so much "at home" that we no longer guard our words. We forget simple civility. If we are not on guard, we can fall into the habit of criticizing one another, losing our tempers, or behaving selfishly. Because they love us, our spouses and children may be quick to forgive, but they often carry away in silence unseen injuries and unspoken heartache.

There are too many homes where children fear their parents or where wives fear their husbands. Our leaders have reminded us that "fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness," and warned "that individuals who . . . abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). The adversary knows that if he can foster an atmosphere of contention, conflict, and fear in the home, the Spirit is grieved and the cords that ought to bind the family are weakened.

The resurrected Lord Himself declared, "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29).

When we feel anger or contention in our homes, we should immediately recognize what power has taken control of our lives and what Satan is endeavoring to accomplish. Solomon provided us this wise formula: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Our home should ideally be a refuge where each member feels safe, secure, loved, and insulated from harsh criticism and contention that we so often encounter in the world.

### Return good for evil, as Jesus did

Christ set a perfect example of maintaining emotional control in every setting. Appearing before Caiaphas and Pilate, He was buffeted, slapped, spat upon, and mocked by His tormentors (see Matthew 26; Luke 23). The great irony was that they demeaned their Creator, whose suffering was undertaken out of love for them.

In the face of this unjust abuse, Jesus maintained His composure, refusing to act unkindly. Even on the cross, in the midst of that unspeakable agony, His plea was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He expects the same of us. To those who would follow Him, He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

May we evidence our discipleship by strengthening our homes in kind and loving ways. May we remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" and strive through our relationships and encounters to shape a character that will meet with the Savior's approval.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. I tes-

tify of Him! We are led by a living prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder H. Ross Workman

### Murmuring—a tool of the adversary

As young missionaries, my companion and I testified that God speaks through prophets today. One man asked, “So what did your prophet say this week?” Struggling to remember the prophet’s message in the most recent *Improvement Era*, the relevant Church magazine at the time, I came to a special understanding of the importance of knowing and obeying the teachings of the living prophet.

Today I hope to persuade you to follow the living prophets and to warn of a deception the adversary has devised to prevent you from following them. The scriptures refer to that deception as “murmuring.”

### Parable shows three steps of murmuring

The Savior taught a parable to warn us of the treacherous path to disobedience through “murmuring.” In the parable, we learn of a nobleman who had a choice spot of land. He told his servants to plant 12 olive trees and build a tower overlooking the olive grove. The purpose for the tower was to permit a watchman perched upon the tower to warn of the coming of the enemy. Thus, the olive grove could be protected.

The servants did not build the tower. The enemy came and broke down the olive trees. The disobedience of the servants left a catastrophe in the olive grove. (See D&C 101:43–62.)

Why did the servants fail to build the tower? The seeds of the disaster were planted by murmuring.

According to the Lord’s parable, murmuring consists of three steps, each lead-

ing to the next in a descending path to disobedience.

First, the servants began to question. They felt to exercise their own judgment upon the instruction given by their master. “What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?” they said (D&C 101:48). They questioned first in their own minds and then planted questions in the minds of others. Questioning came first.

Second, they began to rationalize and excuse themselves from doing what they had been instructed to do. They said: “Might not this money be given to the ex-changers? For there is no need of these things” (D&C 101:49). Thus, they made an excuse for disobedience.

The third step inevitably follows: slothfulness in following the commandment of the Master. The parable says, “They became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord” (D&C 101:50). Thus, the stage was set for disaster.

God has blessed His children with prophets to instruct them in His ways and prepare them for eternal life. The ways of God are not easily understood by man. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Obedience is essential to realize the blessings of the Lord, even if the purpose of the commandment is not understood.

### Murmuring of the children of Israel

The adversary whispers the deceptive invitation to murmur to thus destroy the power that comes from obedience. The pattern of murmuring can be seen clearly



in the following account of the children of Israel.

The Lord promised the children of Israel that He would send an angel to drive out the Canaanites, that Israel might inherit a land of milk and honey (see Exodus 33:1-3). When Israel reached the borders of Canaan, Moses sent spies into the countryside, and when they returned, they reported that the armies of Canaan were strong and ventured the opinion that Canaan was stronger than Israel. Then began the murmuring.

They questioned the commandment given through Moses, their living prophet. They spread their questioning to others. How could Israel defeat the giants of Canaan when the children of Israel saw themselves, by comparison, as grasshoppers? (see Numbers 13:31-33).

The questioning turned to rationalization and excuses. They claimed to fear for their wives and children. "It would have been better for us in Egypt!" they declared (see Numbers 14:2-3).

The murmuring became disobedience when Israel sought to appoint a captain who would lead them back to Egypt (see Numbers 14:4).

They simply refused to follow the living prophet. For their murmuring, the Lord relieved the children of Israel of the promised blessing that He would destroy the Canaanites and give them their promised land. Instead, He sent Israel into the wilderness to wander for 40 years.

### **Murmuring in Lehi's family**

The familiar pattern of murmuring is again seen in the family of Lehi.

When the prophet Lehi sent his sons to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass, they met much opposition. First, Laman was ejected from the house of Laban for merely asking for the plates. After the sons of Lehi offered to pay for the plates with gold and silver, Laban sought their lives and confiscated their property. The

brothers huddled in the cavity of a rock to assess the situation.

Laman and Lemuel murmured. It began, as always, with questioning: "How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands?" they said (1 Nephi 3:31).

Next, the excuses: "Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?" (1 Nephi 3:31).

Finally, they were slothful. Filled with anger, resentment, and excuses, Laman and Lemuel waited by the walls of Jerusalem while the faithful Nephi accomplished the work of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 4:3-5).

### **Murmuring today**

The Lord has spoken against this attitude in our day: "But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned" (D&C 58:29).

We have sustained by uplifted hand our living prophets. We rejoice in the privilege of hearing the revealed word of God in our day from our living prophets. What do we do when we hear them? Do we follow the instructions of our living prophets with exactness, or do we murmur?

Is it easier in our own age to follow a living prophet than it was in the days of Moses or Nephi? Would those who murmured against Moses and Nephi not also murmur today? The same questions can be asked in reverse. Those who murmur today would also have murmured as did Laman and Lemuel or the children of Israel against the prophet of their day with the same disastrous consequences.

### **Murmuring over "small things"**

The simplest of instructions may reveal the tendency to murmur. I attended a meeting once when the presiding authority invited members of the congregation to

come forward in the meeting room. A few stirred. Most did not. Why not?

I feel sure there were those who questioned why they should leave their comfortable position. "Why should I?" That question was, no doubt, followed promptly by an excuse or rationalization as to why it should not matter whether the seat was changed or not. I believe there followed some irritation that the presiding authority should make such a request. The last step, obvious to all who observed, was slothfulness in responding. Few moved. Was that a small thing? Yes. But it reflected a deeper, more profound lack of willingness to obey. It reflected a spirit of disobedience. That is not a small thing.

I was recently in a Church meeting in West Africa when a priesthood leader invited the brethren to come forward and occupy the first three rows of the chapel. Every man immediately stood and moved his seat according to instruction. A small thing? Yes. But it reflected a willingness to obey. That is not a small thing.

I invite you to focus on the commandment from living prophets that bothers you the most. Do you question whether the commandment is applicable to you? Do you find ready excuses why you cannot now comply with the commandment? Do you feel frustrated or irritated with those who remind you of the commandment? Are you slothful in keeping it? Beware of the deception of the adversary. Beware of murmuring.

### **Willing obedience brings God joy**

A fortunate parent experiences that special joy that comes with the willing obedience of his child. Is it not the same with God?

I can understand in some small part how joyful the Lord must be when His servants obey without murmuring. Recently, my dear wife and I participated in a meeting during which our responsibilities were to be explained. We had no idea, at that time, what our assignment would be or where we would be serving. I was privately advised that we would be called to serve in West Africa. I was surprised and delighted with the assignment, but there passed through my mind the thoughts that would inevitably arise in the mind of my companion of almost 39 years. How would she receive this assignment? I knew she would agree to go. In all our years together, she has never refused a call from the Lord. But what would be the feelings of her heart?

As I sat next to her, she discerned in my eyes that I knew our assignment. She said, "Well, where is it?" I simply said, "Africa." Her eyes brightened, and she said with cheerful heart, "Isn't that great!" My joy was full.

So also must our Father in Heaven feel joy when we follow the living prophets with willing hearts. I testify that Jesus the Christ lives. He speaks to prophets in our day. May we follow our living prophets without murmuring, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **The power of a strong testimony**

In this uncertain world there are some things that never change: the perfect love of our Heavenly Father for each of us; the assurance that He is there and will always

hear us; the existence of absolute, unchanging truths; the fact that there is a plan of happiness; the assurance that success in life is attained through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings because of the redemptive power of

His Atonement; the certainty of life after death; the reality that our condition there is set by how we live here.

Whether one does or does not accept these truths does not alter their reality. They are the fundamental building blocks of a living testimony. A strong testimony is the unshakable foundation of a secure, meaningful life where peace, confidence, happiness, and love can flourish. It is anchored in a conviction that an all-knowing God is in command of His work. He will not fail. He will keep His promises.

### **What a testimony is and what it does**

A strong testimony is the sustaining power of a successful life. It is centered in an understanding of the divine attributes of God our Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. It is secured by a willing reliance upon Them. A powerful testimony is grounded in the personal assurance that the Holy Ghost can guide and inspire our daily acts for good.

A testimony is fortified by spiritual impressions that confirm the validity of a teaching, of a righteous act, or of a warning of pending danger. Often such guidance is accompanied by powerful emotions that make it difficult to speak and bring tears to the eyes. But a testimony is not emotion. It is the very essence of character woven from threads born of countless correct decisions. These choices are made with trusting faith in things that are believed and, at least initially, are not seen.<sup>1</sup>

A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth, distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths in faith and the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained.

### **Honestly evaluate your testimony**

A strong testimony has sustained prophets throughout the ages and fortified them to act with courage and determination in times of difficulty. A powerful testimony can do the same for you. As you fortify your own personal testimony, you will have power to make correct choices so you can stand unwaveringly against the pressures of an increasingly vicious world. Your personal security and happiness depend upon the strength of your testimony, for it will guide your actions in times of trial or uncertainty.

Honestly evaluate your personal life. How strong is your own testimony? Is it truly a sustaining power in your life, or is it more a hope that what you have learned is true? Is it more than a vague belief that worthwhile concepts and patterns of life seem to be reasonable and logical? Such mental assent will not help when you face the serious challenges that will inevitably come to you. Does your testimony guide you to correct decisions? To do so, fundamental truths must become part of the very fiber of your character. They must be an essential part of your being, more treasured than life itself.

### **How to strengthen your testimony**

#### *Exercise faith and live by Jesus' teachings*

If an honest assessment of your own testimony confirms that it is not as strong as it should be, how can it be strengthened?

Your testimony will be fortified as you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, in His teachings, and in His limitless power to accomplish what He has promised.<sup>2</sup> The key words are "exercise faith." True faith has enormous power, but there are principles that must be followed to unleash that power. Moroni taught:

"Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not be-

cause ye see not, for ye receive no witness until *after the trial of your faith*.”<sup>3</sup>

That means you must practice the truth or principle you have faith in. As you live it consistently, there will come a witness of its truthfulness through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is often a feeling of peace. It could be a stirring within you. It might be evidenced by opening doors to other truths. As you patiently look for a confirmation, it will come. Recognize that the Lord will give you the capacity to understand and prove through personal experience the truthfulness of His teachings. He will confirm the certainty that His laws will produce the promised results when obeyed willingly and consistently.

#### *Pray with humility and trust*

A powerful testimony distills from quiet moments of prayer and pondering as you recognize the impressions that will accompany such effort. Humble, trusting prayer brings consolation, solace, comfort, direction, and peace the unworthy can never know.

Some truths regarding prayer may help you. The Lord will hear your prayers in time of need. He will invariably answer them. However, His answers will generally not come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. There is a pattern that must be followed. You are asked to look for an answer to your prayers, then confirm that it is correct.<sup>4</sup> Obey His counsel to “study it out in your mind.”<sup>5</sup> Often you will think of a solution. Then seek confirmation that your answer is right. This help can come from prayer and from pondering the scriptures, at times by the intervention of others,<sup>6</sup> or from your own capacity, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

At times the Lord will want you to proceed with trust before you receive a confirming answer. His answer generally comes as packets of help. As each piece is

followed in faith, it will unite with others to give you the whole answer. This pattern requires the exercise of faith. While sometimes very hard, it results in significant personal growth. At times the Lord will give you an answer before you ask. This occurs when you are unaware of a danger or may be doing the wrong thing, trusting that it is correct.

Alma showed how fasting and prayer can strengthen your testimony. He stated:

“I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

“... Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

#### *Study the scriptures*

President Romney taught of the testimony-strengthening power of scriptures with this personal example:

“I urge you to get acquainted with [the Book of Mormon]. Read it to your children; they are not too young to understand it. I remember reading it with one of my lads when he was very young. . . . I lay in the lower bunk and he in the upper bunk. We were each reading aloud alternate paragraphs of those last three marvelous chapters of Second Nephi. I heard his voice breaking and thought he had a cold. . . . As we finished he said . . . , ‘Daddy, do you ever cry when you read the Book of Mormon?’

“‘Yes, Son. . . . Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord so witnesses to my soul that the Book of Mormon is true that I do cry.’

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘that is what happened to me tonight.’”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Pay tithes and offerings*

Your testimony will be made strong through willing obedience to the law of

tithing and by fast offerings, and the Lord will bless you richly for it.

### **Resist Satan's efforts to weaken testimony**

As your testimony is fortified, Satan will try harder to tempt you. Resist his efforts. You will become stronger and his influence on you weaker.<sup>9</sup> Satan's increasing influence in the world is allowed to provide an atmosphere in which to prove ourselves. While he causes havoc today, Satan's final destiny was fixed by Jesus Christ through His Atonement and Resurrection. The devil will not triumph.

Even now, he must operate within bounds set by the Lord. He cannot take away any blessing that has been earned. He cannot alter character that has been woven from righteous decisions. He has no power to destroy the eternal bonds forged in a holy temple between a husband, wife, and children. He cannot quench true faith. He cannot take away your testimony. Yes, these things can be lost by succumbing to his temptations. But he has no power in and of himself to destroy them.

### **Testimony comes line upon line**

These and the other truths are certainties. However, your conviction of their reality must come from your own understanding of truth, from your own application of divine law and your willingness to seek the confirming witness of the Spirit. Your testimony may begin from acknowledgment that the teachings of the Lord seem reasonable. But it must grow from practicing those laws. Then your own experience will attest to their validity and yield the results promised. That confirmation will not all come at once. A strong testimony comes line upon line, precept upon precept. It requires faith, time, consistent obedience, and a willingness to sacrifice.

### **Build testimony on a strong foundation**

A strong testimony cannot be built upon a weak foundation. Therefore, don't pretend you believe something when you are not sure of it. Seek to receive a ratifying witness. Wrestle in mighty prayer, living righteously, and ask for a spiritual confirmation. The beauty of the teachings of the Lord is that they are true and that you can confirm them for yourself. Hone your spiritual susceptibility by being constantly alert to the guidance that will come through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Let your Father in Heaven know of your feelings, your needs, your concerns, your hopes and aspirations. Speak to Him with total confidence, knowing that He will hear and respond. Then patiently go forth in your life doing those things you know are correct, walking with confidence born of faith and righteousness, patiently waiting for the response that will come in the manner and at the time the Lord considers most appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

### **Strong testimony expands our capacity**

Why was Joseph Smith able to do that which was beyond his personal capacity? It was because of his powerful testimony. That led to his obedience, his faith in the Master, and his unwavering determination to do His will. I testify that as your testimony grows in strength, when needed and earned, you can enjoy inspiration to know what to do and, when necessary, divine power or capacity to accomplish it.<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith perfected his ability to follow the guidance of the Lord by practiced personal discipline. He did not let his own desires, convenience, or the persuasions of men interfere with that compliance. Follow his example.

### **A consummate power for good**

For enduring peace and security, at some time in life, in quiet moments of re-

flection, you must come to know with a surety that there is a God in heaven who loves you, that He is in control and will help you. That conviction is the core of strong testimony.

In a few moments President Gordon B. Hinckley will give the closing conference message. This morning we heard him, as the prophet of the Lord, give sober yet reassuring counsel regarding the challenges we face. He asked that we humbly pray to our Father in Heaven for guidance and strength in combating evil. Our security is in Him and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I know that the Savior loves you. He will confirm your efforts to strengthen your testimony so that it becomes a consummate power for good in your life, a power that will sustain you in every time of need and give you peace and assurance in these times of uncertainty.

As one of His Apostles authorized to bear witness of Him, I solemnly testify that I know that the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. He is our hope, our Mediator, our Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Ether 12:6; Hebrews 11:1.
2. See Alma 26:22; Doctrine and Covenants 3:1–10; 82:10.
3. Ether 12:6; italics added.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:23, 36; 8:2–3, 10; 9:9.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
6. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
7. Alma 5:45–46.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 41.
9. See David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 94; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 28.

10. See David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 152–53; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 117.

11. See Doctrine and Covenants 43:16.

#### President Faust

As we conclude this conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Utah County, and the brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood choir, along with their conductors and organists, for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey the traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert R. Steuer of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### "God be with you till we meet again"

My dear brothers and sisters, I'm glad we've had with us, today and yesterday, Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter. We very much appreciate her presence.

Now we come to the close of this great conference. The choir will sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again" (*Hymns*, no. 152). I'm grateful for that song. It says:

God be with you till we meet again;  
By his counsels guide, uphold you;  
With his sheep securely fold you. . . .  
When life's perils thick confound you,  
Put his arms unfailing round you. . . .  
Keep love's banner floating o'er you;  
Smite death's threat'ning wave before you.  
God be with you till we meet again.

I have sung those words in English when others sang them in a score of languages. I have lifted my voice with those wonderful and simple words on memorable occasions on all the continents of the earth. I have sung them in bidding farewell to missionaries, with tears in my eyes. I have sung them with men in battle dress during the war in Vietnam. In a thousand places and in many circumstances over these almost numberless years, I have raised my voice with so many others in these words of parting, sung by people who love one another.

We were strangers when we met. We were brothers and sisters when we said good-bye.

These simple words became a prayer offered to the throne of heaven in behalf of one another.

And in that spirit we bid good-bye as we close what has been a most remarkable and historic conference.

### Hopes for resolutions from conference

I hope that as we have heard the brethren and the sisters speak, our hearts have been touched and our resolutions lifted. I hope that every married man has said to himself, "I will be more kind and generous toward my companion and children. I will control my temper." I hope that kindness will replace harshness in our conversations one with another.

I hope that every wife will look to her husband as her dear companion, the star of her life, her supporter, her protector, her companion with whom she walks hand in hand "equally yoked." I hope that she will look to her children as sons and daughters of God, the most significant contribution she has made to the world, her greatest concern with regard to their achievements, and more precious than any other thing she has or could hope for.

I hope that boys and girls will leave this conference with a greater appreciation for their parents, with more fervent love in their hearts for those who have brought them into the world, for those who love them most and are most anxious concerning them.

I hope that the noise of our homes will drop a few decibels, that we will subdue our voices and speak to one another with greater appreciation and respect.

I hope that all of us who are members of this Church will be absolutely loyal to the Church. The Church needs your loyal support, and you need the loyal support of the Church.

I hope that prayer will take on a new luster in our lives. None of us knows what lies ahead. We may speculate, but we do not know. Sickness may strike us. Misfortune may overtake us. Fears may afflict us. Death may place his cold and solemn hand upon us or a loved one.

Regardless of what may come, may faith, immovable and constant, shine above us as the polar star.

### Turn to God, and He will not forsake us

Now, today, we are faced with particular problems, serious and consuming and difficult and of great concern to us. Surely we have need for the Lord.

When I went home for lunch, I turned on the television, looked at the news for a moment, and paraphrased in my mind the words of the Psalms: "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?" (see Psalm 2:1). I've lived through all of the wars of the 20th century. My eldest brother lies buried in the soil of France, a victim of the First World War. I have lived through the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and lesser conflicts. We have been a very quarrelsome and difficult people in our conflicts one with another. We so need to turn to the Lord and look to Him. I think of the great words of Kipling:

Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!  
[Rudyard Kipling, "Recessional,"  
in James Dalton Morrison, ed.,  
*Masterpieces of Religious Verse*  
(1948), 512]

Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness. God has made it clear that if we will not forsake Him, He will not forsake us. He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps (see Psalm 121:4).

### Prayer of benediction

And now as we close this conference, even though we shall have a benediction, I should like to offer a brief prayer in these circumstances:

O God, our Eternal Father, Thou great Judge of the Nations, Thou who art the governor of the universe, Thou who art our Father and our God, whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. We pray for the great democracies of the earth which Thou hast overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain.

O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen.

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The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Robert R. Steuer offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from Utah County provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Steven Kapp Perry directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir

joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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**A**


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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-second  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 6 and 7, 2002



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# Report of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 2002. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, Dennis B.

Neuenschwander, Charles Didier, and Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Gerald N. Lund, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 10:00 A.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Spirit of God." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We also recognize the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Spirit of God" and will now favor us with "God Is Love." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "God Is Love."

Elder Bruce C. Hafen offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

We will now be privileged to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Remarkable growth of the Church

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to meet with you again in a great world conference of the Church.

One hundred and seventy-two years ago today, Joseph Smith and his associates met in the inconspicuous log house on the Peter Whitmer farm in the quiet village of Fayette, New York, and organized the Church of Christ.

From that modest beginning something truly remarkable has happened. Great has been the history of this work. Our people have endured every kind of suffering. Indescribable have been their sacrifices. Immense beyond belief have been their labors. But out of all of this fiery crucible has come something glorious. Today we stand on the summit of the years and look about us.

From the original six members has grown a vast family of worshipers, 11 million-plus strong. From that quiet village has grown a movement that today is scattered through some 160 nations of the earth. This has become the fifth largest church in the United States. That is a remarkable development. More members of the Church reside out of this nation than in it. That too is a remarkable thing. No other church to come out of the soil of America has grown so fast or spread so widely. Within its vast embrace are members from many nations who speak many tongues. It is a phenomenon without precedent. As the tapestry of its past has unrolled, a beautiful pattern has come to view. It finds expression in the lives of a happy and wonderful people. It portends marvelous things yet to come.

When our people first arrived in this valley 155 years ago, they saw with prophetic vision a great future. But I sometimes wonder if they really sensed the magnitude of that dream as it would unfold.

### **Positive impressions during the Olympics**

The headquarters of the Church are in this city, which recently hosted the 19th Winter Olympics. We made a deliberate decision that we would not use this as a time or place to proselytize, but we were confident that out of this significant event would come a wonderful thing for the Church. The great buildings we have here—the temple, the Tabernacle, this magnificent Conference Center, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the family history facilities, the Church Administration Building, the Church Office Building, our welfare facilities, together with scores of chapels in this valley—could not be overlooked by those who walked the streets of this and neighboring cities. As Mike Wallace once remarked to me, “These structures all denote something solid.”

And beyond this, we had total confidence in our people, many thousands of them, who would serve as volunteers in this great undertaking. They would be dependable; they would be pleasant; they would be knowledgeable; they would be accommodating. The unique and distinctive capacity of our people in speaking the languages of the world would prove to be a tremendous asset beyond anything to be found elsewhere.

Well, it all worked out. The visitors came by the hundreds of thousands. Some came with suspicion and hesitancy, old and false images persisting in their minds. They came feeling they might get trapped in some unwanted situation by religious zealots. But they found something they never expected. They discovered not only the scenic wonder of this area, with its magnificent mountains and valleys, they found not only the wonderful spirit of the international games at their best, but they found beauty in this city. They found hosts who were gracious and accommodating and anxious to assist them. I do not wish to infer that such hospitality was limited to our people. The entire community joined together in a great expression of hospitality.

### **Laudatory comments of journalists**

Out of all of this came something wonderful for this Church. Representatives of the media, so often a tough and calloused group, with very few exceptions spoke and wrote in language both complimentary and accurately descriptive of a unique culture they found here, of the people they met and dealt with, of the spirit of hospitality which they felt.

Television carried the picture to billions of people across the earth. Newspapers and magazines ran story after story.

Thousands upon tens of thousands walked through Temple Square, admired the majestic house of the Lord, sat in the Tabernacle and listened to the matchless

music of the choir. More thousands filled this great Conference Center to watch a wonderful production dealing with the Church and its worldwide mission. Other thousands visited the Family History Center. The media were hosted in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We were interviewed for television, radio, and the press by correspondents from many parts of this nation and from across the world. I am told that nearly 4,000 stories about the Church appeared in the German press alone.

Georgie Anne Geyer, prominent syndicated writer whose column appears in many newspapers, wrote as follows:

"How on Earth could a largely Mormon state do something so daring as hosting an international celebrity meeting? Would the world come gladly to a state whose dominant religion asks members to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and even caffeine, three staples of international conferences?"

And then she went on to quote Raymond T. Grant, artistic director of the Olympic Arts Festival. He talked of the opening ceremony and said:

"You know, 98 percent of the entire cast were volunteers, and that's huge. In fact, most were not paid at all. This is an extraordinary story, and I'd link it directly to Mormon culture. As a Catholic boy from New York, I found it interesting that Brigham Young, the founder of the Utah settlement of the Mormons, built a theater before anything else."

"He went on to tally up: The state has six dance companies; more pianos and harps are sold in Utah than anywhere in the United States; the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has [360] members; and the oldest Steinway dealership in Utah . . . was started as early as 1862. In Utah, their per capita spending on students is one of the lowest—yet they boast high test scores. 'It has been fascinating for me, having to tap into this culture.'"

Miss Geyer concluded her story by writing: "It is simply the mix of a serious and upright religion, of families who foster and insist upon providing the highest levels of culture right along with the highest modern technology, and of generally sensible organizing and governing. In short, it is a modern mix of the old America" ("Salt Lake City and State of Utah Reveal Themselves to the World," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 Feb. 2002, A15).

If there were time, I could give you many quotations from the seasoned journalists of the world, who wrote in a most laudatory fashion.

Was there anything negative? Of course. But it was minimal. We had private interviews with presidents of nations, with ambassadors, with leaders in business and other fields.

### **Fulfillment of Brigham Young's prophecy**

In 1849, two years after our people first arrived here and following the discovery of gold in California, many were discouraged. They had struggled to wrest a living from the arid soil. Crickets had devoured their crops. The winters were cold. Many thought they would go to California and get rich. President Young stood before them and encouraged them to remain, promising that "God will temper the climate, and we shall build a city and a temple to the Most High God in this place. We will extend our settlements to the east and west, to the north and to the south, and we will build towns and cities by the hundreds, and thousands of the Saints will gather in from the nations of the earth. This will become the great highway of the nations. Kings and emperors and the noble and wise of the earth will visit us here" (in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* [1936], 128).

We have witnessed the fulfillment of that prophecy in these recent days. Need-

less to say, I am happy with what has happened. Those visitors tasted the distinctive culture of this community. We believe that culture is worth preserving. I compliment and thank our people who participated in such numbers and so generously, and I compliment and thank all others who worked together to make of this a wonderful and most significant event.

### **Growth of the Perpetual Education Fund**

Now I wish to speak rather quickly of one or two other matters.

Speaking of Brigham Young has reminded me of the Perpetual Education Fund which we have established. It was only a year ago that I first spoke of this in our general conference. The contributions of generous Latter-day Saints have come in to assure us that this endeavor is now on a solid foundation. We will need more yet, but already it has been demonstrated that vast good will come of this undertaking. Young men and women in the underprivileged areas of the world, young men and women who for the most part are returned missionaries, will be enabled to get good educations that will lift them out of the slough of poverty in which their forebears for generations have struggled. They will marry and go forward with skills that will qualify them to earn well and take their places in society where they can make a substantial contribution. They will likewise grow in the Church, filling positions of responsibility and rearing families who will continue in the faith.

I have time to read only one testimonial. It comes from a young man who has been blessed by this program. He says:

"It is so wonderful that I do not have to just dream anymore about my education or my future. The Lord has cleared the way, and I am doing it!

"I am currently attending a great technical institute in our country, where I am studying to become a computer technician. . . . By going to school, I am discovering my

abilities. The discipline I developed on my mission helps me to succeed. . . . Never before has any young man felt more blessed than I do. The PEF has strengthened my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, more than ever, I feel the responsibility the gospel places upon me to prepare myself to be a better member, a better leader, and a better father. . . .

"My dear mother, who has sacrificed so much, gets so emotional that she cries when she prays at night because of her gratitude to the Lord. . . .

"Now, I envision my town being blessed because of me. I envision the Church with leaders who have financial stability and who can support the Lord's work with all their might, mind, and strength. I see the Church prospering. I am excited to start my own family and teach them that we can be self-sufficient. So I must finish my education. I will then repay the loan quickly to help my fellowmen. . . . I am grateful for the Savior's mercy. He truly sustains us with His love."

And so it goes, my brothers and sisters. As this great work moves across the earth, we are blessing now some 2,400 young people. Others will be blessed.

May the Lord bless you, and each of us, as we rejoice in our opportunity to be a part of this great cause in this wonderful season of the Lord's work is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

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### **President Faust**

President Hinckley has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

Our next speaker will be President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of

the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Following the singing, Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general pres-

ident, will address us. We will then hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by the choir singing "I Am a Child of God."

## President Boyd K. Packer

### A street orphan in Cuzco, Peru

Many years ago in Cuzco, high in the Andes Mountains of Peru, Elder A. Theodore Tuttle and I held a sacrament meeting in a long, narrow room with a door that opened onto the street. It was night and it was very cold.

While Elder Tuttle spoke, a little boy, perhaps six years old, appeared in the doorway. He was naked except for a ragged shirt that went about to his knees.

On our left was a small table with a plate of bread for the sacrament. This ragged street orphan saw the bread and inched slowly along the wall toward it. He was almost to the table when a woman on the aisle saw him. With a stern toss of her head, she banished him out into the night. I groaned within myself.

Later the boy returned. He crept along the wall, glancing from the bread to me. He was near the point where the woman would see him again. I held out my arms, and he came running to me. I held him on my lap.

Then, as something symbolic, I set him in Elder Tuttle's chair. After the closing prayer, much to my sorrow, he darted out into the night.

When I returned home, I told President Spencer W. Kimball about him. He was deeply moved and spoke of it in a conference talk. He told others of it and said to me more than once, "That experience has far greater meaning than you have yet come to know."

I have never forgotten that little street orphan. Many times in South America

I have looked for him in the faces of the people. When he comes back into my mind, others come with him.

### Other suffering children

After World War II on a cold night in a train station in southern Japan, I heard a tap on the train window. There stood a boy wearing the same ragged shirt, a rag tied about a swollen jaw, his head covered with scabies. He held a rusty tin can and a spoon, the symbol of an orphan beggar. As I struggled to open the door to give him money, the train pulled out. I will never forget that hungry little boy standing in the cold, holding up his empty tin can.

There was a sick little first grader in a hospital at a government Indian school with a fever and running nose. I opened a package from his mother, hundreds of miles away on the reservation. Wrapped in a cardboard box with an auto parts label, which no doubt she got from the trading post, were some Navajo fry bread and pieces of mutton—a Christmas present for her little boy.

On the news recently I saw that long, familiar line of refugees. With them, as usual, were the children carrying children. One child was perched atop a massive bundle carried by her mother. As they pushed slowly and silently by, she looked into the camera. That sober little black face and those big black eyes seemed to ask, "Why?"

Children are the past, the present, and the future all blended into one. They

are consummately precious. Every time a child is born, the world is renewed in innocence.

I constantly think about and pray for the children and youth and their parents.

### **Jenny brings love and joy**

Recently I attended a sacrament meeting given by children with special needs. Each was disabled in hearing or sight or mental development. Beside each was a teenager assigned as a companion. They sang and played music for us. Facing us on the front row was a young girl who stood and signed to those behind us who could not hear.

Jenny gave a brief testimony. Then her parents each spoke. They told of the utter agony they had known when they learned that their child would never have a normal life. They told of the endless, everyday trials that followed. When others would stare or laugh, Jenny's brothers put an arm protectively around her. The mother then told us of the love and absolute joy Jenny brought to the family.

Those parents have learned that "after much tribulation . . . cometh the blessing" (D&C 103:12). I saw them bound together by adversity and refined into pure gold—true Latter-day Saints.

They told us Jenny adopts fathers. So when I shook hands with her, I said, "I'm a grandpa."

She looked up at me and said, "Well, I can see why!"

### **Warnings to those who abuse children**

There is nothing in the scriptures, there is nothing in what we publish, there is nothing in what we believe or teach that gives license to parents or anyone else to neglect or abuse or molest our own or anyone else's children.

There is in the scriptures, there is in what we publish, there is in what we believe, there is in what we teach counsel,

commandments, even warnings that we are to protect, to love, to care for, and to "teach [children] to walk in the ways of truth" (Mosiah 4:15). To betray them is utterly unthinkable.

Among the strongest warnings and the severest penalties in the revelations are those relating to little children. Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

### **Children are blameless before God**

In the days of the prophet Mormon, some who did not understand that little children are "blameless before God" (Mosiah 3:21) and are "alive in Christ" (Moroni 8:12) wanted to baptize little children. Mormon said they "[denied] the mercies of Christ, and [set] at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption" (Moroni 8:20).

Mormon sternly rebuked them, saying: "He that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell. . . .

" . . . Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God" (Moroni 8:14, 16).

Only when children reach the age of accountability, set by the Lord at eight years of age (see D&C 68:27), is their baptism essential. Before that age they are innocent.

### **Look after children's needs**

Children should not be ignored or neglected. They absolutely must not be abused or molested. Children must not be abandoned or estranged by divorce. Parents are responsible to provide for their children.

The Lord said, "All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:4).

We are to look after their physical, their spiritual, and their emotional needs. The Book of Mormon teaches, "Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness" (Mosiah 4:14).

Nothing compares with a father who is responsible and in turn teaches his children responsibility. Nothing compares with a mother who is present with them to comfort them and give them assurance. Love, protection, and tenderness are all of consummate worth.

The Lord said, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40).

All too often, a parent is left alone to raise children. The Lord has a way of strengthening that parent to meet alone what should be the responsibility of two parents. For either parent to deliberately abandon their children is a very grievous mistake.

### **Do not make steps too high for converts**

I think often of another boy. We met him at a seminary graduation in a remote city in Argentina. He was well clothed and well nourished.

The students came down the aisle up to the stand. There were three rather high steps. He could not make the first step because his legs were too short. He was a dwarf.

It was then we noticed marching behind him two stalwart young men who stepped forward, one on either side, and lifted him gracefully to the podium. When the service was over, they lifted him down again and then marched out with him. They were his friends and watched over

him. This boy could not reach the first step without being lifted up by his friends.

Those who come into the Church come as children spiritually. They need someone—some friend—to lift them up.

If we design the steps after baptism to fit only those who have long, strong legs, we ignore what the Lord said in the revelations. The prophets have told us that we "ought to be teachers [and teach that] which be the first principles of the oracles of God; [for they are] such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. . . .

" . . . Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12, 14).

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:2).

In a revelation given in 1830, just before the Church was organized, the Lord cautioned, "They cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish" (D&C 19:22).

We must be careful lest we make that first step too high or design it for those with strong, long legs and leave the others without some friend to lift them up.

### **A deep concern for children**

When some disciples rebuked those who brought little children, "Jesus said, Suffer little children [*suffer* means to permit], and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

When His disciples asked what kind of men they ought to be, Jesus set a little child in their midst (see Matthew 18:2–3). Except we "become as a little child, [we] can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:38).

A deep concern for children and their parents is in my mind and heart and soul.



### **"You held a nation in your lap"**

Over the years I have wondered what President Kimball meant when he reminded me of that street orphan in Cuzco and repeated, "That experience has far greater meaning than you have yet come to know." One day he added, "You held a nation on your lap."

Now in my 78th year, I understand what President Kimball was seeing; I know what he meant. That boy in Cuzco and the one in Japan and the other children about the world profoundly influence what I think and how I feel and what I pray for most earnestly. I constantly think of little children and their parents who struggle to raise them in ever more perilous times.

### **Treasure most how family treats children**

Like my Brethren, I have traveled all over the world. Like my Brethren, I have held positions of trust in education, in business, in government, and in the Church. I have written books and, like them, have received honors, degrees, certificates, plaques. Such honors come with the territory and are undeserved.

Assessing the value of those things, the one thing I treasure more than any of them—more than all of them put together—the thing of most value to me is how our sons and daughters and their

husbands and wives treat their children and how, in turn, our grandchildren treat their little ones.

When it comes to understanding our relationship with our Heavenly Father, the things my wife and I have learned as parents and grandparents that are of most worth knowing, we have learned from our children.

This blessing has come to me as a gift from my wife. The Lord said of such women, "[A wife is given to a man] to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

With women such as this to be the mothers of children, we see why the Lord revealed that "great things may be required at the hand of their fathers" (D&C 29:48).

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the power of it is to bless little children. I pray earnestly that the children and youth and their parents will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that it will be a guide and a protection to them, that it will bear in their hearts the testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Earl C. Tingey**

### **An income and expense journal**

Last Christmas I received a special gift from my mother. She had carefully kept in her possession over these many years a little book I first received from my parents in 1944, when I was 10 years of age.

This is the book. It is a journal in which I was taught to record on a weekly basis my income and expenses.

As an example, my entry for the week of 29 July 1944 records that I started the week with \$24.05 on hand and earned \$7.00 working on our family farm. For expenses, I spent 5 cents for candy, \$3.45 for a purchase, 20 cents for a movie, and \$2.37 for personal clothing. I also invested \$20.00 in a war savings bond and paid 70 cents tithing. I ended the week with \$4.28 on hand.

I remember questioning my father whether my wage of 25 cents an hour might be increased. But remembering that a movie was 20 cents and candy cost only 5 cents, I now realize I was probably overpaid.

As I looked through this journal of more than 50 years ago, I noted that every week during the years 1944 and 1945, I paid tithing of 10 percent of my income for that week. In December 1944 I recorded that I had paid \$12.35 in tithing that year—a full tithing.

This is where and how I learned to pay tithing.

### **Teach the principle of tithing to children**

My wife and I taught our children the importance of setting aside tithing each week as they received an allowance or earned money babysitting or doing special jobs. They put the tithing in a little box. On fast Sunday they gave the tithing to the bishop. They also learned the value of money by saving a goodly portion of the balance of their income for a future mission and education.

Our grandchildren are now following a similar pattern.

Let us teach this principle to our children and be sure they see us paying tithing. President Joseph F. Smith said:

“Our children, as soon as they become old enough to earn means, should be taught to pay their tithing, that their names may be written in the book of the law of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

In my day, in Primary, we learned this little poem:

What is tithing?  
I will tell you every time.  
Ten cents from a dollar  
And a penny from a dime.

### **Tithing in biblical times**

The doctrine of tithing is woven like a tapestry throughout the scriptures. Abra-

ham paid tithing to Melchizedek.<sup>2</sup> The children of Israel were taught to bring their tithes to the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Probably the most quoted scripture on the subject of tithing in the Old Testament is found in Malachi:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . .

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>4</sup>

The amount of tithing we pay is the most perfect and equitable arrangement of which I know. It is one-tenth of our increase. All, from the poorest to the richest, pay the same percentage. Christ taught that principle in the story of the widow’s mite:

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

“And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

“And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

“For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”<sup>5</sup>

A mite is a very small coin. It was the smallest coin used by the Jews. It was one-sixty-fourth of a Roman silver penny.

### **Law of tithing revealed at Far West**

In this dispensation the Lord has established the law of tithing as the law of revenue of His Church. Without it we could not carry out the eternal purposes of the Lord. It is also a law by which we show our loyalty to the Lord and prove

ourselves worthy of privileges, ordinances, and blessings.

I was recently in Independence, Missouri, and felt a need to drive an hour north to Far West. The Latter-day Saints settled Far West in 1836 as a place of refuge from persecution. Far West became the county seat, with an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 inhabitants. It was the headquarters of the Church for a season. My own ancestors lived there.

As I arrived at Far West and looked about, all I could see was rolling farmlands. There was no city, no roads, and no buildings. There was only a peaceful, grassy temple site containing four cornerstones, surrounded by a modest fence.

In 1838 the Saints were driven from Far West. Joseph Smith and others were arrested and taken to the nearby Liberty Jail. There they languished under the most horrible conditions imaginable for six months. My own ancestors suffered terribly in Far West and almost lost their lives.

As I stood in Far West and visualized what it once was, I opened my scriptures and read section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. This revelation was given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Far West on 8 July 1838, in the midst of these persecutions:

“And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.

“And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

I thought to myself that the law of tithing could not have been received by the members of the Church at a less opportune time than then. But they received it, and the members commenced living this new law at a time when they were losing their possessions and, in some cases, their lives. As I visited Far West, I gained a spiritual testimony of the law of tithing that was stronger and deeper than I had ever before felt.

## **Counsel to new members to pay tithing**

I would like to offer a word of counsel to the many thousands of members joining the Church today as a result of the diligent efforts of our missionaries. Exercise your faith. Pay your tithing. This law may be different from that to which you were accustomed prior to your baptism. But nothing you do as a new convert will more completely prepare you to enjoy the wonderful blessings that await you—even temple blessings—than paying your tithing.

Now, a brief word of counsel to missionaries. Teach tithing to your investigators in such a way that they will gain a testimony of this wonderful principle of the gospel.

## **Paying tithing in difficult circumstances**

Joseph F. Smith's mother was known as “Widow Smith.” She was the widow of Hyrum Smith, who was martyred with the Prophet Joseph. She once rebuked the tithing clerk who stated that because of her poverty, she should not have to pay her tithing. She said: “‘Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold his blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper, and to be able to provide for my family.’”<sup>7</sup>

Did she prosper? Her son and grandson became Presidents of the Church, and her descendants today include a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and many notable Church leaders.

Speaking of his mother, Joseph F. Smith once said she paid “tithes of her sheep and cattle, the tenth pound of her butter, her tenth chicken, the tenth of her eggs, the tenth pig, the tenth calf, the tenth colt—a tenth of everything she raised.”<sup>8</sup>

I was once teaching the law of tithing to a group of Church leaders in Africa.

One brother said, "Elder Tingey, how can I pay tithing when I have no income?" I inquired and determined that he had a large family of seven or eight children and was unemployed. I asked how he fed his family. He said he had a small garden and raised geese. I asked, "What do the geese do?" He replied, "They lay eggs." I responded, "What if one morning you discovered 10 geese eggs in the nests of your geese?" A light flickered on in his soul. "I could take one egg and give it to my branch president," he answered. He understood, and he could become a full-tithe payer.

### **Paying tithing brings a special peace**

As we pay and teach our children to pay tithing, we develop a family that is deeply rooted in making and keeping temple covenants. The most glorious of all blessings we receive in this life and in the eternities are blessings that come from knowing that our families are sealed together for all eternity. Today some may find that they are denying themselves these privileges by their failure to pay tithing. To those who find themselves in

this situation, my counsel is to exercise your faith, prove the Lord herewith, and pay your tithing.

A special peace that will surpass all understanding will come to you and your family as you pay a full tithing. You will find that all fears concerning finances and care of family will diminish. You will come to know that your Heavenly Father loves you.

I am grateful that my parents taught me to pay tithing. I bear my humble testimony that paying tithing is a true principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 231.
2. See Genesis 14:18–20.
3. See Deuteronomy 12:6.
4. Malachi 3:8, 10.
5. Mark 12:41–44.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
7. Quoted in *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.
8. *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## **Sister Mary Ellen W. Smoot**

### **Relief Society helps develop inner strength**

On behalf of my counselors and the Relief Society general board, we acknowledge the members of the Church worldwide, and specifically the women, who through their faithfulness and devotion, make sacrifices of their time and talents to bless the lives of individuals and families around the world.

In the blessing President Gordon B. Hinckley gave me when I was set apart, he spoke of the service the Relief Society can render. He said, "This is a tremendous organization, perhaps the largest and oldest of its kind in all the world. Its mission is to do good and to help those in

distress and need, to bring about the processes of education, good homemaking, and other skills into the lives of women throughout the world."

We have as our guides the Relief Society declaration; home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and the visiting teaching program. These tools have been carefully evaluated and are now in place to help sisters expand their inner strength through service and unity.

### **Inner strength of Susanna Stone Lloyd**

To demonstrate the kind of inner strength I am talking about, I would like to share the story of Susanna Stone Lloyd,

who at the age of 26 left England in 1856 and traveled to Utah alone. The only member of her family to join the Church, Susanna was a member of the Willie handcart company. Like so many other pioneers, she endured life-threatening hunger, illness, and fatigue.

Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Susanna borrowed a mirror to make herself more presentable. Despite her best efforts, she recounts: "I shall never forget how I looked. Some of my old friends did not know me."<sup>1</sup> Having sold her own mirror to an Indian for a piece of buffalo meat, she had not spent much time looking at herself. Now she did not recognize her own image. She was a different person, both inside and out. Over the course of rocky ridges and extreme hardship came a deep conviction. Her faith had been tried, and her conversion was concrete. She had been refined in ways that the very best mirror could not reflect. Susanna had prayed for strength and found it—deep within her soul.

### **How to build inner strength**

This is the kind of inner strength I would like to talk about. How do you and I become so converted to the truth, so full of faith, so dependent on God that we are able to meet trials and even be strengthened by them?

It does not take much living to find out that life almost never turns out the way you planned it. Adversity and affliction come to everyone. Do you know anyone who would not like to change something about themselves or their circumstances? And yet I am sure you know many who go forward with faith. You are drawn to those people, inspired by them, and even strengthened by their examples.

Over the past five years I have met with sisters from Africa to Spain who are pioneers in their own right. I have marveled at their inner strength, and I have been inspired by the depth of their tes-

timonies. These are sisters who live the truths that the Relief Society declaration affirms.

The declaration reminds us of who we really are and why we do the things we do. The more we live by its precepts, the more inner strength we will have. We will mirror our beliefs. Fasting, prayer, and scripture study impact our relationship with the Savior. I would like to highlight two more ways we can develop inner strength.

### **Serving others builds inner strength**

When we are truly converted, our focus shifts from self to others. We can find inner strength through service. Nothing would please the adversary more than for us to be distracted by selfish concerns and appetites. But we know better. Service will help us to stay on course.

At women's conferences; at home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and most importantly in our own homes I have been inspired by your acts of service.

Just a few weeks ago I received a call from the Area President in the Europe Central Area. He said the members and missionaries in Albania and Moldova were so cold, and he wondered if the Relief Society might have any quilts to send their way. Imagine the joy I felt as I visited with Humanitarian Service and discovered that we could donate 1,000 quilts. Within days they were packaged and sent. The mission president wrote, "Members here were touched that other members would be thinking of them." Thank you for your selfless service.

Sisters, take a close look at the suggested topics for home, family, and personal enrichment meeting and find ways to build spiritual strength, develop personal skills, strengthen the home and family, and provide gospel service. By so doing, we will become less preoccupied with our problems and more dependent on God.

## Being united builds inner strength

Another way we can develop inner strength is by striving for unity in our families, stakes, wards, and presidencies. The Lord Himself taught, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>2</sup>

Unity of purpose, thought, and feeling are exalting qualities. When we can put aside our differences and value each other's strengths, great things happen. The Prophet Joseph Smith admonished: "Don't be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor's virtue . . . ; you must enlarge your souls towards each other."<sup>3</sup> Such generosity of spirit invites greater unity.

I have visited stakes and wards that are united. The auxiliary presidencies are supporting each other and coordinating their efforts; they are sustaining their priesthood leaders and together striving to bring families to Christ. As the kingdom of God rolls forth, we must unite our efforts in saving souls.

As a Relief Society general presidency we are grateful for the new emphasis in visiting teaching.<sup>4</sup> The new messages invite sisters to read from their scriptures and from the teachings of the First Presidency and other General Authorities about a principle of the gospel. Sisters are then encouraged to share insights and experiences about how living the principle has blessed their lives.

Sisters, if you will follow this format, you will feel more unity with your companion and with those you teach. You will be strengthened spiritually.

## Great inner strength of women

No matter our circumstances, who of us can afford to waste our life in front of the mirrors of self-pity and discouragement? Yes, as the Apostle Paul admonished, we all need to examine ourselves<sup>5</sup> from time to time. We all need to repent,

recognize our weaknesses, and more fully come unto Christ. Like Susanna, we may have to sell our looking glass in order to cross the plains of pain, sorrow, and discouragement. But as we do, we will discover God-given strengths that we may not have otherwise known.

President Joseph F. Smith spoke with great feeling of the inner strength of pioneer women. He said:

"Death was nothing to them. Hardship was nothing. Cold or rain, or heat, was nothing to them. All they felt and knew and desired was the triumph of the kingdom of God and the truth that the Lord had given to them." And then, with all the sincerity of a prophet of God, he pled, "My soul, where are these women now?"<sup>6</sup>

I am here today to witness to you that such women are all around the world in the Relief Societies of the Church. I am grateful beyond measure for the opportunity that is mine to see these women in our time who have "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth."<sup>7</sup> With all my heart I know that the Lord can "make weak things become strong."<sup>8</sup> I know this is His work and His kingdom. I know that each of us can mirror the Savior by the way we choose to live our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, comp., *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 634.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 228.
4. See General Relief Society Presidency, "For Such a Time as This," *Ensign*, Jan. 2002, 64–66.
5. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 189.
7. Alma 17:2.
8. Ether 12:27.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Disciples left their nets to follow Jesus

They were fishermen before they heard the call. Casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee, Peter and Andrew stopped as Jesus of Nazareth approached, looked into their eyes, and spoke the simple words, "Follow me." Matthew writes that the two fishermen "straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Then the Son of Man approached two other fishermen who were in a ship with their father, mending their nets. Jesus called to them, "and [James and John] immediately left the ship and their father, and followed [the Lord]."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like to have lived in the days of the Savior? If you had been there, would you have heeded His call "Follow me"?

Perhaps a more realistic question might be, "If the Savior were to call you today, would you be just as willing to leave your nets and follow Him?" I am confident that many would.

But for some it may not be such an easy decision. Some have discovered that nets, by their very nature, are sometimes not so easy to leave.

Nets come in many sizes and shapes. The nets that Peter, Andrew, James, and John left were tangible objects—tools that helped them earn a living.

We sometimes think of these four men as modest fishermen who did not sacrifice much when they left their nets to follow the Savior. To the contrary, as Elder James E. Talmage, in *Jesus the Christ*, points out, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were partners in a prosperous business. They "owned their boats and gave employment to other men." According to Elder Talmage, Simon Peter "was well to do in a material way; and when he once spoke of having left all to follow Jesus, the Lord did not deny that Peter's sacrifice of temporal possessions was . . . great."<sup>2</sup>

Later the net of wealth entrapped a rich young man who claimed that he had obeyed all the commandments from his youth. When he asked the Savior what else he should do to have eternal life, the Master said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." When the young man heard that, "he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."<sup>3</sup>

### Modern nets that keep us from Christ

Nets are generally defined as devices for capturing something. In a more narrow but more important sense, we might define a net as anything that entices or prevents us from following the call of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

Nets in this context can be our work, our hobbies, our pleasures, and, above all else, our temptations and sins. In short, a net can be anything that pulls us away from our relationship with our Heavenly Father or from His restored Church.

Let me give you a modern example. A computer can be a useful and indispensable tool. But if we allow it to devour our time with vain, unproductive, and sometimes destructive pursuits, it becomes an entangling net.

Many of us enjoy watching athletic contests, but if we can recite the statistics of our favorite players and at the same time forget birthdays or anniversaries, neglect our families, or ignore the opportunity to render acts of Christlike service, then athletics may also be an entangling net.

Since the days of Adam, mankind has, by the sweat of his brow, earned his daily bread. But when our work consumes us to the point where the spiritual dimensions of life are neglected, work can also be an entangling net.

Some have been ensnared in the net of excessive debt. The net of interest holds

them fast, requiring them to sell their time and energies to meet the demands of creditors. They surrender their freedom, becoming slaves to their own extravagance.

It is impossible to list the many nets that can ensnare us and keep us from following the Savior. But if we are sincere in our desire to follow Him, we must straightway leave the world's entangling nets and follow Him.

### **The dangers of being too busy**

I do not know of another period in the history of the world that has been so filled with such a variety of entangling nets. Our lives are so easily filled with appointments, meetings, and tasks. It is so easy to get caught in a multitude of nets that sometimes even a suggestion of breaking free of them can be threatening and even frightening to us.

Sometimes we feel that the busier we are, the more important we are—as though our busyness defines our worth. Brothers and sisters, we can spend a lifetime whirling about at a feverish pace, checking off list after list of things that in the end really don't matter.

That we do a lot may not be so important. That we focus the energy of our minds, our hearts, and our souls on those things of eternal significance—that is essential.

As the clatter and clamor of life bustle about us, we hear shouting to “come here” and to “go there.” In the midst of the noise and seductive voices that compete for our time and interest, a solitary figure stands on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, calling quietly to us, “Follow me.”

We can easily get our lives out of balance. I remember a few years that were particularly challenging for me. Our family had grown to seven children. I had served as a counselor in the bishopric and was then given the sacred call as bishop of our ward. I was striving to manage our business that required long hours each day. I pay tribute to my wonderful wife,

who always made it possible for me to serve the Lord.

There was simply too much to do in the time available. Instead of sacrificing things of significance, I decided I'd get up earlier, take care of my business, then spend the time required to be a good father and husband and a faithful member of the Church. It wasn't easy. There were mornings when the alarm clock went off that I cracked open an eyelid and glared at it, daring it to keep ringing.

Nevertheless, the Lord was merciful and helped me find the energy and time to do all I had committed to do. Although it was difficult, I have never regretted making the choice to heed the Savior's call and follow Him.

### **Promises to those who follow Jesus**

Think of the debt we owe to Him. Jesus is “the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in [Him], though he were dead, yet shall he live.”<sup>4</sup> There are those who have great wealth, yet they would give their all to add just a few additional years, months, or even days to their mortal lives. What should we be willing to give for eternal life?

There are those who would give all they have to experience peace. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” the Savior taught, “and I will give you rest.”<sup>5</sup> But it is not merely peace that the Savior promises to those who keep His commandments and endure to the end, but eternal life, “which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Because of the Savior, we will live forever. Immortality means that we will never die. But eternal life means to live forever in exalted spheres in companionship with those we cherish, encompassed about by profound love, exquisite joy, and glory.

No amount of money can purchase this exalted state. Eternal life is a gift from a loving Heavenly Father, offered freely



and liberally to all who heed the call of the Man of Galilee.

Unfortunately, many are too entangled in their nets to heed the call. The Savior explained that "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."<sup>7</sup>

### **What it means to follow Jesus**

How do we follow the Savior? By exercising faith. By believing in Him. By believing in our Heavenly Father. By believing that God speaks to man on earth today.

We follow the Savior by repenting of our sins—by experiencing sorrow because of them and forsaking them.

We follow the Savior by entering the waters of baptism and receiving a remission of our sins, by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and allowing that influence to inspire, instruct, guide, and comfort us.

How do we follow the Savior? By obeying Him. He and our Heavenly Father have given us commandments—not to punish or torment us, but to help us come to a fulness of joy, both in this life and for the eternities to come, worlds without end.

In contrast, when we cling to our sins, our pleasures, and sometimes even our perceived obligations, and when we resist the influence of the Holy Ghost and put aside the words of the prophets, we then stand at the shore of our *own* Galilee, nets tightly entangling us. We find ourselves unable to leave them behind and follow the living Christ.

But the Shepherd calls to each of us today. Will we recognize the voice of the Son of God? Will we follow Him?

### **A convert follows faithfully despite trials**

May I extend a word of caution? There are those who feel that if we follow the Savior, our lives will be free from worry, pain, and fear. This is not so! The

Savior Himself was described as "a man of sorrows."<sup>8</sup> Those early disciples who followed the Christ experienced great persecution and trials. The Prophet Joseph Smith was no exception. Nor were the other early Saints of this last dispensation. And it is no different today.

I have had the opportunity to speak with a woman who heard the call of the Savior when she was 18. Her father, who was a high official in another church, became angry with her and forbade her from being baptized. He let her know that if she became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she would be ostracized from the family.

Even though the sacrifice was great, this young woman heeded the call of the Savior and entered the waters of baptism.

Her father could not accept her decision, however, and tried to force her into abandoning her new faith. He and his wife reviled her for her decision to become a member of the Church and demanded that she recant and forsake her new religion.

Even through the rage, the bitterness, and the indignity, her faith remained strong. She endured the verbal and emotional abuse, knowing she had heard the call of the Savior and she would follow Him, whatever the consequence.

Eventually this young woman managed to find a safe haven, a place of refuge with a kind member family far away from the threats and unkindness of her father.

She met a faithful young man, and the two of them were married in the temple, receiving the choice blessings that accompany a temple marriage.

Today she stands among the multitude of those who have sacrificed so much to follow the call of the Savior.

Yes, I do not suggest that the road will be easy. But I will give you my witness that those who, in faith, leave their nets and follow the Savior will experience happiness beyond their ability to comprehend.

## Leave worldly nets and follow Jesus

As I meet the wonderful members of this Church—both young and old—I am encouraged and filled with gratitude for the faithfulness of those who have heard the call of the Savior and have followed Him.

For example, a steelworker follows the Savior. Day after day, over a period of more than three decades, he pulls out his scriptures to read during lunch break as his coworkers chide him. The 70-year-old widow who is confined to her wheelchair and who, to all who visit, cheers their spirits and never fails to tell them of how fortunate she is, follows the Savior. The child who seeks through prayer to commune with the Master of the universe follows the Savior. The wealthy member who gives so generously to the Church and his fellowmen follows the Savior.

As Jesus the Christ stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee 2,000 years ago, so stands He today, issuing the same call He gave to those faithful fishermen and now to all who will hear His voice: "Follow me!"

We have nets that must be tended and nets that must be mended. But when the Master of ocean, earth, and sky calls to us, "Follow me," we should leave the entangling, worldly nets behind and follow His footsteps.

## The glorious restoration of the gospel

My brothers and sisters, I proclaim with joyful voice that the gospel is restored once again! The heavens opened to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he saw and conversed with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Under divine direction and tutelage from celestial beings, eternal truths are restored once again to man!

In our day another great prophet lives, who daily adds his witness to these hallowed truths. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands in his sacred office as the

mouthpiece of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. At his side stand his noble counselors. In addition, he has the sustaining support of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, and the millions of members throughout the world who assist him, each adding his voice to proclaim the glorious Restoration of the gospel that is once again restored unto man!

Jesus the Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life: no [one] cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]."<sup>9</sup> As a special witness of Him, I testify to you this day that the time will come when every man, woman, and child will look into the Savior's loving eyes. On that day we will know with a surety the worth of our decision to straightway follow Him.

That each of us may hear the call of the Master and straightway leave our entangling nets and joyfully follow Him is my earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthew 4:18–22.
2. *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 218.
3. Matthew 19:21–22.
4. John 11:25.
5. Matthew 11:28.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
7. John 10:26–27.
8. Isaiah 53:3; Mosiah 14:3.
9. John 14:6.

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The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

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## President Faust

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Love One Another."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Hidden wedges

In April 1966 at the Church's annual general conference, Elder Spencer W. Kimball gave a memorable address. He quoted an account written by Samuel T. Whitman entitled "Forgotten Wedges." Today I too have chosen to quote from Samuel T. Whitman, followed by examples from my own life. Whitman wrote:

"The ice storm [that winter] wasn't generally destructive. True, a few wires came down, and there was a sudden jump in accidents along the highway. . . . Normally, the big walnut tree could easily have borne the weight that formed on its spreading limbs. It was the iron wedge in its heart that caused the damage.

"The story of the iron wedge began years ago when the white-haired farmer [who now inhabited the property on which it stood] was a lad on his father's homestead. The sawmill had then only recently been moved from the valley, and the settlers were still finding tools and odd pieces of equipment scattered about. . . .

"On this particular day, it was a faller's wedge—wide, flat, and heavy, a foot or more long, and splayed from mighty poundings," which the lad found in the south pasture. A faller's wedge, used to help fell a tree, is inserted in a cut made by a saw and then struck with a sledge hammer to widen the cut.

"Because he was already late for dinner, the lad laid the wedge . . . between the limbs of the young walnut tree his father had planted near the front gate. He would take the wedge to the shed right after dinner, or sometime when he was going that way.

"He truly meant to, but he never did. [The wedge] was there between the limbs, a little tight, when he attained his manhood. It was there, now firmly gripped, when he married and took over his father's farm. It was half grown over on the day the threshing crew ate dinner under the tree. . . . Grown in and healed over, the wedge was still in the tree the winter the ice storm came.

"In the chill silence of that wintry night, . . . one of the three major limbs split away from the trunk and crashed to the ground. This so unbalanced the remainder of the top that it, too, split apart and went down. When the storm was over, not a twig of the once-proud tree remained.

"Early the next morning, the farmer went out to mourn his loss. . . .

"Then, his eyes caught sight of something in the splintered ruin. 'The wedge,' he muttered reproachfully. 'The wedge I found in the south pasture.' A glance told him why the tree had fallen. Growing, edge-up in the trunk, the wedge had prevented the limb fibers from knitting together as they should."<sup>1</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, there are hidden wedges in the lives of many whom we know—yes, perhaps in our own families.

### Wedge keeps a man from the Church

Let me share with you the account of a lifelong friend, now departed from mortality. His name was Leonard. He was not a member of the Church, although his wife and children were. His wife served as a Primary president; his son served an honorable mission. His daughter and his

son married companions in solemn ceremonies and had families of their own.

Everyone who knew Leonard liked him, as did I. He supported his wife and children in their Church assignments. He attended many Church-sponsored events with them. He lived a good and a clean life, even a life of service and kindness. His family, and indeed many others, wondered why Leonard had gone through mortality without the blessings the gospel brings to its members.

In Leonard's advanced years, his health declined. Eventually he was hospitalized, and life was ebbing away. In what turned out to be my last conversation with Leonard, he said, "Tom, I've known you since you were a boy. I feel persuaded to explain to you why I have never joined the Church." He then related an experience of his parents which took place many, many years before. Reluctantly the family had reached a point where they felt it was necessary to sell their farm, and an offer had been received. Then a neighboring farmer asked that the farm be sold to him instead—although at a lesser price—adding, "We've been such close friends. This way, if I own the property, I'll be able to watch over it."

At length Leonard's parents agreed, and the farm was sold. The buyer—even the neighbor—held a responsible position in the Church, and the trust this implied helped persuade the family to sell to him, even though they did not realize as much money from the sale as they would have if they had sold to the first interested buyer.

Not long after the sale was made, the neighbor sold both his own farm and the farm acquired from Leonard's family in a combined parcel which maximized the value and hence the selling price. The long-asked question of why Leonard had never joined the Church had been answered. He always felt that his family had been deceived by the neighbor.

He confided to me following our conversation that he felt a great burden had at last been lifted as he prepared to meet

his Maker. The tragedy is that a hidden wedge had kept Leonard from soaring to greater heights.

### **Forgiveness prevents a hidden wedge**

I am acquainted with a family which came to America from Germany. The English language was difficult for them. They had but little by way of means, but each was blessed with the will to work and with a love of God.

Their third child was born, lived but two months, and then died. Father was a cabinetmaker and fashioned a beautiful casket for the body of his precious child. The day of the funeral was gloomy, thus reflecting the sadness they felt in their loss. As the family walked to the chapel, with Father carrying the tiny casket, a small number of friends had gathered. However, the chapel door was locked. The busy bishop had forgotten the funeral. Attempts to reach him were futile. Not knowing what to do, the father placed the casket under his arm and, with his family beside him, carried it home, walking in a drenching rain.

If the family were of a lesser character, they could have blamed the bishop and harbored ill feelings. When the bishop discovered the tragedy, he visited the family and apologized. With the hurt still evident in his expression, but with tears in his eyes, the father accepted the apology, and the two embraced in a spirit of understanding. No hidden wedge was left to cause further feelings of anger. Love and acceptance prevailed.

The spirit must be freed from tethers so strong and feelings never put to rest, so that the lift of life may give buoyancy to the soul. In many families there are hurt feelings and a reluctance to forgive. It doesn't really matter what the issue was. It cannot and should not be left to injure. Blame keeps wounds open. Only forgiveness heals. George Herbert, an early 17th-century poet, wrote these lines: "He that cannot forgive others breaks the

bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven, for every one has need of forgiveness."<sup>2</sup>

Beautiful are the words of the Savior as He was about to die upon the cruel cross. Said He, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>3</sup>

### **Forgive yourself to remove a hidden wedge**

There are some who have difficulty forgiving themselves and who dwell on all of their perceived shortcomings. I quite like the account of a religious leader who went to the side of a woman who lay dying, attempting to comfort her—but to no avail. "I am lost," she said. "I've ruined my life and every life around me. There is no hope for me."

The man noticed a framed picture of a lovely girl on the dresser. "Who is this?" he asked.

The woman brightened. "She is my daughter, the one beautiful thing in my life."

"And would you help her if she were in trouble or had made a mistake? Would you forgive her? Would you still love her?"

"Of course I would!" cried the woman. "I would do anything for her. Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because I want you to know," said the man, "that figuratively speaking, Heavenly Father has a picture of you on His dresser. He loves you and will help you. Call upon Him."

A hidden wedge to her happiness had been removed.

In a day of danger or a time of trial, such knowledge, such hope, such understanding will bring comfort to the troubled mind and grieving heart. The entire message of the New Testament breathes a spirit of awakening to the human soul. Shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope, sorrow yields to joy, and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

The Savior provided assurance of this truth when He taught that even a sparrow shall not fall to the ground unnoticed by our Father. The Savior then concluded the beautiful thought by saying, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."<sup>4</sup>

### **Lay hidden wedges to rest**

Some time ago I read the following Associated Press dispatch, which appeared in the newspaper. An elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small, one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel, they had divided the room in half with a chalk line and neither had crossed the line or spoken a word to the other since that day—62 years before. What a powerful and destructive hidden wedge.

As Alexander Pope wrote, "To err is human; to forgive, divine."<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes we can take offense so easily. On other occasions we are too stubborn to accept a sincere apology. Who will subordinate ego, pride, and hurt—then step forward with, "I am truly sorry! Let's be as we once were: friends. Let's not pass to future generations the grievances, the anger of our time." Let's remove any hidden wedges that can do nothing but destroy.

### **The hidden wedge of contention**

Where do hidden wedges originate? Some come from unresolved disputes, which lead to ill feelings, followed by remorse and regret. Others find their beginnings in disappointments, jealousies, arguments, and imagined hurts. We must solve them—lay them to rest and not leave them to canker, fester, and ultimately destroy.

A lovely lady of more than 90 years visited with me one day and unexpectedly recounted several regrets. She mentioned

that many years earlier a neighboring farmer, with whom she and her husband had occasionally disagreed, asked if he could take a shortcut across her property to reach his own acreage. She paused in her narrative and, with a tremor in her voice, said, "Tommy, I didn't let him cross our property but required him to take the long way around—even on foot—to reach his property. I was wrong and I regret it. He's gone now, but oh, I wish I could say to him, 'I'm so sorry.' How I wish I had a second chance."

As I listened to her, the words written by John Greenleaf Whittier came into my mind: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"<sup>6</sup>

From 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon comes this inspired counsel:

"There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."<sup>7</sup>

### Service removes a hidden wedge

Let me conclude with an account of two men who are heroes to me. Their acts of courage were not performed on a national scale, but rather in a peaceful valley known as Midway, Utah.

Long years ago, Roy Kohler and Grant Remund served together in Church capacities. They were the best of friends. They were tillers of the soil and dairymen. Then a misunderstanding arose which became somewhat of a rift between them.

Later, when Roy Kohler became grievously ill with cancer and had but a limited time to live, my wife, Frances, and I visited Roy and his wife, and I gave him a bless-

ing. As we talked afterward, Brother Kohler said, "Let me tell you about one of the sweetest experiences I have had during my life." He then recounted to me his misunderstanding with Grant Remund and the ensuing estrangement. His comment was, "We were sort of on the outs with each other."

"Then," continued Roy, "I had just put up our hay for the winter to come, when one night, as a result of spontaneous combustion, the hay caught fire, burning the hay, the barn, and everything in it right to the ground. I was devastated," said Roy. "I didn't know what in the world I would do. The night was dark, except for the dying embers of the fire. Then I saw coming toward me from the road, in the direction of Grant Remund's place, the lights of tractors and heavy equipment. As the 'rescue party' turned in our drive and met me amidst my tears, Grant said, 'Roy, you've got quite a mess to clean up. My boys and I are here. Let's get to it.'" Together they plunged to the task at hand. Gone forever was the hidden wedge which had separated them for a short time. They worked throughout the night and into the next day, with many others in the community joining in.

Roy Kohler has passed away, and Grant Remund is getting older. Their sons have served together in the same ward bishopric. I truly treasure the friendship of these two wonderful families.

May we ever be exemplary in our homes and faithful in keeping all of the commandments, that we may harbor no hidden wedges but rather remember the Savior's admonition: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>8</sup>

This is my plea and my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Quoted in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 70-71.
2. Quoted in Frank S. Mead, ed., *12,000 Religious Quotations* (1989), 147.

3. Luke 23:34.
4. Matthew 10:31.
5. *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), part 2, line 525.
6. "Maud Muller," lines 107–8; in *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.

7. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
8. John 13:35.

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The choir sang "Love One Another."  
Elder Robert C. Oaks offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes. Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes, under the direction of Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jer-

ald F. Simon, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Press Forward, Saints." At the conclusion of the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."  
Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Wesley L. Jones, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2001.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Gerald N. Lund and William R. Walker as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release Kay H. Christensen, Clayton S. Huber, David López, Hyde M. Merrill, Adelson de Paula Parrella, and R. Gordon Porter as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: D. Allen Andersen, David S. Baxter, C. Elmer Black Jr., G. Lynn Brenchley, Ildefonso de Castro Deus Neto, Clayton M. Christensen, Ernesto A. Da Silva, Hector A. Dávalos, James Dunlop, James M. Dunn, I. Lee Ence, Carlos R. Fernandez, John R. Gibson, Stephen W. Hansen, Emmanuel A. Kissi, B. Renato Maldonado, Jeffrey J. Marchant, Gerald A. Mead, Hyae-Kee Min, Rodrigo Myrrha, Masayuki Nakano, Yasuo Niiyama, Carlos L. Pedraja, Carlos A. Perez, D. Chad Richardson, Maury W. Schooff, M. Gonzalo Sepúlveda, T. LaMar Sleight, John C. Taggart, Anthony R. Temple. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Mary Ellen Wood Smoot, Virginia Urry Jensen, and Sheri L. Dew as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society general board. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Bonnie Rae Dansie Parkin as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Kathleen Hurst Hughes as first counselor and Anne Clark Pingree as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.



## Church Auditing Department Report

**Wesley L. Jones**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an auditing department that performs its work independently from all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, and other qualified, credentialed professionals.

Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments and operations worldwide. The Church Auditing Department has access to all records, personnel, properties, and systems needed to audit Church contributions, expenditures, and resources. Risk is the primary factor guiding the selection and performance of audits.

Expenditures of Church funds in 2001 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of Tithes. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. Expenditures are controlled through the Budget and Finance Departments under

direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees. Administration of approved budgets was audited and reported.

Based upon performance of our audits, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received and funds expended during the year ended December 31, 2001, have been managed in accordance with approved budget guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

The financial activities of Church-affiliated organizations, which are operated separately from the Church, were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2001. These organizations include Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries and Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education. However, financial activities in these organizations were audited by independent public accounting firms. In addition, the Church Auditing Department did verify that appropriate reporting of these audit results occurred with each organization's audit committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Auditing Department

Wesley L. Jones

Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report

**F. Michael Watson**

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2001:

### Church units

Stakes	2,607
Districts	618
Missions	333

Wards and branches . . . . . 26,084

### Church membership

Total membership	11,394,522
Increase in children of record	
during 2001	69,522
Converts baptized during 2001	292,612

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries . . . . . 60,850

## Temples

Temples dedicated during 2001 . . . . . 5  
 (Montevideo Uruguay, Winter Quarters  
 Nebraska, Guadalajara México, Perth  
 Australia, Columbia River Washington)  
 Temples in operation . . . . . 107

## Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Loren C. Dunn*, an emeritus General Authority and president of the Boston Massachusetts Temple at the time of his passing; *Elder Merlyn R. Lybbert*, a former member of the Seventy; *Elder*

*George R. Hill III*, a former member of the Seventy; *Phyllis Nielsen Reeve*, wife of Rex C. Reeve Sr., an emeritus General Authority; *Avanella Richards Osborn*, wife of Spencer H. Osborn, a former member of the Seventy; *Naomi Ward Randall*, a former counselor in the Primary general presidency and author of the words of the hymn "I Am a Child of God."

## President Faust

We shall now hear from Elders Richard G. Scott and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Insights from Peter about true conversion

Each of us has observed how some individuals go through life consistently doing the right things. They seem happy, even enthusiastic about life. When difficult choices are to be made, they seem to invariably make the right ones, even though there were enticing alternatives available to them. We know that they are subject to temptation, but they seem oblivious to it. Likewise, we have observed how others are not so valiant in the decisions they make. In a powerfully spiritual environment, they resolve to do better, to change their course of life, to set aside debilitating habits. They are very sincere in their determination to change, yet they are soon back doing the same things they resolved to abandon.

What is it that makes the difference in the lives of these two groups? How can you consistently make the right choices? The scriptures give us insight. Consider enthusiastic, impetuous Peter. For three years he had served as an Apostle beside the Master, observing miracles and hearing transforming teachings and private explanations of parables. With James and

John, he experienced the glorious Transfiguration of Jesus Christ with the accompanying visitations of Moses and Elijah.<sup>1</sup> Yet with all of this, the Savior could see that Peter still lacked consistency. The Master knew him very well, as He does each of us. In the Bible we read:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you . . .

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren.

"And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."<sup>2</sup>

Certainly these were not, from the perspective of Peter, idle words. He sincerely meant what he said but would act otherwise.

Later, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus prophesied to His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Peter again responded, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then the Master soberly prophesied, "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before

the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice," to which Peter responded more vehemently, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise."<sup>3</sup>

For me, one of the most poignant passages of scripture describes what then occurred. It is a sobering reminder to each of us that knowing to do right, even ardently desiring to do right, is not enough. It is often very hard to actually do what we clearly know we should do. We read:

"But a certain maid beheld [Peter] . . . and said, This man was also with him. And he denied . . . , saying, Woman, I know him not. . . . Another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. . . . Another confidently affirmed, . . . Of a truth this fellow also was with him: . . . And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, . . . and . . . went out, and wept bitterly."<sup>4</sup>

As painful as that confirmation of prophecy must have been for Peter, his life began to change forever. He became that unwavering, rock-solid servant essential to the plan of the Father after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Savior.

This tender passage also illustrates how very much the Savior loved Peter. Although He was in the midst of an overpowering challenge to His own life, with all the weight of what was to transpire upon His shoulders, yet He turned and looked at Peter—the love of a teacher transmitted to a beloved student, giving courage and enlightenment in time of need. Thereafter Peter rose to the full stature of his calling. He taught with power and unshakable testimony despite threats, imprisonment, and beatings. He was truly converted.

#### What it means to be truly converted

Sometimes the word *converted* is used to describe when a sincere individual de-

cides to be baptized. However, when properly used, *conversion* means far more than that, for the new convert as well as the long-term member. With characteristic doctrinal clarity and precision, President Marion G. Romney explained conversion:

"Converted means to turn from one belief or course of action to another. Conversion is a spiritual and moral change. *Converted* implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings but also a motivating faith in him and his gospel. A faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one's understanding of life's meaning and in his allegiance to God in interest, in thought, and in conduct. In one who is really wholly converted, desire for things contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died. And substituted therefore is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments."<sup>5</sup>

#### How to become truly converted

To be converted, you must remember to apply diligently in your life the key words "a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments." Your happiness now and forever is conditioned on your degree of conversion and the transformation that it brings to your life. How then can you become truly converted? President Romney describes the steps you must follow:

"Membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith. That is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion is the fruit or the reward for repentance and obedience."<sup>6</sup>

Stated simply, true conversion is the fruit of *faith*, *repentance*, and *consistent obedience*. *Faith* comes by hearing the word of God<sup>7</sup> and responding to it. You

will receive from the Holy Ghost a confirming witness of things you accept on *faith* by willingly doing them.<sup>8</sup> You will be led to *repent* of errors resulting from wrong things done or right things not done. As a consequence, your capacity to *consistently obey* will be strengthened. This cycle of *faith*, *repentance*, and *consistent obedience* will lead you to greater conversion with its attendant blessings. True conversion will strengthen your capacity to do what you know you should do, when you should do it, regardless of the circumstances.

### Conversion and the parable of the sower

The parable of the sower taught by Jesus is generally considered to describe how the word of the Lord is received by different individuals as it is preached. Consider for a moment how the same parable may apply to you in different circumstances in your life, as you face challenges or come under strong influences. The word, or teachings of the Savior, can come to you in many ways: as you observe others, or through your own prayer or pondering the scriptures, or through the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As I repeat the explanation that Jesus gave His disciples of the parable of the sower, mentally examine your life. See if there are periods when correct teachings find in you conditions unsuitable to receive them and consequently the promised fruits of happiness, peace, and progress are lost.

"The sower soweth the word.

"[Some are sown] by the way side, . . . but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Could that happen to you, in the wrong environment, with the wrong friendships?

"[Some] are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

"And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when

. . . persecution ariseth . . . , immediately they are offended."

Have you ever been in a circumstance when someone proposed something inappropriate and you did nothing to resist it?

"[Some] are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

"And the cares of this world . . . and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Have there been times when you wanted something so badly that you justified an exception to your standards?

"[Some] are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."<sup>9</sup>

I know this is the way you want to live your life. How completely you willingly embrace the teachings of the Savior determines how much fruit, as blessings, you will harvest in your life. This parable illustrates that the degree to which you willingly obey those things you know you should do, resisting the rationalization to do otherwise, will determine how truly converted you are and, therefore, how fully the Lord can bless you.

### Blessings of true conversion

True conversion yields the fruit of enduring happiness that can be enjoyed even when the world is in turmoil and most are anything but happy. Of a group of individuals in difficulty, the Book of Mormon teaches, "They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God."<sup>10</sup>

President Hinckley has declared that it is true conversion that makes the difference.<sup>11</sup>

To receive the blessings promised from true conversion, make the changes

that you know are needed in your life now. The Savior said:

"Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

"... If ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life."<sup>12</sup>

I bear testimony that as you pray for guidance, the Holy Ghost will help identify the personal changes you need to make for full conversion. The Lord can then bless you more abundantly. Your *faith* in Him will be fortified, your capacity to *repent* will increase, and your power to *consistently obey* will be reinforced. The Savior lives. He loves you. As you do your best, He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthew 17:1–3; see also 1 Kings 17:1; Doctrine and Covenants 110:13.
2. Luke 22:31–33; italics added.
3. See Mark 14:27, 29–31.
4. Luke 22:56–62.
5. In Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8.
6. In Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 9.
7. See Romans 10:17; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 99.
8. See Ether 12:6.
9. Mark 4:14–20.
10. Helaman 3:35.
11. See Regional representatives' seminar, 6 Apr. 1984, quoted by W. Mack Lawrence, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 103; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 75.
12. 3 Nephi 9:13–14.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Our promise at baptism to be a friend

Each year, hundreds of thousands of the children of our Heavenly Father come into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For most it requires a great change in their lives. All of them have made a sacred covenant with great promises and with a solemn pledge to endure. That covenant is so important that our Heavenly Father described the blessing and the challenge to the prophet Nephi:

"And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

"And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved."<sup>1</sup>

The Savior warns that if we start along the path and go far enough and then fail and deny Him, it would have been better if we had never begun.<sup>2</sup>

I think of that each time I visit with new members of the Church. I get that opportunity often, across the world. I see their trusting faces, and often they tell me about some trial of their faith, and then, with urgency in their voices, they whisper, "Please pray for me." At those moments I feel again the weight of the charge to each of us from the Lord's living prophet. It is to keep the promise we made in the waters of baptism "to bear one another's burdens."<sup>3</sup> It is to be a friend.

### Friendship brings young man to the gospel

These words of President Hinckley energize me: "I hope, I pray, I plead with you, every one of you, to embrace every new member of the Church. Make a friend of him or her. Hold on to them."<sup>4</sup>

President Hinckley can't be there as a friend for every new member. But you can be there for at least one. All it takes is to feel something of what they feel and something of what the Savior feels for

them. Try to feel the heart of a young man, Nkosiyo Eddie Lupahla, in Africa, writing about his friend.

"Two and a half years prior to my joining the Church in 1999, my good friend, Mbuti Yona, looked me up. We had been friends through grades 5 to 12, then [were] separated when we attended different [schools].

"Mbuti was baptized in April 1999, and four weeks later he visited me at home and introduced the gospel to me. Regardless of the rumors about the Church, I was impressed by the 'fellow Saints' who gave me a warm welcome on my first visit. It was this same Sunday that my friend introduced me to the missionaries. Arrangements were made to be taught. My friend was there for every discussion, and he kept inviting me to the activities. I really enjoyed being around people with the same values, interests, standards, and goals. It was during this same time period that I began attending institute [of religion]. It all seemed very natural: Thursday nights [5:30]—missionary discussion, followed by institute.

"I learned a lot in institute and especially enjoyed our class about how to achieve a celestial marriage. The first semester ended in May, shortly after I began attending, and I felt cheated. But I was fortunate enough to catch the second-semester class, Teachings of the Living Prophets. While in institute, I bought myself the four standard works and continued to learn and grow in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. I was baptized September 17, 1999, by another friend I had made while attending institute.

"I am thankful for the institute program. It has not only shaped me, but it has also helped me qualify to become a missionary, which mission I started preparing for five months after my baptism. I have been blessed with many opportunities to serve and to teach prior to my mission.

"I am thankful for my friend. I hope he realizes what he has done for me. We have both served missions, I to South Africa Durban, he to South Africa Cape Town. All it takes is a friend to bring such a mighty change in one's life."<sup>5</sup>

Now, there seems to be nothing miraculous in that story. But there is a miracle of wisdom beyond human capacity.

Perhaps because Mbuti had walked the path himself or perhaps by revelation, he knew what his friend would have to do to endure. And so he knew how to lift and help.

He introduced his friend to the missionaries. He saw that his friend was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. He took his friend, even before baptism, to where he would study the scriptures and thus be nurtured by the good word of God. Even before baptism he helped his friend discover this promise: "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."<sup>6</sup> The words must have told him to buy scriptures, which he did.

### **Holy Ghost gives direction, brings change**

At baptism, Brother Lupahla received the gift of the Holy Ghost to serve as his constant companion as long as he invited it and lived worthy of it. That assured him of another promise: "For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do."<sup>7</sup> The Holy Ghost must have told him to begin to prepare for a mission, which he did.

We do not know which friends went with him to his sacrament meetings both before and after baptism, but some must have greeted him warmly, as they did on his first visit. There he renewed his covenant to always remember the Savior, to keep His commandments, and to receive

again the promise of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We don't know what part his friends had in his calls to serve and to speak. But we can be sure that they thanked him and told him when they felt the Spirit in his service and in his teaching.

We can know something of his private life. Remember that he wrote that he continued to learn. He wrote that he grew in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. He said that he had been shaped by his experiences in the Church Educational System institute. We know from the scriptures what caused those changes in him. He had to be praying with faith in the Savior. He was receiving testimony and directions through the Spirit. And then he was not only doing what he was inspired to do but he was asking God to let the Atonement work in his life.

Nephi, describing that miracle of change and what brings it, said this:

"And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

"But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Ghost is a comforter and a guide. But it is also a cleansing agent. That is why service in the kingdom is so crucial to enduring. When we are called to serve, we can pray for the Holy Ghost to be our companion with assurance it will come. When we ask in faith, a change can come in our natures both for the welfare of our souls and to strengthen us for the tests we all must face.

## **New members must choose to live gospel**

There are limits on what friends can do to help the ones who must endure. It is the new members who must pray. It is they who must rely on the strength they will receive in answers to their prayers. They must choose for themselves in faith to be baptized, trusting in their perfect friend, the Savior. They must choose in faith in Him to repent, to be humble and contrite.

They must choose to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The words of confirmation into the Church are an invitation: "Receive the Holy Ghost." And that choice must be made not once, but every day, every hour, every minute. Even when the Holy Ghost comes and inspires them what they should do, doing it or not is a choice. Even when they read the scriptures regularly, it takes a choice to "feast upon the words of Christ." And even the feast is not nourishing without a choice to do what the words of Christ tell them to do. With faith and obedience practiced long enough, the Holy Ghost becomes a constant companion, our natures change, and endurance becomes certain.

## **How true friends help new members**

The member must make the choices, but the true friend is vital. There are important ways for us to share the new member's burden that it may be bearable. We can love, listen, show, and testify.

### *Love as Christ loves*

First, we must love them. That is what the Savior does. We can do it with Him and for Him. He showed us the way in His mortal ministry. He taught by precept and example that we are to love His disciples.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."<sup>9</sup>

The Savior watches over the struggling member as a friend. He laid down His life for all of us. He loves us and will grant us, if we are faithful, the gift of feeling a part of His love for them. I have at times been blessed by the Holy Ghost to sense the Savior's love for a struggling new member. I know for myself that is possible.

### *Listen with understanding*

Second, we must listen to the new member with understanding and empathy. That also will take spiritual gifts, since our experience will rarely parallel theirs. It will not be enough to say, "I understand how you feel," unless we do. But the Savior does. He is prepared to help you be a friend who understands even those you have just met, if you ask in faith. Before He was born, prophets knew what He would do to be able to help you be a friend for Him:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>10</sup>

### *Set an example*

Third, we must be an example for the new member. We can feast upon the word of God. We can ask for and live for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We

can be obedient out of our faith in Jesus Christ. And in time we can become an example of a disciple who is born again through the Atonement. It may be gradual. It may be hard for us to discern in ourselves. But it will be real. And it will give hope to the new member and to all those we befriend on the path to eternal life.

### *Testify of gospel truths*

Fourth, we must testify of the truth to the new member. It must be sincere, and it is best when it is simple. It is most helpful when it is about the reality and mission of the Savior, about our Heavenly Father's love, and of the gifts and companionship of the Holy Ghost. And it is essential to testify that the Father and the Son appeared to the young Joseph Smith and that the full gospel and the true Church have been restored by heavenly messengers. The Holy Ghost will confirm those simple declarations as truth.

The new member will need that confirmation again and again, even when we are not there to testify. Should they choose to reject the companionship of the Holy Ghost, he or she will not endure. But that is true for all of us, wherever we are and however faithful we have been. All of us will be tested. And all of us need true friends to love us, to listen to us, to show us the way, and to testify of truth to us so that we may retain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. You must be such a true friend.

### *True friends may bless generations*

I can still remember, as if it were today, friends who touched my life for good long ago. They are gone, but the memory of their love, example, faith, and testimony still lifts me. And your friendship to even one new member may, in this life and in the next, cause hundreds or even thousands of their ancestors and their descendants to call you blessed.



This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. He lives. He loves you, and He loves those whom you must serve and who will become your true friends forever.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 31:15–16.
2. See 2 Nephi 31:14; Doctrine and Covenants 40:1–3; 41:5–6.

3. Mosiah 18:8.
4. Meeting, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 2 Aug. 1998.
5. Personal correspondence.
6. 2 Nephi 32:3.
7. 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 32:8–9.
9. John 15:12–15.
10. Alma 7:11–12.

## Elder R. Conrad Schultz

### Sneaker waves

In this world in which we live, things are not always what they appear to be. We sometimes are unaware of the powerful forces pulling on us. Appearances can be very deceptive.

A few years ago I had an experience with deceptive appearances where the results could have been tragic. My wife's cousin and family were visiting us from Utah. It was a calm summer day on the Oregon coast, and we were fishing in the ocean. It was pleasant, and we were having a good time catching salmon, when for some reason I turned around to see a huge eight-foot wave bearing down upon us. I only had time to shout a warning before the wave hit us broadside. Somehow the boat stayed upright, but Gary, our cousin, was thrown overboard. We were all wearing life jackets and with some difficulty maneuvered the boat, half filled with water, to where he was floating and pulled him aboard.

We had been hit by what is called a sneaker wave. It doesn't happen often, and there is no way to predict an occurrence. Later we found that up and down the Oregon-Washington coast, five people had drowned that day in three separate boating accidents. All were caused by the same sneaker wave, which for no apparent reason had welled up off the ocean surface. At the time we went out

over the bar, the ocean was flat and calm and gave no sign of any danger. But the ocean turned out to be very deceptive and not at all what it appeared to be.

As we make our way through this life's journey, we must continually be on guard and watch for those things which are deceptive and not what they appear to be. If we are not careful, the sneaker waves in life can be as deadly as those in the ocean.

### **"Faith obedience" is not blind obedience**

One of the sneaky ploys of the adversary is to have us believe that unquestioning obedience to the principles and commandments of God is blind obedience. His goal is to have us believe that we should be following our own worldly ways and selfish ambitions. This he does by persuading us that "blindly" following the prophets and obeying the commandments is not thinking for ourselves. He teaches that it is not intelligent to do something just because we are told to do so by a living prophet or by prophets who speak to us from the scriptures.

Our unquestioning obedience to the Lord's commandments is not blind obedience. President Boyd K. Packer in the April conference of 1983 taught us about this:

"Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedi-

ent. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God. . . . We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 89–90; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 66).

We might call this "faith obedience." With faith, Abraham was obedient in preparing Isaac for sacrifice; with faith, Nephi was obedient in obtaining the brass plates; with faith, a little child obediently jumps from a height into the strong arms of his father. "Faith obedience" is a matter of trust. The question is simple: Do we trust our Heavenly Father? Do we trust our prophets?

### **Danger of relying on world's knowledge**

Another of the adversary's deceptions is to have us believe that the wisdom and the learning of the world is the only source of knowledge we should follow. The prophet Nephi's brother Jacob understood the adversary's plan and warned us about it:

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish" (2 Nephi 9:28).

Jacob did not say that we should not be learned. He went on to tell us that it is good to be learned, provided we hearken to the counsels of God (see 2 Nephi 9:29).

### **Counsel against selective obedience**

Some come to believe that you may pick and choose which of God's commandments to follow. They conveniently label many commandments as little things that can be put off and that don't appear to be life threatening or too important—things like saying our prayers, honoring the Sab-

bath, reading the scriptures, paying our tithing, attending our meetings—and the list goes on.

Our Heavenly Father communicates in a very clear way to His children. In the teachings of the gospel, there is no uncertain sound of which the Apostle Paul speaks (see 1 Corinthians 14:8). There is no question about the meaning of what is being said or of feelings prompted by the Spirit. We have not been left alone. We have the scriptures, the prophets, loving parents, and leaders.

### **Heed prophets to avoid deception**

Why do we sometimes stray? Why do we let ourselves be influenced by the deception of the adversary? The solution to his deception is simple in its answer, but sometimes it is difficult in its application. President Harold B. Lee in the October conference of 1970 spoke of the Lord, the adversary, and the solution to the adversary's power of deception:

"We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation. . . . The power of Satan will increase; we see it . . . on every hand. . . . We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet. . . . There will be some things that take patience and faith" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 126).

Then President Lee added a warning when he went on to say that we may not always like what comes from the authority of the Church, because it may conflict with our personal views or interfere with some of our social life. However, if we will listen to and do these things as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, we will not be deceived and great blessings will be ours.

### **No doctrine more critical than obedience**

It brings us back to obedience. It will always be so. It's part of the plan of eternal happiness. I know of no doctrine that

is more critical to our well-being in this life and the next. All scriptures teach obedience, and no apostle or prophet has ever lived who has not taught the principle of obedience.

Sometimes it is necessary to be obedient even when we do not understand the reason for the law. It takes faith to be obedient. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in teaching obedience, said that whatever God requires is right, though we may not know the reason until much later (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 256).

I am grateful that we had on our life jackets that summer day on the ocean. I am thankful we were able to avoid the tragedy that came to others from that sneaker wave. It is my prayer that we will continue to wear our life jackets of obedience in order to avoid the tragedy that will surely come if we are deceived and follow the enticings of the adversary.

I witness to you that our Father in Heaven lives, that He loves us, and that by being unquestioningly obedient to His commandments, we can once again dwell with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." Following the singing, Elder Robert R. Steuer of the Seventy will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

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## Elder Robert R. Steuer

### Being teachable

True disciples of the Master are teachable. In just a few words, Abraham gives us much insight into why he was so greatly blessed. He lived a life "desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God."<sup>1</sup> "Desiring to receive instructions" is more than a willingness to listen. When our desire to receive instruction is a greater force than our comfort in remaining as we are, we become teachable.

President Brigham Young taught that our "first and foremost duty [is] to seek the Lord until we open the path of communication from God to our own soul."<sup>2</sup> Shortly after his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared in a dream to Brigham Young and instructed him:

"Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to keep the spirit of

the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the Kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

### Be willing to receive instruction

How do we ignite this power of divine instruction in our lives? First, we need to start with a willingness to be instructed. While many naturally hunger and thirst after righteousness, others may be compelled to be humble.<sup>4</sup> Some of us, rather than follow instructions or change ourselves, would simply like to change the rules.

Naaman certainly wanted to be rid of his leprous flesh but went away in a rage when told by the prophet's messenger to simply wash seven times in the river Jordan. It was inconvenient, a little thing,

and he felt that the rivers in his land were better than the Jordan. But his leprosy was cured as he listened to his servants, changed his mind, and did "according to the saying of the man of God."<sup>5</sup> He was dramatically shown that there was a prophet and a God in Israel. We too must realize that God has governing laws<sup>6</sup> and that His wisdom is greater than our own. Even Moses observed, after seeing God's majesty and workmanship, "Man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed."<sup>7</sup>

### **Labor to receive instruction**

Second, we need to put ourselves into a proper frame of mind and heart. This comes by prayerful pondering and laboring in the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> This labor is real labor. It includes the very active steps of seeking, hearkening, and studying the scriptures. When humbled and stripped of pride, our hearts are softened and we can focus on heavenly counsel and instruction. Laman's father, the powerful Lamanite king, made just that change in focus, even prostrating himself to the earth, demonstrating his great commitment to know God. He declared, "I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day."<sup>9</sup>

### **Obey the instruction received**

Third, we must be obedient to the instruction we receive. Alma said, "Experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith."<sup>10</sup> Nephi simply said, "I will go and do."<sup>11</sup> What a wonderful attitude of submission and obedience as he accepted his father's counsel in getting the brass plates and in being told where to hunt, and the Lord's counsel in building a ship.<sup>12</sup> In each case he proceeded with trust, moving forward, "not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" or the outcome.<sup>13</sup> But since we are free agents, life can sometimes be a difficult journey of applying our hearts and minds

to the truths of God. Nevertheless, as President Thomas S. Monson said, "The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors."<sup>14</sup>

Becoming teachable is a process of learning line upon line. In this process we convert thoughts and feelings into actions. But what a reward for this exercise of our faith as we open the path of communication with the Lord. The Lord said, "Blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom."<sup>15</sup> And He also said, "Every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father."<sup>16</sup>

Some years ago I remember asking my father-in-law, a seasoned bishop, about a three-by-five-inch card he always carried in his shirt pocket. He replied that at times he felt impressions or promptings. He then liked to pull out that card and write down those feelings whenever they came. And then he tried to act upon them as quickly as possible. It is humbling to consider that the still, small voice is always there for us, teaching us what to do and where to go. The Lord tells us that when the promptings are heeded, often more are given. If we do not follow them, the promptings eventually diminish.

### **Being teachable draws us to Christ**

As a result of being teachable, we gain an even greater testimony of our Heavenly Father's care for us. We gain the security and certainty that our course in life is according to His will.<sup>17</sup> We even have reasons to be good, reasons to be moral, and reasons to change our behavior. By being teachable, we activate the full force and blessings of the Atonement in our lives. We become sensitive to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit so that the righteous principles taught by the prophets and the truths from the earth can place Christ deeply into our lives.<sup>18</sup> We become His true disciples.

It is by loving these truths with all our hearts that an affinity develops between us and the Source of truth itself, "for intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; [and] virtue loveth virtue."<sup>19</sup> Hence, we shall discover that the things we value and appreciate the most are those that we personally learned *from* the Lord.

I testify that through the Prophet Joseph Smith we have received countless revelations of truth, bearing testimony of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When we are teachable, we will more clearly see, hear, and adhere to those revelations continuing even today through our living apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Abraham 1:2.

2. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 41.
3. Quoted by Brigham Young, in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 41.
4. See Matthew 5:6; Alma 32:13.
5. See 2 Kings 5:1–14.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:30.
7. Moses 1:10.
8. See Alma 17:5.
9. See Alma 22:17–18.
10. Alma 32:27.
11. 1 Nephi 3:7.
12. See 1 Nephi 3:4; 16:23–32; 17:8–11.
13. 1 Nephi 4:6.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 64; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 49.
15. 2 Nephi 28:30.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:47.
17. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
18. See Moses 7:62.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Becoming full participants in the Church

Some years ago I enjoyed a newspaper cartoon that showed a clergyman in conversation with a hippie-dressed couple astride a motorcycle. "We *are* church goers," one was saying to the clergyman. "We've been going for years . . . we just haven't got there yet."<sup>1</sup>

Many of our extended family and friends haven't yet gotten to church either. They may attend sporadically, but they are not yet enjoying the full blessings of Church participation and service. Others may attend regularly but refrain from commitments and from seeking the personal spiritual rebirth that comes from yielding our hearts to God. Both kinds are missing some unique blessings in this life. And both are in jeopardy of missing the most glorious blessings in the life to come.

Paul taught that the Lord gave prophets and apostles for "the perfecting of the saints, . . . the work of the ministry, [and]

the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Persons who are not fully participating in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and also seeking a personal spiritual conversion are missing out on experiences that are essential under the divinely established great plan of happiness. The teachings and the work of the Church are essential to bring to pass the eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39).

I pray that many within the sound of my voice will have a spiritual witness of the importance of the Church's mission to edify and exalt the children of God. I pray especially that some who are not yet enjoying the blessings of full Church participation and commitment will seek and obtain that witness and act upon it.

### Some have mistaken expectations

About a decade ago, while I was at a stake conference in the United States, I was introduced to a member who had not

participated in the Church for many years. "Why should I return to Church activity?" this member asked me. Considering all the Savior has done for us, I replied it should be easy to offer something in service to Him and our fellowmen. My questioner considered that idea for a moment and then voiced this astonishing reply: "What's He done for me?"

This astonishing answer moved me to ponder what people expect to receive from Jesus Christ, from His gospel, and from participating in His Church. I thought of some others who said they stopped going to Church because the Church was "not meeting their needs." Which needs could they be expecting the Church to meet? If they are simply seeking a satisfying social experience, they might be disappointed in a particular ward or branch and seek other associations. There are satisfying social experiences in many organizations. If they are simply seeking help to learn the gospel, they could pursue that goal through available literature. But are these the principal purposes of the Church? Is this all we are to receive from the gospel of Jesus Christ?

### **Seek ways to *give*, not only to *get***

Someone has said that what we get depends on what we seek. Persons who attend church solely in order to *get* something of a temporal nature may be disappointed. The Apostle Paul wrote disparagingly of persons who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly" (Romans 16:18). Persons who attend church in order to *give* to their fellowmen and *serve* the Lord will rarely be disappointed. The Savior promised that "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).

The Church gives us opportunities to serve the Lord and our fellowmen. If given in the right way and for the right reasons, that service will reward us beyond anything we have given. Millions serve unselfishly and effectively as officers or teach-

ers in Church organizations, and those who do experience the conversion described by the prophet who pleaded with us to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

### **Blessings from Church participation**

Throughout my life I have been blessed by my membership and participation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is impossible to describe all the ways the Church has blessed my life and the lives of those I love. But I will give a few examples, in the hope that this will add personal persuasion to the principles described.

#### *Blessings of the sacrament and the Sabbath*

Attendance at church each week provides the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as the Lord has commanded us (see D&C 59:9). If we act with the right preparation and attitude, partaking of the sacrament renews the cleansing effect of our baptism and qualifies us for the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. A mission of that Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is to testify of the Father and the Son and to lead us into truth (see John 14:26; 2 Nephi 31:18). Testimony and truth, which are essential to our personal conversion, are the choice harvest of this weekly renewing of our covenants. In the day-to-day decisions of my life and in my personal spiritual growth, I have enjoyed the fulfillment of that promise.

I am sorry when any Latter-day Saint does not understand the precious blessing that comes to those who keep the commandment to offer up their sacraments upon each Sabbath day. What is there in life—on the lakes or streams, in places of commercial recreation, or at home reading the Sunday paper—that can provide anything comparable to these blessings? No recreational pleasure can equal the cleansing renewal and the spiritual guidance and growth God has promised those

who faithfully partake of the sacrament and honor Him each Sabbath day. I give thanks for the fulfillment of those promises in my life and affirm their availability to all.

### *Blessings of gospel doctrines and teachings*

As I came to the age of accountability and understood and experienced the effect of personal sin, the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ gave me the peace and courage to go forward in the knowledge that my sins could be forgiven and that there is always hope and the possibility of mercy for those who fall short.

As I experienced the death of loved ones, including my father, my mother, and my wife, the comforting revelations of the Holy Ghost gave me the strength to carry on. The Spirit affirms that there is purpose in mortal adversities and gives assurance of the Resurrection and the reality of family relationships sealed for eternity.

Throughout my life I have been blessed by the doctrine and teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As taught in the scriptures and by the leaders and teachers of this Church, the gospel has been a light to my path and the impetus for my temporal and spiritual progress. As Brigham Young taught, the gospel laws "teach men to be truthful, honest, chaste, sober, industrious, frugal and to love and practice every good word and work, . . . they elevate and ennoble man . . . [and], if fully obeyed, bring health and strength to the body, clearness to the perceptions, power to the reasoning faculties as well as salvation to the soul."<sup>2</sup>

Among many blessings I have received from gospel teachings are those promised for keeping the Word of Wisdom. For me these have included health and knowledge and the capacity to "run and not be weary, and . . . walk and not faint," and the fulfillment of the promise that "the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21; see also verses 18–19).

The gospel teaches us to pay our tithes and offerings and assures us of blessings when we do. I testify of the fulfillment of these promises in my life. I have seen the windows of heaven open in my behalf to bestow blessings unnumbered. Among these is the capacity to see the relative unimportance of the property, pride, prominence, and power of this world, in the context of eternity. How grateful I am for the focus and peace that come from a gospel-based understanding of the purpose of life and its relationship to eternity!

### *Blessings of good personal associations*

From my earliest years and through schooling and marriage to middle age and beyond, the Church has provided me personal associations with the finest people in the world. Teachers and classmates in Sunday School and Primary, in Scouting and other youth activities, in quorum and ward and stake activities have given me the finest possible role models and friends. Of course, our Church does not have a monopoly on good people, but we have a remarkable concentration of them. My associations in the organizations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have given me the basis to recognize, appreciate, and enlarge my associations with people of quality in other churches and organizations.

### *Blessings relating to eternal families*

Because my father died before I was eight years old, I had early cause to wonder about the purposes of the Lord in depriving me of a relationship other boys enjoyed and took for granted. As with so many other mortal challenges, the perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ filled that void. How grateful I am that my brother and sister and I were raised by a widowed mother who used her faith and our parents' temple marriage to make our departed father a daily presence in our lives. We never had cause to feel that we

were without a father. We had a father, but he was away for a season. There are few things more important in this life than knowing your place in mortality and your potential in eternity. Marriages sealed for eternity in a temple of the Lord provide that possibility for every child and for every adult.

Over the years, my active participation in the Church has provided me access to the counsel and inspiration of the leaders of the Church on things I should do as a husband and father and leader in my family. Again and again, in stake and general conferences, in priesthood quorums, and in Sunday School classes, I have been taught and inspired by wonderful and experienced fathers, mothers, and grandparents.

I have sought to follow those teachings to improve my participation in those associations that will persist for eternity. To cite only one example, I have been taught the power of a priesthood blessing—not just a blessing of healing, but a blessing of comfort and guidance that a father holding the Melchizedek Priesthood is privileged to give to members of his family. Learning and applying that principle has favored me and my loved ones with the sweetness and closeness that can come only from sensing the significance of the priesthood of God in an eternal family.

### *Blessings of scriptural and prophetic counsel*

I am also grateful for the warnings of the scriptures and Church leaders on things to avoid. By following that counsel I have been able to avoid pitfalls that might otherwise have trapped and enslaved me. Alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pornography, and gambling are but a few examples of dangerous substances and addictive practices we have been warned to avoid. I appeal to all—especially to young people—to hear and heed the words of the men and women God has called as your leaders and teachers. You

will be blessed if you refrain from setting your own wisdom or desires ahead of the commandments of your Creator and the warnings of His servants.

The scriptures tell us to take upon us the “whole armor” of God that we “may be able to withstand the evil day.” They promise that the “breastplate of righteousness” and “the shield of faith” will “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:15–17). I urge you to obey those teachings and lay claim on those blessings. They include the personal spiritual conversion—the “mighty change . . . in our hearts” (Mosiah 5:2)—that helps us become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

The leaders of this Church say, as the Savior said: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17).

Your leaders also say, along with King Benjamin: “I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41).

### **The Lord has given us everything**

In modern revelation the Lord has declared, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

What has our Savior done for us? He has given us His Atonement, His gospel, and His Church, a sacred combination that gives us the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. I testify that this is true, and I testify of God the Father, the author of the plan, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Atoning One, who has made it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## NOTES

1. Calvin Grondahl, [Ogden, Utah] *Standard-Examiner*, 26 May 1990.
2. Letter to the editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, 7 Jan. 1869, quoted in Jed Woodworth, "Brigham Young and the Mission of Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies*, volume 40, number 2 (2001), 11.

## President Faust

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Logan and Ogden institutes for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

## Consecrating heart, soul, and mind

These remarks are addressed to the imperfect but still striving in the household of faith. As always, my immediate audience is myself.

We tend to think of consecration only as yielding up, when divinely directed, our material possessions. But ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. *Heart, soul, and mind* were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If it is kept, then our performances will in turn be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds, the very opposite of estrangement: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Many ignore consecration because it seems too abstract or too daunting. The conscientious among us, however, experience divine discontent because of progression mixed with procrastination. Hence, loving counsel is given with the confirmation of this direction, encouragement to continue the journey, and consolation as we experience individually the inherent degrees of difficulty.

## Be fully submissive, not holding back part

Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time anyway. Eventually our wills can be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" as we are "willing to submit . . . even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 15:7; 3:19). Otherwise, though striving, we will continue to feel the world's prop wash and be partially diverted.

Illustrations involving economic consecration are relevant. When Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions, they “kept back part of the price” (see Acts 5:1–11). So many of us cling tenaciously to a particular “part,” even treating our obsessions like possessions. Thus, whatever else we may have already given, the last portion is the hardest to yield. Granted, partial surrender is still commendable, but it resembles, more than faintly, the excuse, “I gave at the office” (see James 1:7–8).

We may, for instance, have a specific set of skills which we mistakenly come to think we somehow own. If we continue to cling to those more than to God, we are flinching in the face of the consecrating first commandment. Since God lends us “breath . . . from one moment to another,” hyperventilating over these distractions is not recommended! (Mosiah 2:21).

A stumbling block appears when we serve God generously with time and checkbooks but still withhold portions of our inner selves, signifying that we are not yet fully His!

Some have difficulty when particular tasks enter their sunset phase. John the Baptist is a model, however, saying of Jesus’ growing flock, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Mistakenly regarding our present assignments as the only indicator of how much God loves us only adds to our reluctance to let go. Brothers and sisters, our individual worth is already divinely established as “great”; it does not fluctuate like the stock market.

Other stepping-stones remain unused because, like the rich, righteous young man, we are not yet willing to confront what we yet lack (see Mark 10:21). A residue of selfishness is thereby exposed.

Shrinking occurs in so many ways. The terrestrial kingdom, for example, will include the “honorable,” clearly not bearers of false witness. Yet they were still “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:75, 79). The best way to valiantly testify of Jesus is to become steadily more like

Him, and it is that consecration that carves out the emulative character (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

### **Do not put other gods before God**

In meeting these recited challenges, spiritual submissiveness is fortunately and helpfully adroit—sometimes helping us to “let go” of things, even mortal life, other times to “hold fast,” and still other times to use the next stepping-stone (see 1 Nephi 8:30).

But if we lack proportion, the next few yards can seem so formidable. Though aware of how God blessed ancient Israel to escape from mighty Pharaoh and his hosts, myopic Laman and Lemuel still lacked faith in God to help them with a mere local Laban.

We can also be deflected if we are too anxious to please those who are ascendant in our professional and avocational niches. Pleasing “other gods” instead of the real God still violates the first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

We sometimes even defend our idiosyncrasies, as if these protrusions somehow constituted our individuality. In a way, discipleship is a “contact sport,” as the Prophet Joseph testified:

“I am like a huge, rough stone . . . ; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force. . . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 304).

Since knees often bend long before minds, holding back this “part” deprives God’s work of some of mankind’s very best intellects. Far better to be meek like Moses, who learned things he “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). Yet sadly, brothers and sisters, in the subtle interplay of agency and identity, there is so much hesitation. The surrender of the mind is actually a victory, because it then introduces

us to God's stretching and "higher" ways! (see Isaiah 55:9).

Ironically, inordinate attention, even to good things, can diminish our devotion to God. For instance, one can be too caught up in sports and the forms of body worship we see among us. One can reverence nature and yet neglect nature's God. One can have an exclusionary regard for good music and similarly with a worthy profession. In such circumstances, the "weightier matters" are often omitted (Matthew 23:23; see also 1 Corinthians 2:16). Only the Highest One can fully guide us as to the highest good which you and I can do.

On the two great commandments, Jesus declared emphatically, everything else hangs, not vice versa (see Matthew 22:40). The first commandment is not suspended just because of our vigorous pursuit of a lesser good, for we do not worship a lesser god.

### **Be meek, acknowledging God's hand**

Before enjoying the harvests of righteous efforts, let us therefore first acknowledge God's hand. Otherwise, the rationalizations appear, and they include, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Or, we "vaunt" ourselves, as ancient Israel would have done (except for Gideon's deliberately small army), by boasting that "mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2). Touting our own "hand" makes it doubly hard to confess God's hand in all things (see Alma 14:11; D&C 59:21).

At a place called Meribah, one of the greatest ever, Moses, was fatigued by people clamoring for water. Momentarily, Moses "spake unadvisedly," saying, "Must we fetch you water?" (Psalm 106:33; Numbers 20:10; see also Deuteronomy 4:21). The Lord mentored remarkable Moses through the pronoun problem and further magnified him. We would do well to be as meek as Moses (see Numbers 12:3).

Jesus never, never, never lost His focus! Though He went about doing so very much good, He always knew that the Atonement awaited, pleading with perspective, "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27; see also 5:30; 6:38).

As you and I develop additional love, patience, and meekness, the more we have to give God and humanity. Moreover, no one else is placed exactly as we are in our opportune human orbits.

Granted, the stepping-stones take us into new territory which we may be very reluctant to explore. Hence, the successful users of the stepping-stones are powerful motivators for the rest of us. We usually pay more attention to those we quietly admire. The hungry prodigal son remembered the menus in his home, but he was also drawn by other memories, declaring, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18).

### **Consecration returns to God what is His**

In striving for ultimate submission, our wills constitute all we really have to give God anyway. The usual gifts and their derivatives we give to Him could be stamped justifiably "Return to Sender," with a capital S. Even when God receives this one gift in return, the fully faithful will receive "all that [He] hath" (D&C 84:38). What an exchange rate!

Meanwhile, certain realities remain: God has given us our lives, our agency, our talents, and our opportunities; He has given us our possessions; He has given us our appointed mortal spans, complete with the needed breaths (see D&C 64:32). Guided by such perspective, we will avoid serious errors of proportion. Some of these are far less amusing than would be hearing a double quartet and mistaking it for the Tabernacle Choir!

No wonder President Hinckley has stressed our being a covenant people, emphasizing the covenants of the sacrament, tithing, and the temple, citing sacrifice

as the “very essence of the Atonement” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 147).

### **Jesus’ example of total submissiveness**

Breathtaking submissiveness was achieved by the Savior as He faced the anguish and agonies of the Atonement and “would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). On our small, imperfect scale, we face tests and wish that these would somehow be taken away.

Consider this: What of Jesus’ ministry if He had performed additional miracles but without the transcending miracle of Gethsemane and Calvary? His other miracles brought blessed extensions of life and lessened suffering—for some. But how could these miracles possibly compare with the greatest miracle of the universal Resurrection? (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). The multiplying of the loaves and fishes fed a hungry multitude. Even so, recipients were soon hungry again, while those who partake of the Bread of Life will never hunger again (see John 6:51, 58).

### **Full submission brings God’s fulness**

In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, “My grace is sufficient for you” (D&C 17:8). Do we really believe Him? He has also promised to make weak

things strong (see Ether 12:27). Are we really willing to submit to that process? Yet if we desire fulness, we cannot hold back part!

Having our wills increasingly swallowed up by the will of the Father actually means an enhanced individuality, stretched and more capable of receiving “all that [God] hath” (D&C 84:38). Besides, how could we be entrusted with His “all” until our wills are much more like His? Nor could His “all” be fully appreciated by the partially committed.

Frankly, it is our prospective selves we betray by holding back whatever the “part.” No need therefore to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Rather, let us inquire about our individual stumbling blocks, “Lord, is it this?” We may have known the answer for a long time and may need resolve more than His response.

The greatest happiness in God’s generous plan is finally reserved for those who are willing to stretch and to pay the costs of journeying to His regal realm. Brothers and sisters, “come, let us anew [this] journey pursue” (“Come, Let Us Anew,” *Hymns*, no. 217).

In the name of the Lord of the outstretched arm (see D&C 103:17; 136:22), even Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 172nd Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men’s choir from BYU—Idaho. Kevin Brower and

Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the

172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing for this session will be furnished by a men's choir from BYU—Idaho, directed by Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Sing Praise to

Him." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Sing Praise to Him."

Elder John B. Dickson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Lessons learned from Joseph F. Smith

I want to address my remarks tonight to you great young men who bear the holy Aaronic Priesthood. What a special blessing it is to bear the priesthood of God, which can only multiply our powers, abilities, and discernment. To illustrate the blessings received from this privilege, I would like to speak about two men of God, both of whom carried the name of Joseph.

My father had a unique experience when he was the age of a priest. There were no high schools where he lived, and he wanted an education. He received permission from his father to leave the farm and seek his education elsewhere, but he had to make it on his own. Arriving in Salt Lake City, he heard of an employment position being offered in the home of President Joseph F. Smith. He was hired to care for the prophet's two cows. In our family home evenings we would want Dad to relate experiences about his early life of living in the home of the prophet. We would hear him make reports like this:

Sister Smith instructed my father in his duties, explaining that the cows "were aristocrats, and you must treat them well. You are to keep them so clean and train them so well that if I should ever at any time conclude to move them into the parlor, they would be clean enough to enter." Dad said he understood milking but not laundering cows.

Before milking each morning and night, the cows were thoroughly washed and dried with hot water, soap, and towels prepared for that purpose. They were fed the best of hay and milked at exactly the same hour twice a day.

In addition to his duties with the Smith family and their "aristocratic" cows, my father was asked on occasion to do some housework. He would tell us stories like this: "One frosty morning I washed the steps leading to the official residence of the President of the Church. It nearly led to his downfall, for I let the water freeze before drying. Then I had to take boiling water and thaw the ice and take towels to dry the stones. The steps were nearly clean, but my classmates were passing on their way to school before the job

was completed. It was a humbling experience.”

By telling these stories, I don't want to leave you with the impression that my father was a male twin to Cinderella. The Smith family took this poor farm boy from Idaho into their home while he finished high school and attended the University of Utah. They included him in their family activities, around the dinner table, and at family prayer. My father shared with us his witness that the prophet Joseph F. Smith was truly a man of God:

“When I kneeled with the prophet, in family prayer, and listened to his earnest supplications for the blessings of the Lord upon his family and their flocks and their herds, I realized that those same humiliating cows were the subject of his blessings, [and] my feet were brought solidly to earth. . . . Most great men I have known have been deflated by intimate contact. Not so with the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Every common everyday act added inches to his greatness. To me he was prophet even while washing his hands or untying his shoes.”

The lessons learned taught us a great appreciation and love for a prophet of God.

My father's description of the prophet Joseph F. Smith reminds me of the Pharaoh's statement about Joseph of Egypt: “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38).

### **Gift of the Holy Ghost can protect us**

My father's stories tell us about President Smith, his family, and his cows, and they also reveal how times have changed since the early 20th century. I don't think my father ever imagined our modern-day computers that sit on small desks and have speeds measured in gigahertz, storage measured in gigabytes. I also don't think he ever imagined the evils that Satan can do with these same marvelous

technologies. Through his evil ways, Satan has been able to spread many new, infectious viruses. These viruses will inflict great damage on our spirits if we do not have powerful ways of defending against them. This causes me to think of the greatest antivirus program of all—that is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

About this gift, President Joseph F. Smith said: “‘The gift of the Holy Ghost,’ is a special blessing sealed upon baptized repentant believers in Jesus Christ, and is ‘an abiding witness.’ The spirit of God may be enjoyed as a temporary influence by which divine light and power come to mankind for special purposes and occasions. But the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was received by the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and is bestowed in confirmation, is a permanent witness and higher endowment” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 5:4).

### **The example of Joseph of Egypt**

It is important that your families assist you in learning about the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Then all of us must rely on the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide us in discerning right from wrong. This is where the example of Joseph of Egypt helps instruct each of us. He relied on the Spirit of the Lord so completely that even a man who was blinded by the practice of idolatry, namely Pharaoh, recognized his unusual countenance and strength.

Let us try tonight to see what great messages we can gain from a study of great leaders in the scriptures. Joseph Fielding Smith instructed us in his *Answers to Gospel Questions*:

“There is ample evidence that boys were called and ordained in ancient times. In antediluvian times, when the lives of men were greatly prolonged, some were called to act at comparatively tender years. Enoch was but twenty-five when he was

ordained by Adam; . . . and Noah received the priesthood when he was but ten years of age [see D&C 107:48, 52]. How old Joseph, son of Israel, was when he received the priesthood is not recorded; but it must have been when he was very young. He was sold by his brethren when he was only seventeen, and he must have had the priesthood before that time, for he exercised it in the land of Egypt [see Genesis 37:2; 40:8–19; 41:14–36]” (comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 2:9).

Turning to the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, we find the story of Joseph. Joseph had 11 brothers—10 of them older than he. His father seemed to favor him more than the others. He made Joseph a coat of many colors, let him remain at home, and instructed him occasionally to go out and check up on his brothers who were tending the flocks. Joseph also had dreams that seemed to put him in a place of authority ahead of his brothers.

One day when Joseph was checking on his brothers as they tended the flocks, they decided they’d had about enough of Joseph and wanted to do away with him. An opportunity came to sell Joseph as a slave to a company of Ishmeelites traveling on their way to Egypt.

#### *Joseph prospers in difficult circumstances*

Suddenly, Joseph found himself in a strange land with strange customs, a strange religion, and worst of all, being sold as a slave. Joseph presented himself so well and so ably that he was purchased by “Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard” (Genesis 37:36).

“And the Lord was with Joseph, [and he carried a spirit with him that helped as he became] a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

“And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and [Potiphar] made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

“And it came to pass from the time that he had made [Joseph] overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

“And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured” (Genesis 39:2–6).

#### *Joseph flees from temptation*

One day as Joseph was working in the house, he found himself in a difficult position. Potiphar’s wife made unwanted approaches to him. Joseph immediately knew that he was in the wrong place. We have him saying:

“There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? . . .

“And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:9, 12).

We learn a great lesson from Joseph. When he was presented with a temptation, he immediately separated himself from even the appearance of evil. All of us have events in our lives which find us in challenging situations.

When we are confronted with that which is evil and degrading—whether it be the wrong kind of music, a television program, or Internet sites which place us in the wrong environment—how strengthening it is to remember the story of Joseph: “And [he] fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12). Joseph removed himself from the temptation.

*The Lord is with Joseph in prison*

Even making the right choices did not free Joseph from the challenges he faced in life. When Potiphar returned home, his wife complained to her husband that Joseph had mocked her. Potiphar was so upset that he “took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

“[And again] the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and [He] gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

“[Soon] the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it” (Genesis 39:20–22).

But the Lord was with Joseph, and an opportunity was again presented to him while he served in prison. Two of the Pharaoh’s servants were also cast into prison. Each of them had a dream which Joseph was able to interpret. One of them was to lose his life in prison; the other would again in three days return to his position as chief butler for the Pharaoh. Both dreams came to pass. The butler returned to his high position with the Pharaoh and forgot all about Joseph until two years had passed.

Then the Pharaoh had a dream. No one could interpret his dream. The butler finally remembered Joseph. He told the Pharaoh about Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams. “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh” (Genesis 41:14).

Joseph was able to interpret the Pharaoh’s dream. The Pharaoh, being so impressed, made Joseph one of his servants. Again the Lord was with Joseph. Soon Joseph rose to a position of being second to the Pharaoh in all the land of Egypt. There was something special that distin-

guished Joseph from all the other servants. Pharaoh remarked what made Joseph different from all of the others when he said, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38).

**Heed warnings of the Holy Ghost**

You will notice in each situation in which Joseph found himself that the Lord was with him. It was easy to recognize the special spirit in him because of the way he lived and heeded the voice of the Lord to direct him.

That same recognition will surely be with each of us as we are led and directed by His Holy Spirit. Listen to the still, small voice when you are faced with a time of decision. It will surely be a strong warning voice to tell you to turn off the wrong kind of music, to flee from the degrading television programs, or to get out of a Web page that will only bring evil thoughts into your mind. The Holy Spirit will let you know when you are in forbidden territory.

I promise you that if you will heed the voice of warning of the Holy Ghost and will follow His direction, you will be blessed with the ministering of angels, which will add wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory to your life. Remember, the Lord is bound by solemn covenant to bless our lives according to our faithfulness. Only He can turn us into men in whom the Spirit of God, namely the Holy Ghost, is.

What a blessing it is to bear the Lord’s holy priesthood and have that power and strength within us. May the Lord inspire and direct us to study the stories of great prophets who have walked the earth. May we glean from their lives that which will draw us closer to our Maker and help us enjoy the blessings and fruits that come from the gospel of our Lord and Savior. May we be so inspired to follow His path is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Ben B. Banks

### The road we call life

Brethren, I am delighted to be with you this evening. I too want to speak specifically with the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I love you and care very much about you.

In the new *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the First Presidency says to you:

"Our beloved young men . . . , we have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity" (page 2).

I hope in some small way this evening that you can learn from my nearly 70 years of traveling this road we call life. Your parents or grandparents may have already told you this: "The older you get, the quicker time seems to pass." It is as though one minute you are 12 with your whole life in front of you, and the next minute you are nearly 70 with an expanding waistline in front of you!

It is hard to believe it was nearly 13 years ago when I last spoke in general priesthood meeting. At that time I told the brethren about a journey I made by bicycle with my sons and drew from that experience the importance of preparing well for the journey of life.

Today I want to tell you about other journeys I have made and share the lessons I have learned from them.

### Preparing for a bicycle trip—and for life

Recently some members of my family determined it would be fun to bicycle from Bozeman, Montana, to Jackson Hole,

Wyoming, in the United States. This 225-mile journey would take us three days, and we would cross the Continental Divide on three occasions. We determined that traveling through the mountain passes with good weather would be a wonderful experience that would help us appreciate God's creations.

After careful planning and preparation, two of my sons and my only daughter and I set out on the first day to cycle to our overnight stop in Big Sky, Montana. The morning was perfect, and we expected a delightful journey. However, as we traveled along, dark clouds gathered and brought rain, which eventually became sleet and hail and made us extremely cold and wet and miserable. As we concluded day one of our journey and reached our overnight destination, I was reminded that life can be just like that day. Fortunately, we had prepared for all types of weather conditions; had we not done so, it would have been difficult to complete our journey that first day. At each stage of life's journey, we should set out full of hope and optimism, but we should be prepared nonetheless to face opposition or hardship at some point.

### Establish good patterns while young

The patterns you establish in your youth may accompany you throughout the rest of your mortal life. By making the right choices now, you will be able to take the path that will help you endure the coldest and bleakest moments later.

For example, if you are in the habit of using foul language, the longer you use it, the harder it is to change and stop using it. Better now to choose a different road, one that leads to cleanliness in thought and word and action so you can enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Imagine the difficulty of serving a mission and having bad language pop into your mind when you need to have the Spirit with you

as your constant companion. If using bad language is a problem for you, now is the time to change.

### **Give credit to God, not to ourselves**

On day two of our trip, we headed to West Yellowstone. Everything was as it should be—the bicycles were running smoothly and our legs were rested as we progressed toward our second destination. It was then that I realized if we are not careful when everything is going just right in life, there can be a temptation to forget our Heavenly Father and give credit to ourselves for our happy state. Don't make that mistake.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255–56).

The Book of Mormon is replete with accounts of those who were blessed by the Lord and then became boastful of their accomplishments. Eventually in their pride they left the correct path and lost all they had as they fell away from the truth. Make sure you don't become like the Nephites of old; always remember the true source of your blessings.

### **Start early to achieve goals**

On day three of our journey, I learned that even though we may have some uphill struggles in our lives, our attitude will determine how we face them. On that day we crossed the Continental Divide three times, rising from an elevation of 4,800 feet to 8,300 feet. Climbing steep mountain passes on a bike requires the right attitude to get to the right altitude. It's the same with life. By setting worthwhile goals and keeping your eyes fixed on them, you will learn self-discipline and accomplish

much. Yes, there were times when climbing the steep mountain grades was as much as I could bear, but I didn't give up, because I was fixed in my purpose.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, I urge you to set goals for yourselves, such as completing seminary, serving an honorable mission, graduating from college, and being worthy of a temple marriage. At your age these may seem like very big goals, but if you start climbing now you will be so much better prepared to accomplish them.

### **Rely on the Spirit in making decisions**

Two years ago Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and I had the opportunity to go on a canoe trip into the Quetico wilderness area in Ontario, Canada, portaging from lake to lake. As we reached the halfway point across one of the larger lakes, the weather turned very bad, and the once tranquil water turned angry and perilous, tossing our little canoe to and fro.

We had a decision to make. Do we try to reach our planned destination, or do we head for the nearest island and wait for the storm to pass? The answer seems obvious now, but at the time it was not an easy decision to make. By carrying on, we might arrive at our planned campsite. By delaying our journey, we would arrive very late and may have to travel in the dark. As we pondered the options, we had the impression to head to the nearest island quickly. As we did so, a much worse-than-anticipated storm rolled by us. Had we elected to continue canoeing, we would have put our lives in great peril.

Here in mortality we are called upon to make serious decisions, the outcome of which can have a lasting effect upon our spiritual future. I encourage you to always be worthy to seek for the Spirit to help you always choose the right.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi tells us, "Then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye

have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:18).

### **Enduring the journey brings happiness**

As our family concluded the 225-mile bicycle journey, we learned that no matter how difficult things can become on this road we call life, great happiness is waiting for those who keep the commandments and endure to the end.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, you have a responsibility to remain firmly focused on your eternal destination. Yes, life's journeys can have many ups and downs. Yes, there will be days when you will feel the going is tough. But as you stay on the right path, the reward

at the end of life's journey is well worth the moments of adversity you experience along the way.

Again, from the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the First Presidency writes: "May you keep your minds and bodies clean from the sins of the world so you can do the great work that lies before you. We pray that you will be worthy to carry on the responsibilities of building the kingdom of God and preparing the world for the Second Coming of the Savior" (page 3).

My young friends, please know the importance of being wise by following the counsel of our prophets, and happiness will be yours throughout life's journey.

Of this I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Spencer J. Condie**

### **Wilford Woodruff's missions bless others**

As a young man of 27, Wilford Woodruff was ordained a priest on November 5, 1834. Eight days later he began a two-year mission in the southern states.<sup>1</sup> One night he and his companion found lodging with a family who provided them with a bare floor for a bed, which he described as "pretty hard after walking sixty miles without anything to eat."<sup>2</sup>

The next day they walked 12 miles through the rain until they came to the house of a man who happened to be a member of the Missouri mob. Brother Woodruff said:

"The family were about to sit down to breakfast as we came in. In those days it was the custom of the Missourians to ask you to eat even though they were hostile to you; so he asked us to take breakfast, and we were very glad of the invitation. He knew we were Mormons; and as soon as we began to eat, he began to swear about the Mormons. He had a large platter of bacon and eggs, and plenty of bread

on the table, and his swearing did not hinder our eating, for the harder he swore the harder we ate, until we got our stomachs full; then we arose from the table, took our hats, and thanked him for our breakfast. The last we heard of him he was still swearing. I trust the Lord will reward him for our breakfast."<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the first year of that mission he recounted that he had "traveled three thousand two hundred and forty-eight miles, held one hundred and seventy meetings, [and] baptized forty-three persons."<sup>4</sup>

His first mission to the southern states was followed by two brief missions to the Fox Islands off the coast of Maine<sup>5</sup> and then subsequently two missions to England.<sup>6</sup> During his latter mission in England, in 1840, he acknowledged that "through the blessings of God," he had been an instrument in bringing over 1,800 souls into the Church within a period of eight months.<sup>7</sup>

Wilford Woodruff claimed the Book of Mormon promise that "God has pro-

vided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.”<sup>8</sup> My young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, I would remind you that our Father in Heaven not only wants you to be good, but to be good for something, to serve and bless the lives of others, and to become a benefit to your fellow beings.

### **Increase in wisdom and stature**

We read in the Gospel of Luke that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”<sup>9</sup> Inasmuch as our earthly quest for perfection involves becoming more like the Savior, then we also should increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Priesthood quorum activities and Mutual activities with the young women, when carefully and prayerfully planned and discussed in the bishopric youth committee,<sup>10</sup> will help every young man and young woman to grow in wisdom as they gain a greater appreciation for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets and as they participate in Mutual activities involving “anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”<sup>11</sup>

Counseling together in the bishopric youth committee also provides valuable training for an entire generation of future leaders who learn to work effectively together in councils.

You young men will grow in stature and physical strength as you engage in folk dancing, sports, and wholesome, friendly athletic competition characterized by good sportsmanship. You will grow in favor with God as you engage in family history research, perform baptisms in the temple for deceased ancestors, become faithful home teachers, frequently clean the chapel, visit nursing homes, and help beautify your communities. As you do so, you will exemplify King Benjamin’s counsel that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the ser-

vice of your God.”<sup>12</sup> A wise youth leader will place less emphasis on fund-raising activities and a much greater emphasis upon rendering selfless service to others.

You young men will increase in favor with man and become better prepared for missions, marriage, and future employment as you learn more about various careers and develop greater self-confidence through giving speeches and participating in original one-act plays and talent shows.

### **Minister to others**

Our youth activities should reflect our belief that “men are, that they might have joy,”<sup>13</sup> and we should be willing to share that joy with others. Not long ago I met a woman from the East who is now living in the Salt Lake Valley. She is a devout member of another Christian church, and I asked her how she enjoyed living among the Latter-day Saints. She said, “My husband and I get along fine, but I worry about our teenage daughter. Each Wednesday evening about seven o’clock, several girls in our neighborhood walk right past our home headed somewhere together, and not once have they stopped to invite our 14-year-old daughter to go with them.”

I said, “My dear, this is your lucky day; I am in a position to get that problem fixed.” She readily gave me her daughter’s name and address, and we made contact with both the stake president and the seminary principal.

Our friends and neighbors are children of a loving Father in Heaven, who desires that all of us return to Him. Can we be content when not all the members of our quorum are in attendance Sunday morning? Surely we can extend ourselves to the less active and those of other faiths and warmly invite them to our Young Men and Young Women Mutual activities, seminary, Sunday School classes, and sacrament meetings.

When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood un-

der the hands of the resurrected John the Baptist, they received “the keys of the ministering of angels,”<sup>14</sup> and so did you when you were ordained. I pray that you wonderful young men will not only be worthy to *receive* ministering angels, but that you, like young Wilford Woodruff, will *become* a ministering angel in the lives of others as you exercise your faith in working “mighty miracles,” thereby becoming a “great benefit” to your fellow beings.

### **The Holy Ghost will protect and direct you**

Satan would diminish your faith and dilute your priesthood power to work mighty miracles, but a loving Heavenly Father has provided you with providential protection—the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon we learn that as Lehi read the scriptures, “he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>15</sup> Nephi later promises us that as we “feast upon the words of Christ . . . , the words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do.”<sup>16</sup>

You may be facing decisions about a mission, your future career, and, eventually, marriage. As you read the scriptures and pray for direction, you may not actually see the answer in the form of printed words on a page, but as you read you will receive distinct impressions and promptings, and, as promised, the Holy Ghost “will show unto you all things what ye should do.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The power of fasting and prayer**

Satan would have you surrender your moral agency to various forms of addictive behavior, but a loving Heavenly Father has promised you through His prophet Isaiah that through sincere fasting, as you subdue your physical appetites, He will help you “loose the bands of wickedness” and “break every yoke.”<sup>18</sup> Claim that promise through fasting. Our emptiness will provide more room for the fulness of the gospel. The hallowing precedes the hallowing.

Scripture study and fasting, preceded and followed by prayer, really can “change the night to day.”<sup>19</sup> The entire life of the Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrates the power of prayer and the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise that “if thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation.”<sup>20</sup> One important revelation you will receive will be insight into how you can best touch the lives of others who have lost their way. In so doing, it is well to remember President Hinckley’s wise counsel: “The Holy Ghost is the Testifier of Truth, who can teach men things they cannot teach one another.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Use priesthood to benefit others**

President Gordon B. Hinckley considers good friends to be one of the key ingredients in retaining new converts and in reclaiming the less active, and Robert Browning eloquently described how this is so:

Were I elect like you,  
I would encircle me with love, and raise  
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem  
Impossible for me to fail, so watched  
By gentle friends who made my cause  
their own.<sup>22</sup>

Late in life, as President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff declared:

“It does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me, by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me.”<sup>23</sup>

My young beloved brethren, I pray that each of us, through our faith, will use our priesthood power to work mighty miracles through sharing the gospel and serving others, thereby becoming a great

benefit to our fellow beings, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1909), 47.
2. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
3. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
4. *Wilford Woodruff*, 58.
5. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 70–86.
6. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 99–113; 114–28; 129–46.
7. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 119.
8. Mosiah 8:18.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 318–19.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.
12. Mosiah 2:17.
13. 2 Nephi 2:25.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
15. See 1 Nephi 1:8–12.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.

17. 2 Nephi 32:5.
18. Isaiah 58:6.
19. “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
21. “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 7.
22. *Paracelsus*, in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 2 vols. (1902), 1:25.
23. “Discourse by President Woodruff,” *Millennial Star*, 5 Oct. 1891, 629.

## President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for your inspirational counsel.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then join in singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” Following this, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

## President James E. Faust

### The myth of “it can’t happen to me”

My beloved brethren of the priesthood of God, the responsibility of speaking to you tonight is overwhelming. I have prayed for inspiration and guidance, and I seek your understanding.

One of the great myths in life is when men think they are invincible. Too many think that they are men of steel, strong enough to withstand any temptation. They delude themselves into thinking, “It cannot happen to me.” Borrowing a thought from Bertrand Russell, “We are all like the turkey who wakes up [Thanksgiving] morning expecting lunch as usual. Things can go wrong at any time.”<sup>1</sup> Brethren, it *can* happen to any of us at any time. So much of our course in life is influenced by forces we only partly perceive.

### We often see only part of the danger

President Charles W. Penrose used to tell the story of an officer on the *Titanic* who stated that there was no fear of “God, man or devil,” because the *Titanic* was built so solidly that it could readily withstand collision with other ships or contact with any other force, including icebergs.<sup>2</sup> The *Titanic* was in fact three football fields in length, 12 stories high, and built of the finest steel. On that fateful night of April 14, 1912, other ships warned of ice ahead. Yet the *Titanic* continued to increase her speed, cutting through the cold Atlantic Ocean. By the time the lookouts sighted the iceberg, it was too late. The *Titanic* could not turn out of its way in time, and the iceberg scraped along the starboard side of the ship, creating a series of punc-

tures. Two hours and 40 minutes later the brand-new *Titanic* sank to the bottom of the ocean. Over 1,500 people drowned.

Usually one-eighth of an iceberg is above the waterline. The ice in the cold core is very compact, and keeps seven-eighths of the iceberg under water. As it was when the *Titanic* encountered the iceberg, so it is with us. We can often see only part of the danger that lies ahead.

### **David's tragic succumbing to weakness**

History is full of examples of men who were gifted and able but who, in a moment of weakness, threw away their promising lives. King David is a tragic example. As a youth he was handsome, brave, and full of faith. He slew the frightening giant, Goliath. He became king. He had everything a man could desire. Yet when he saw Bathsheba, he wanted her even though she was another man's wife. He had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, sent to the front of the hottest battle so that he would be killed. Uriah died in battle, and David married Bathsheba. As a consequence of this evil deed, David lost his spiritual inheritance.<sup>3</sup> For all the good David accomplished, much of it was negated because he allowed himself to succumb to a serious personal flaw.

### **False security regarding temptation**

I once heard a man tell his sons, "I can drive closer to the edge than you because I have had more experience than you." He thought he was in control, but he was really in denial. "The trouble with using experience as a guide is that the final exam often comes first and then the lesson."<sup>4</sup> Some people think their age and experience make them better able to withstand temptation. This is a falsehood.

I remember hearing President J. Reuben Clark Jr. tell of the time when one of his children was going out on a date. He asked them to come home at a certain

hour. "Chafing under that constant, urgent reminder, the [teenager] said, 'Daddy, what is the matter, don't you trust me?'"

"His answer must have shocked her as he said, 'No, my [child], I don't trust you. I don't even trust myself.'"<sup>5</sup>

### **Counsel for resisting temptation**

So that some things "can't happen to us," I suggest we learn from President Spencer W. Kimball's counsel:

"Develop discipline of self so that, more and more, you do not have to decide and redecide what you will do when you are confronted with the same temptation time and time again. You need only to decide some things once. How great a blessing it is to be free of agonizing over and over again regarding a temptation. To do such is time-consuming and very risky."<sup>6</sup>

### **"Just one" can lead to addiction**

Someone may rationalize by thinking, "Just one fix of drugs won't hurt me." That may sound harmless, but please know how powerful drugs are. I quote from a user: "There is no controlling drugs. It controls you. The first time, you usually feel nothing. That's when it grabs you."<sup>7</sup>

"Just one cigarette—just to see how it feels." But beware of the danger lurking here. Nicotine is highly addictive.<sup>8</sup> As few as four cigarettes may be enough to set someone on a path to becoming a regular smoker.<sup>9</sup>

"Just one can of beer." We do not know our potential for alcohol addiction, but one drink usually leads to another. It is much better never to take the first drink. Then you know you won't be led to more.

"The purchase of just one lottery ticket." This is more subtle than other addictions. You may not think gambling is an addiction because it is not a substance that is taken into the body, but as some-

one recently wrote: "Those who gamble risk more than just money. Their lives and families are at stake too."<sup>10</sup>

"Just one peek at a pornographic site on the Internet, or a quick look at a centerfold in a racy magazine." That sounds so harmless, but what we see is so much harder to get rid of than what we take into our bodies. Many hardened criminals admit they got their start in crime by viewing obscene pictures.

Some may say that inappropriate entertainment now and again is OK. However, this often desensitizes us to violence, improper sexual relations, vulgarity, taking the Lord's name in vain, and other associated evils.

### **The Holy Ghost increases our potential**

I have spoken at some length about things you *don't* want to happen to you. Now let's consider some of the good things that you *do* want to happen to you. If you are willing to pay the price for success, good things, even great things, *can* happen to you, even beyond your fondest dreams and expectations! Often we do not have even a glimpse of our potential for happiness and accomplishment in this life and in eternity because, as the Apostle Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly."<sup>11</sup> But the lens can be lightened and become crystal clear through the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Savior promised us that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,"<sup>12</sup> and "guide you into all truth."<sup>13</sup>

We must recognize that our natural gifts and abilities are limited, but when augmented by inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, our potential increases manifold. You need help from a power beyond your own to do something extraordinarily useful. You young men can have opportunities and receive blessings beyond your wildest dreams and expectations. Your future may not hold fame or fortune,

but it can be something far more lasting and fulfilling. Remember that what we do in life echoes in eternity.

### **Testimony grows as our faith is tested**

Some of you young men may not yet have a strong testimony of the divine origin of this Church like your parents have. You may wish you could be more sure that Joseph Smith actually saw in vision God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and that the Book of Mormon was truly translated from golden plates. You may have some lingering doubts about the law of tithing, the law of chastity, or the Word of Wisdom. This is not unusual for some young men your age. Your faith may not have been fully tested. You may not yet have had to defend your beliefs or lifestyle. I assure you that great things can happen to you. You can receive an unwavering testimony that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and that through Joseph Smith the gospel has been restored to the earth in its fulness. But that testimony may not come until your faith has been tried.<sup>14</sup>

### **Testimony grows from devoted service**

Many years ago two General Authorities called a very young man to be a new stake president. In his response the new stake president said he would give total devotion to his calling and would not ask any of the members of his stake to be more devoted than he. Then he bore his testimony that he believed the gospel with all his heart and proposed to live it.

Later at lunch one of the General Authorities asked this new stake president whether he knew absolutely that this gospel is true. He answered that he did not. The senior Apostle said to his fellow Apostle, "He knows it just as well as you do. The only thing that he *does not know* is that he *does know* it. It will be but a short time until he does know it. . . . You do not need to worry."



A short time later the new stake president testified that following a spiritual experience, "I shed tears of gratitude to the Lord for the abiding, perfect, and absolute testimony that came into my life of the divinity of this work."<sup>15</sup>

### Knowing that you know the gospel is true

Many of us do not have a full awareness of what we really know. Even though we have been taught the gospel, we may not be fully aware of what the Lord has put in our "inward parts" and written in our hearts.<sup>16</sup> As young men of the covenant, you are heirs to great promises. You have the opportunity to become more than "hewers of wood and drawers of water."<sup>17</sup>

I do not claim to have an absolute understanding of all of the principles of the gospel, but I have come to know with certainty the divinity and authority of this Church. This came to me gradually, line upon line and precept upon precept. I now *know* that I *know*, just as you can come to *know* that you *know*. It can happen to you.

Knowledge comes through faith. In our day and time we must come to know the truthfulness of what was on the golden plates without seeing them. They are not available for us to see and handle as they were for the Three Witnesses and for the Eight Witnesses. Some of those who actually saw and handled the golden plates did not remain faithful to the Church. Seeing an angel would be a great experience, but it is far greater to come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior through faith and the witness of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

You can also come to *know* what you *know* as a valiant son of God in the pre-mortal existence. It can happen to you. But it won't just happen automatically. You will have to exercise faith. The only way to acquire spiritual knowledge and keep it burning brightly is to be humble, prayerful, and to strive diligently to keep all of the commandments.

### Be swifter, higher, and stronger

At the opening ceremonies of the recently concluded 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Utah Symphony Orchestra performed a majestic musical piece written by John Williams especially as the official musical theme of the games. It was entitled "Call of the Champions." Tonight I wish to make a call to the champions. The stirring first words of this piece are *citius* (swifter), *altius* (higher), and *fortius* (stronger), which have been the official Olympic motto since 1924.

Brethren of the priesthood, we live in a marvelous time. Never in the history of the Church have we had more witnesses of the truthfulness of this holy work. We have our detractors and critics, as we have always had. But never has the Church climbed higher, moved swifter, or been stronger to accomplish its mission. Now is the time for all of us to reach upward and move onward. In God's work we too must be swifter, working with greater urgency; higher, striving for lofty spiritual goals; and stronger, relying on God's strength. It can happen to you.

The sure way to have life's joys and blessings come to you is to follow our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. So much good has come to us from past prophets, but it is President Hinckley's voice we need to hear today and his counsel we need to follow so that the best things can happen to us. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (1995), 610.
2. Quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. (1953), 1:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:39.
4. Author unknown, quoted in Robert Byrne, comp., *1,911 Best Things Anybody Ever Said* (1988), 386.

5. Quoted by Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 629.
6. *President Kimball Speaks Out* (1981), 94.
7. Quoted in Guillermo D. Jalil, *Street-Wise Drug Prevention: A Realistic Approach to Prevent and Intervene in Adolescent Drug Use* (1996; excerpt on the Internet at [www.nodrugs.com](http://www.nodrugs.com)).
8. See U.S. Department of Education, "Specific Drugs and Their Effects," in *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention* (printed publication also on the Internet at [www.health.org/govpubs/phd533/](http://www.health.org/govpubs/phd533/)).
9. See Janet Brigham, "Tobacco: Quitting for Good," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 52.
10. Shanna Ghaznavi, "Don't Bet Your Life," *New Era*, Feb. 2002, 26.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:12.
12. John 14:26.
13. John 16:13.
14. See Ether 12:6.
15. Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 192–93; italics added.
16. Jeremiah 31:33.
17. Joshua 9:21.
18. See John 20:29.

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The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### They pray and they go

My brethren, I am honored by the privilege to speak to you this evening. What a joy to see this magnificent Conference Center filled to capacity with those young and old who hold the priesthood of God. To realize that similar throngs are assembled throughout the world brings to me an overwhelming sense of responsibility. I pray that the inspiration of the Lord will guide my thoughts and inspire my words.

Many years ago, on an assignment to Tahiti, I was talking to our mission president, President Raymond Baudin, about the Tahitian people. They are known as some of the greatest seafaring people in all the world. Brother Baudin, who speaks French and Tahitian but little English, was trying to describe to me the secret of the success of the Tahitian sea captains. He said, "They are amazing. The weather may be terrible, the vessels may be leaky, there may be no navigational aids except their inner feelings and the stars in the heavens, but they pray and they go." He repeated that phrase three times. There is a lesson in that statement. We need to

pray, and then we need to act. Both are important.

The promise from the book of Proverbs gives us courage:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>1</sup>

### Examples of a widow and of Nephi

We need but to turn to the account found in 1 Kings to appreciate anew the principle that when we follow the counsel of the Lord, when we pray and then go, the outcome benefits all. There we read that a most severe drought had gripped the land. Famine followed. Elijah the prophet received from the Lord what to him must have been an amazing instruction:

"Get thee to Zarephath . . . : behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." When he had found the widow, Elijah declared, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

"And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand."

Her response described her desperate situation as she explained that she was preparing a final and scanty meal for her son and for herself, and then they would die.

How implausible to her must have been Elijah's response:

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail."<sup>2</sup>

If I were to ask you which of all the passages in the Book of Mormon is the most widely read, I venture it would be the account found in 1 Nephi concerning Nephi, his brothers, his father, and the command to obtain from Laban the plates of brass. Perhaps this is because most of us, from time to time, pledge again to read the Book of Mormon. Usually we begin with 1 Nephi. In reality, the passages found therein portray beautifully the need to pray and then to go and do. Said Nephi:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."<sup>3</sup>

We remember the commandment. We remember the response. We remember the outcome.

#### **Cummings family prayed and then went**

In our day and our time there are many examples concerning the experiences of those who pray and then go and do. I share with you a touching account of

a fine family that lived in the beautiful city of Perth, Australia. In 1957, four months before the dedication of the New Zealand temple, Donald Cummings, the father, was the president of the member district in Perth. He and his wife and family were determined to attend the dedication of the temple, although they were of very modest financial means. They began to pray, to work, and to save. They sold their only car and gathered together every penny they could, but a week before their scheduled departure, they were still 200 pounds short. Through two unexpected gifts of 100 pounds each, they met their goal just in time. Because Brother Cummings couldn't get time off work for the trip, he decided to quit his job.

They traveled by train across the vast Australian continent, arriving at Sydney, where they joined other members also traveling to New Zealand. Brother Cummings and his family were among the first Australians to be baptized for the dead in the New Zealand temple. They were among the first ones to be endowed in the New Zealand temple from far-off Perth, Australia. They prayed, they prepared, and then they went.

When the Cummings family returned to Perth, Brother Cummings obtained a new and better job. He was still serving as district president nine years later when it was my privilege to call him as the first president of the Perth Australia Stake.<sup>4</sup> I think it significant that he is now the first president of the Perth Australia Temple.

#### **Missionaries pray and then go**

From the movie *Shenandoah* come the spoken words which inspire: "If we don't try, we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

There are now more than 60,000 full-time missionaries serving the Lord throughout the world. Many of this vast throng are listening in tonight and viewing this priesthood session of general conference. They pray and then they go,

trusting in the Lord concerning where they are sent and trusting in their mission president as to where they serve within their missions. Among the many revelations concerning their sacred callings are two passages which are favorites of mine. Both are from the Doctrine and Covenants.

The first is from section 100. You will remember that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had been absent from their families for some time, and they were concerned about them. The Lord revealed unto them this assurance, which is comforting to missionaries throughout the Church: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends . . . , your families are well; they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good; for in me there is all power."<sup>5</sup>

The second is from the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>6</sup>

### **Walter Krause prayed and then went**

Inspiring is the missionary service rendered by Walter Krause, who lives in Prenzlau, Germany. Brother Krause, whose dedication to the Lord is legendary, is now 92 years of age. As a patriarch he has given more than a thousand patriarchal blessings to members living throughout many parts of Europe.

Homeless following World War II, like so many others at that time, Brother Krause and his family lived in a refugee camp in Cottbus and began to attend church there. He was immediately called to lead the Cottbus branch. Four months later, in November of 1945, the country still in ruins, district president Richard Ranglack came to Brother Krause and asked him what he would think about going on a mission. Brother Krause's answer

reflects his commitment to the Church. Said he, "I don't have to think about it at all. If the Lord needs me, I'll go."

He set out on December 1, 1945, with 20 German marks in his pocket and a piece of dry bread. One of the branch members had given him a winter coat left over from a son who had fallen in the war. Another member, who was a shoemaker, gave him a pair of shoes. With these and with two shirts, two handkerchiefs, and two pairs of stockings, he left on his mission.

Once, in the middle of winter, he walked from Prenzlau to Kammin, a little village in Mecklenburg, where 46 attended the meetings which were held. He arrived long after dark that night after a six-hour march over roads, paths, and finally across plowed fields. Just before he reached the village, he came to a large, white, flat area which made for easy walking, and he soon arrived at a member's home to stay the night.

The next morning the game warden knocked on the door of the member's house, asking, "Do you have a guest?"

"Yes," came the reply.

The game warden continued, "Then come and take a look at his tracks." The large, flat area on which Brother Krause had walked was actually a frozen lake, and some time earlier the warden had chopped a large hole in the middle of the lake for fishing. The wind had driven snow over the hole and covered it so that Brother Krause could not have seen his danger. His tracks went right next to the edge of the hole and straight to the house of the member, without his knowing anything about it. Weighed down by his backpack and his rubber boots, he would certainly have drowned had he gone one step further toward the hole he couldn't see. He commented later that this event caused quite a stir in the village at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Brother Krause's entire life has been to pray and then to go.

### **The calling and service of James Womack**

Should any of us feel inadequate or tend to doubt the ability to respond to a priesthood call to serve the Lord, let this divine truth be remembered: "With God all things are possible."<sup>8</sup>

Not long ago I learned of the passing of James Womack, the patriarch of the Shreveport Louisiana Stake. He had served long and had blessed ever so many lives. Years before, President Spencer W. Kimball shared with President Gordon B. Hinckley, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, and me an experience he had in the appointment of a patriarch for the Shreveport Louisiana Stake of the Church. President Kimball described how he interviewed, how he searched, and how he prayed that he might learn the Lord's will concerning the selection. For some reason, none of the suggested candidates was the man for this assignment at this particular time.

The day wore on; the evening meetings began. Suddenly President Kimball turned to the stake president and asked him to identify a particular man seated two-thirds of the way back from the front of the chapel. The stake president replied that the individual was James Womack, whereupon President Kimball said: "He is the man the Lord has selected to be your stake patriarch. Please have him meet with me in the high council room following the meeting."

Stake president Charles Cagle was startled, for James Womack did not wear the label of a typical man. He had sustained terrible injuries while in combat during World War II. He lost both hands and part of an arm, as well as most of his eyesight and part of his hearing. Nobody had wanted to let him into law school when he returned, yet he finished third in his class at Louisiana State University.

That evening as President Kimball met with Brother Womack and informed him that the Lord had designated him to be the patriarch, there was a protracted

silence in the room. Then Brother Womack said: "Brother Kimball, it is my understanding that a patriarch is to place his hands on the head of the person he blesses. As you can see, I have no hands to place on the head of anyone."

Brother Kimball, in his kind and patient manner, invited Brother Womack to stand behind the chair on which Brother Kimball was seated. He then said, "Now, Brother Womack, lean forward and see if the stumps of your arms will reach the top of my head." To Brother Womack's joy, they touched Brother Kimball's head, and the exclamation came forth, "I can reach you! I can reach you!"

"Of course you can reach me," responded Brother Kimball. "And if you can reach me, you can reach any whom you bless. I will probably be the shortest person you will ever have seated before you."

President Kimball reported to us that when the name of James Womack was presented to the stake conference, "the hands of the members shot heavenward in an enthusiastic vote of approval."

Remembered were the words of the Lord to the prophet Samuel at the time David was designated to be a future king of Israel: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."<sup>9</sup>

### **"Be ye doers of the word"**

Brethren, whatever our calling, regardless of our fears or anxieties, let us pray and then go and do, remembering the words of the Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>10</sup>

In the epistle of James we are counseled, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."<sup>11</sup>

Let us, as a mighty body of priesthood, be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Let us pray; then let us go and do.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Proverbs 3:5–6.
2. 1 Kings 17:9–11, 13–16; see also v. 12.
3. 1 Nephi 3:7.
4. See Richard J. Marshall, “Saga of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1974, 66–67.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 100:1.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
7. See Garold N. Davis and Norma S. Davis, “Behind the Iron Curtain: Recollections of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945–1989,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, volume 5, number 1 (1995), 54–55.
8. Matthew 19:26.
9. 1 Samuel 16:7.
10. Matthew 28:20.
11. James 1:22.

**President Hinckley**

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from

9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening; otherwise you may discover that the meeting’s half over when you arrive.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, please obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We’re deeply grateful to the men’s choir from BYU—Idaho for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “Hope of Israel.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

**Being worthy to exercise the priesthood**

My dear brethren, I wish to speak very plainly this evening about a matter that I feel deeply concerned over. What a great pleasure and a worrisome challenge it is to speak to you. What a tremendous brotherhood we are as those who hold this precious and wonderful priesthood. It comes from God, our Eternal Father, who in this glorious dispensation has, with His Beloved Son, spoken again from the heavens. They have sent Their authorized servants to bestow this divine authority upon men.

Personal worthiness becomes the standard of eligibility to receive and exercise this sacred power. It is of this that I wish to speak tonight.

I begin by reading to you from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121:

“The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven can-

not be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

“That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:36–37).

That is the unequivocal word of the Lord concerning His divine authority. What a tremendous obligation this places upon each of us. We who hold the priesthood of God must stand above the ways of the world. We must discipline ourselves. We cannot be self-righteous, but we can and must be decent, honorable men.

Our behavior in public must be above reproach. Our behavior in private is even

more important. It must clear the standard set by the Lord. We cannot indulge in sin, let alone try to cover our sins. We cannot gratify our pride. We cannot partake of the vanity of unrighteous ambition. We cannot exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon our wives or children or any others in any degree of unrighteousness.

If we do any of these things, the powers of heaven are withdrawn. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved. The very virtue of our priesthood is nullified. Its authority is lost.

The manner of our living, the words we speak, and our everyday behavior have a bearing upon our effectiveness as men and boys holding the priesthood.

### **Parameters for exercising the priesthood**

Our fifth article of faith states, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

Even though those in authority lay hands upon our heads and we are ordained, we may through our behavior nullify and forfeit any right to exercise this divine authority.

Section 121 goes on to say:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile" (D&C 121:41-42).

Now, my brethren, those are the parameters within which this priesthood must find expression. It is not as a cloak that we put on and take off at will. It is, when exercised in righteousness, as the very tissue of our bodies, a part of us at all times and in all circumstances.

### **Young men may have angels minister**

And so, to you young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, you have had conferred upon you that power which holds the keys to the ministering of angels. Think of that for a minute.

You cannot afford to do anything that would place a curtain between you and the ministering of angels in your behalf.

You cannot be immoral in any sense. You cannot be dishonest. You cannot cheat or lie. You cannot take the name of God in vain or use filthy language and still have the right to the ministering of angels.

I do not want you to be self-righteous. I want you to be manly, to be vibrant and strong and happy. To those who are athletically inclined, I want you to be good athletes and strive to become champions. But in doing so, you do not have to indulge in unseemly behavior or profane or filthy language.

To you young men who look forward to going on missions, please do not cloud your lives with anything that would cast a doubt upon your worthiness to go forth as servants of the living God.

### **Warning and counsel to missionaries**

You who are missionaries must not, you cannot under any circumstances compromise the divine power which you carry within you as ordained ministers of the gospel.

By way of warning and forewarning, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have set forth the following statement directed to you:

"As missionaries, you are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct, including strict observance of the law of chastity. . . .

"... You should never be alone with anyone else, male or female, adult or child [other than your assigned companion].

"Even false accusations against an innocent missionary can take many months

to investigate and may result in disruption or termination of missionary service. Protect yourselves from such accusations by never being separated from your companion, even in the homes you visit" (First Presidency statement on missionary conduct, 22 Mar. 2002).

You need not worry about these things if you will at all times observe the rules of missionary service. If you do so, you will have a wonderful experience, and you will return in honor to those you love without taint or suspicion or regret.

When you return home, never forget that you are still an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

You will become involved in the search for an eternal companion. You will wish to marry in the house of the Lord. For you there should be no alternative. Be careful, lest you destroy your eligibility to be so married. Have a wonderful time. But keep your courtship within the bounds of rigid self-discipline. The Lord has given a mandate and a promise. He has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." Then there follows the promise that "thy confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God; and . . . the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion" (D&C 121:45-46).

### Warning against wife abuse

The wife you choose will be your equal. Paul declared, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

In the marriage companionship there is neither inferiority nor superiority. The woman does not walk ahead of the man; neither does the man walk ahead of the woman. They walk side by side as a son and daughter of God on an eternal journey.

She is not your servant, your chattel, nor anything of the kind.

How tragic and utterly disgusting a phenomenon is wife abuse. Any man in

this Church who abuses his wife, who demeans her, who insults her, who exercises unrighteous dominion over her is unworthy to hold the priesthood. Though he may have been ordained, the heavens will withdraw, the Spirit of the Lord will be grieved, and it will be amen to the authority of the priesthood of that man.

Any man who engages in this practice is unworthy to hold a temple recommend.

I regret to say that I see too much of this ugly phenomenon. There are men who cuff their wives about, both verbally and physically. What a tragedy when a man demeans the mother of his children.

It is true that there are a few women who abuse their husbands. But I am not speaking to them tonight. I am speaking to the men of this Church, men upon whom the Almighty has bestowed His holy priesthood.

My brethren, if there be any within the sound of my voice who are guilty of such behavior, I call upon you to repent. Get on your knees and ask the Lord to forgive you. Pray to Him for the power to control your tongue and your heavy hand. Ask for the forgiveness of your wife and your children. President McKay was wont to say, "No other success can compensate for failure in the home" (quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116). And President Lee said, "The most important part of the Lord's work that you will do, is the work that you do within the walls of your own home" (Harold B. Lee, *Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [19 Apr. 1961], 5).

I am confident that when we stand before the bar of God, there will be little mention of how much wealth we accumulated in life or of any honors which we may have achieved. But there will be searching questions about our domestic relations. And I am convinced that only those who have walked through life with love and respect and appreciation for their



companions and children will receive from our eternal judge the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

### **Warning against abuse of the elderly**

I mention another type of abuse. It is of the elderly. I think it is not common among us. I hope it is not. I pray that it is not.

I believe our people, almost all of them, observe the ancient commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

But how tragic it is, how absolutely revolting is abuse of the elderly.

More and more we are living longer, thanks to the miracle of modern science and medical practice. But with old age comes a deterioration of physical capacity and sometimes mental capacity. I have said before that I have discovered that there is much of lead in the years that are called golden. I am so profoundly grateful for the love and solicitude of our children toward their mother and their father. How beautiful is the picture of a son or daughter going out of his or her way to assist with kindness and benevolence and love an aged parent.

### **Warning against child abuse**

Now I wish to mention another form of abuse that has been much publicized in the media. It is the sordid and evil abuse of children by adults, usually men. Such abuse is not new. There is evidence to indicate that it goes back through the ages. It is a most despicable and tragic and terrible thing. I regret to say that there has been some very limited expression of this monstrous evil among us. It is something that cannot be countenanced or tolerated. The Lord Himself said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which

believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

That is very strong language from the Prince of Peace, the Son of God.

I quote from our *Church Handbook of Instructions*:

"The Church's position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse . . . are subject to Church discipline. They should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommendation. Even if a person who abused a child sexually or physically receives Church discipline and is later restored to full fellowship or readmitted by baptism, leaders should not call the person to any position working with children or youth unless the First Presidency authorizes removal of the annotation on the person's membership record.

"In instances of abuse, the first responsibility of the Church is to help those who have been abused and to protect those who may be vulnerable to future abuse" (*Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* [1998], 157-58).

For a long period now we have worked on this problem. We have urged bishops, stake presidents, and others to reach out to victims, to comfort them, to strengthen them, to let them know that what happened was wrong, that the experience was not their fault, and that it need never happen again.

We have issued publications, established a telephone line where Church officers may receive counsel in handling cases, and offered professional help through LDS Family Services.

These acts are often criminal in their nature. They are punishable under the law. Professional counselors, including lawyers and social workers, are available on this help line to advise bishops and stake presidents concerning their obligations in these circumstances. Those in other nations should call their respective Area Presidents.

Now the work of the Church is a work of salvation. I want to emphasize that. It is a work of saving souls. We desire to help both the victim and the offender. Our hearts reach out to the victim, and we must act to assist him or her. Our hearts reach out to the offender, but we cannot tolerate the sin of which he may be guilty. Where there has been offense, there is a penalty. The process of the civil law will work its way. And the ecclesiastical process will work its way, often resulting in excommunication. This is both a delicate and a serious matter.

Nevertheless, we recognize, and must always recognize, that when the penalty has been paid and the demands of justice have been met, there will be a helpful and kindly hand reaching out to assist. There may be continuing restrictions, but there will also be kindness.

### **Safeguard and cherish the priesthood**

Now brethren, I suppose that I have sounded negative as I have spoken to you this evening. I do not wish to. But I do

wish to raise a warning voice to the priesthood of this Church throughout the world.

God has bestowed upon us a gift most precious and wonderful. It carries with it the authority to govern the Church, to administer in its affairs, to speak with authority in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to act as His dedicated servants, to bless the sick, to bless our families and many others. It serves as a guide by which to live our lives. In its fulness, its authority reaches beyond the veil of death into the eternities that lie ahead.

There is nothing else to compare with it in all this world. Safeguard it, cherish it, love it, live worthy of it.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), is my humble prayer as I leave my blessing upon you and extend my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Hope of Israel."

Elder L. Edward Brown offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 7, 2002. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference

of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise" and will now favor us with "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father." The invocation will be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, and the choir will then sing "Adam-ondi-Ahman." Following the singing, President James E. Faust,

Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Adam-ondi-Ahman."

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## President James E. Faust

### The lifeline of prayer

This morning I bear witness of the importance of prayer. Access to our Creator through our Savior is surely one of the great privileges and blessings of our lives. I have learned from countless personal experiences that great is the power of prayer. No earthly authority can separate us from direct access to our Creator. There can never be a mechanical or electronic failure when we pray. There is no limit on the number of times or how long we can pray each day. There is no quota of how many needs we wish to pray for in each prayer. We do not need to go through secretaries or make an appointment to reach the throne of grace. He is reachable at any time and any place.

When God placed man on the earth, prayer became the lifeline between mankind and God. Thus, in Adam's generation, men began "to call upon the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Through all generations since that time, prayer has filled a very important human need. Each of us has problems that we cannot solve and weaknesses that we cannot conquer without reaching out through prayer to a higher source of strength. That source is the God of heaven, to whom we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> As we pray we should think of our Father in Heaven as possessing all knowledge, understanding, love, and compassion.

### Explanation of what prayer is

What is a prayer? The Savior gave us an example in the Lord's Prayer when He prayed:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."<sup>3</sup>

First, prayer is a humble acknowledgment that God is our Father and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer.

Second, it is a sincere confession of sin and transgression and a request for forgiveness.

Third, it is recognition that we need help beyond our own ability.

Fourth, it is an opportunity to express thanksgiving and gratitude to our Creator. It is important that we frequently say, "We thank Thee . . .," "We acknowledge before Thee . . .," "We are grateful unto Thee. . ."

Fifth, it is a privilege to ask Deity for specific blessings.

### Prayer requires sincerity and effort

Many prayers are spoken while we are on our knees. The Savior knelt as He prayed to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>4</sup> But silent prayers of the heart also reach to heaven. We sing, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, / Uttered or unexpressed."<sup>5</sup> Sincere prayers come from the heart. Indeed, sincerity requires that we draw from the earnest feelings of our hearts when we pray rather than using vain repetitions or pretentious affectations such as those condemned by the Savior in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.<sup>6</sup> Our prayers then truly become the "song of the heart" and "a prayer,"<sup>7</sup> not only reaching God but touching the hearts of others as well.

Jeremiah counsels us to pray with all our heart and soul.<sup>8</sup> Enos recounted how his soul had hungered and that he had prayed all the day long.<sup>9</sup> Prayers vary in their intensity. Even the Savior "prayed more earnestly" in His hour of agony.<sup>10</sup> Some are simple expressions of appreciation and requests for a continuation of blessings on our loved ones and us. However, in times of great personal hurt or need, more may be required than mere asking. The Lord said, "You have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me."<sup>11</sup> Blessings sought through prayer sometimes require work, effort, and diligence on our part.

For example, at times fasting is appropriate as a strong evidence of our sincerity. As Alma testified to the people of Zarahemla: "I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit."<sup>12</sup> When we fast we humble our souls,<sup>13</sup> which brings us more in tune with God and His holy purposes.

### Amulek's counsel about prayer

We are privileged to pray daily for the small and great concerns in our lives. Consider the words of Amulek, who admonished us to pray in our fields over our flocks; in our houses over our households, morning, midday, and evening; to pray against the power of our enemies and the devil; to cry unto Him over our crops; to pour out our souls in secret and in the wilderness. When we are not crying directly unto God, we should let our hearts be drawn out in prayer unto Him continually.<sup>14</sup>

Amulek's counsel in our day might be the heartfelt prayer of a wife: "Bless Jason and keep him safe as he serves our country in this time of war." The prayer of a mother: "Please bless dear Jane that she will make the right choices." The prayer of a father: "Heavenly Father, bless Johnny in his missionary labors, that doors will be opened for him, and that he'll find the honest in heart." The lisping, basic prayer of a child "that I won't be naughty today" or "that everybody will have plenty to eat" or "that Mommy will get well soon"—these are sublime prayers that resound in the eternal mansions above. God knows our needs better than we can state them,<sup>15</sup> but He wants us to approach Him in faith to ask for blessings, safety, and comfort.

### Prayers on a ship during World War II

I have mentioned before an experience I had in the military in World War II. I hasten to say I was not a hero. But I did my duty. I endured and survived. I was assigned to a British liberty ship sailing from San Francisco to Suez. I was on that ship for 83 consecutive days except for a brief stop in Auckland, New Zealand. I was the only member of our faith on board. On Sundays I would go alone to the bow of the ship with my little set of servicemen's scriptures and songbook. Amid the howl-

ing of the wind, I would read the scriptures, pray, and sing all by myself. I did not try to bargain with the Lord, but I did pray fervently that if I could survive the war and go home to my wife and family, I would earnestly try to remain true to the sacred covenants I had made at baptism, to the oath and covenant of the priesthood, and to my temple vows.

As part of our tour of duty, our little cargo ship was ordered to tow a large, burned-out oil tanker into Auckland, New Zealand. The tanker had no power and was wallowing helplessly in the ocean. Although we never saw them, we knew enemy submarines were lurking near us. While we were pulling that ship, we were caught in a violent storm, which we later learned sank many vessels. Because of the load we were pulling, we did not have enough power to go into the giant waves head-on, and our ship was thrown from side to side in the trough of the pounding seas. It would creak and groan and roll from side to side, almost capsizing on every roll. Of course I prayed, as I imagine others did. In time the storm moved away from us. I am grateful for the sustaining influence and comfort my prayers gave me then and since in other times of peril.

### **Importance of family prayer**

The Savior told us, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed."<sup>16</sup> In our day, the Church urges us to have family prayer every night and every morning.

I once heard of someone who asked a little boy if he said his prayers every night.

"Yes," he replied.

"And you always say them in the morning too?"

"No," the boy replied. "I ain't scared in the daytime."<sup>17</sup>

Fear of the dark should not be our only motivation to pray, morning or night.

Family prayer is a powerful and sustaining influence. During the dark days of World War II, a 500-pound bomb fell outside the little home of Brother Patey, a young father in Liverpool, England, but the bomb did not go off. His wife had died, so he was rearing his five children alone. He gathered them together at this very anxious time for family prayer. They "all prayed . . . earnestly and when they had finished praying, the children said: 'Daddy, we will be all right. We will be all right in our home tonight.'

"And so they went to bed, imagine, with that terrific bomb lying just outside the door half submerged in the ground. If it had gone off it would have destroyed probably forty or fifty houses and killed two or three hundred people. . . .

"The next morning the . . . whole neighborhood was removed for forty-eight hours and the bomb was finally taken away. . . .

"On the way back Brother Patey asked the foreman of the A.R.P. Squad: 'Well, what did you find?'

"'Mr. Patey, we got at the bomb outside of your door and found it ready to explode at any moment. There was nothing wrong with it. We are puzzled why it did not go off.'"<sup>18</sup> Miraculous things happen when families pray together.

### **The Prophet Joseph's example of prayer**

The Savior counseled that we should pray for those who "despitefully use" us.<sup>19</sup> This principle is often overlooked in our prayers. The Prophet Joseph Smith understood it clearly. His petitions were fervent, his motives pure, and the blessings of heaven regular.

Daniel Tyler, an associate of the Prophet, recalled an important occasion:

"At the time William Smith and others rebelled against the Prophet [at Kirtland], . . . I attended a meeting . . . where 'Joseph' presided. Entering the school-

house a little before [the] meeting opened, and gazing upon the man of God, I perceived sadness in his countenance and tears trickling down his cheeks. . . . A few moments later a hymn was sung and he opened the meeting by prayer. Instead, however, of facing the audience, he turned his back and bowed upon his knees, facing the wall. This, I suppose, was done to hide his sorrow and tears.

"I had heard men and women pray—especially the former—from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent, but never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though He was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. Joseph was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, which was to a considerable extent in behalf of those who accused him of having gone astray and fallen into sin, [was] that the Lord would forgive them and open their eyes that they might see aright—that prayer, I say, to my humble mind, partook of the learning and eloquence of heaven. There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though, in case the veil were taken away, I could see the Lord standing facing His humblest of all servants I had ever seen. . . . It was the crowning . . . of all the prayers I ever heard."<sup>20</sup>

### The Savior's prayers

As the hour of the Savior's death and resurrection drew near, He offered His great Intercessory Prayer. After commending His Apostles to the Father and praying for them, He then prayed for all those who would believe on Him through their word, and He pleaded with the Father for all of us. He prayed that we could all be one as He is one with the Father and that the world would believe that He was sent by the Father.<sup>21</sup>

No more poignant prayer was ever uttered than that given by the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. He withdrew from His Apostles, knelt, and prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."<sup>22</sup> An important element of all of our prayers might well be to follow the pattern of that prayer in Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done." By this, then, we acknowledge our devotion and submission to the overriding purposes of the Lord in our lives. As He said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."<sup>23</sup> What a glorious day it will be for each of us when we pray with confidence that "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."<sup>24</sup>

I sincerely hope that as we say our daily prayers we remember to ask the Lord's blessings to continue to abide with our beloved leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley. No one fully knows, not even his counselors, how heavy his burdens are and how great his responsibility is. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Genesis 4:26.
2. See 2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 20:31.
3. Matthew 6:9–13.
4. See Luke 22:41.
5. *Hymns*, no. 145.
6. See Luke 18:10–14.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
8. See Jeremiah 29:13.
9. See Enos 1:4.
10. Luke 22:44.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:7.
12. Alma 5:46.
13. See Psalm 35:13.
14. See Alma 34:20–27.
15. See Matthew 6:8.
16. 3 Nephi 18:21.
17. Adapted from Tal D. Bonham, *The Treasury of Clean Church Jokes*, as quoted in Cal and Rose Samra, eds., *Holy Humor* (1997), 23.

18. Andre K. Anastasiou, in Conference Report, Oct. 1946, 26.
19. Matthew 5:44.
20. *Juvenile Instructor*, Feb. 1892, 127–28.
21. See John 17.
22. Luke 22:42.
23. John 15:7.
24. 1 John 5:14.

### President Hinckley

We will now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### The prodigal son

Among the most memorable parables the Savior ever told is the story of a foolish younger brother who went to his father, asked for his portion of the estate, and left home to squander his inheritance, the scripture says, in “riotous living.”<sup>1</sup> His money and his friends disappeared sooner than he thought possible—they always do—and a day of terrible reckoning came thereafter—it always does. In the downward course of all this he became a keeper of pigs, one so hungry, so stripped of sustenance and dignity that he “would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.” But even that consolation was not available to him.

Then the scripture says encouragingly, “He came to himself.” He determined to find his way home, hoping to be accepted at least as a servant in his father’s household. The tender image of this boy’s anxious, faithful father running to meet him and showering him with kisses is one of the most moving and compassionate scenes in all of holy writ. It tells every child of God, wayward or otherwise, how much God wants us back in the protection of His arms.

### The other prodigal

But being caught up in this younger son’s story, we can miss, if we are not careful, the account of an elder son, for the opening line of the Savior’s account reads, “A certain man had *two* sons”—and He

might have added, “both of whom were lost and both of whom needed to come home.”

The younger son has returned, and a robe has been placed on his shoulders and a ring on his finger when the older son comes on the scene. He has been dutifully, loyally working in the field, and now he is returning. The language of parallel journeys home, though from very different locations, is central to this story.

As he approaches the house, he hears the sounds of music and laughter.

“And he called one of the servants [note that he has servants], and asked what these things meant.

“And [the servant] said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

“And [the older brother] was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”

You know the conversation they then had. Surely, for this father, the pain over a wayward child who had run from home and wallowed with swine is now compounded with the realization that this older, wiser brother, the younger boy’s childhood hero as older brothers always are, is angry that his brother has come home.

No, I correct myself. This son is not so much angry that the other has come home as he is angry that his parents are so happy about it. Feeling unappreciated and perhaps more than a little self-pity,

this dutiful son—and he is *wonderfully* dutiful—forgets for a moment that he has never had to know filth or despair, fear or self-loathing. He forgets for a moment that every calf on the ranch is already his and so are all the robes in the closet and every ring in the drawer. He forgets for a moment that his faithfulness has been and always will be rewarded.

No, he who has virtually everything, and who has in his hardworking, wonderful way earned it, lacks the one thing that might make him the complete man of the Lord he nearly is. He has yet to come to the compassion and mercy, the charitable breadth of vision to see that *this is not a rival returning*. It is his brother. As his father pled with him to see, it is one who was dead and now is alive. It is one who was lost and now is found.

### Feeling diminished by others' success

Certainly this younger brother had been a prisoner—a prisoner of sin, stupidity, and a pigsty. But the older brother lives in some confinement too. He has, as yet, been unable to break out of the prison of himself. He is haunted by the green-eyed monster of jealousy.<sup>2</sup> He feels taken for granted by his father and disenfranchised by his brother, when neither is the case. He has fallen victim to a fictional affront. As such he is like Tantalus of Greek mythology—he is up to his chin in water, but he remains thirsty nevertheless. One who has heretofore presumably been very happy with his life and content with his good fortune suddenly feels very unhappy simply because another has had some good fortune as well.

Who is it that whispers so subtly in our ear that a gift given to another somehow diminishes the blessings we have received? Who makes us feel that if God is smiling on another, then He surely must somehow be frowning on us? You and I both know who does this—it is the father of all lies.<sup>3</sup> It is Lucifer, our common enemy, whose cry down through the corri-

dors of time is always and to everyone, "Give me thine honor."<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that envy is the one sin to which no one readily confesses, but just how widespread that tendency can be is suggested in the old Danish proverb, "If envy were a fever, all the world would be ill." The parson in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* laments it because it is so far-reaching—it can resent anything, including any virtue and talent, and it can be offended by everything, including every goodness and joy.<sup>5</sup> As others seem to grow larger in our sight, we think we must therefore be smaller. So, unfortunately, we occasionally act that way.

### God doesn't measure us against others

How does this happen, especially when we wish so much that it would not? I think one of the reasons is that every day we see allurements of one kind or another that tell us what we have is not enough. Someone or something is forever telling us we need to be more handsome or more wealthy, more applauded or more admired than we see ourselves as being. We are told we haven't collected enough possessions or gone to enough fun places. We are bombarded with the message that on the *world's* scale of things we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.<sup>6</sup> Some days it is as if we have been locked in a cubicle of a great and spacious building where the only thing on the TV is a never-ending soap opera entitled *Vain Imaginations*.<sup>7</sup>

But God does not work this way. The father in this story does not tantalize his children. He does not mercilessly measure them against their neighbors. He doesn't even compare them with each other. His gestures of compassion toward one do not require a withdrawal or denial of love for the other. He is divinely generous to both of these sons. Toward both of his children he extends charity. I believe God is with us the way my precious wife, Pat, is with my singing. She is a gifted musician, some-



thing of a musical genius, but I couldn't capture a musical note with Velcro. And yet I know she loves me in a very special way when I try to sing. I know that because I can see it in her eyes. They are the eyes of love.

One observer has written: "In a world that constantly compares people, ranking them as more or less intelligent, more or less attractive, more or less successful, it is not easy to really believe in a [divine] love that does not do the same. When I hear someone praised," he says, "it is hard not to think of myself as less praiseworthy; when I read about the goodness and kindness of other people, it is hard not to wonder whether I myself am as good and kind as they; and when I see trophies, rewards, and prizes being handed out to special people, I cannot avoid asking myself why that didn't happen to me."<sup>8</sup>

If this inclination is left unresisted, we can see how it, so embellished by the world, will ultimately bring a resentful, demeaning view of God and a terribly destructive view of ourselves. Most "thou shalt not" commandments are meant to keep us from hurting others, but I am convinced the commandment not to covet is meant to keep us from hurting ourselves.

### Overcoming the tendency to envy and covet

How can we overcome such a tendency so common in almost everyone? For one thing, we can do as these two sons did and start making our way back to the Father. We should do so with as much haste and humility as we can summon. Along the way we can count our many blessings and we can applaud the accomplishments of others. Best of all, we can serve others, the finest exercise for the heart ever prescribed. But finally these will not be enough. When we are lost, we can "come to ourselves," but we may not always be able to "find ourselves," and, worlds without end, we cannot "save ourselves." Only the Father and His Only Begotten Son can do that. Salvation is in Them only. So

we pray that They will help us, that They will "come out" to meet and embrace us and bring us into the feast They have prepared.

They will do this! The scriptures are replete with the promise that God's grace is sufficient.<sup>9</sup> This is one arena where no one has to claw or compete. Nephi declares that the Lord "loveth the [whole] world" and has given salvation freely.

"Hath [he] commanded *any* that they should *not* partake of his goodness?" Nephi asks. No! "All . . . are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden [at his hand]."

"Come unto me all ye ends of the earth," He pleads, and buy milk without money and honey without price.<sup>10</sup> *All are privileged, the one like unto the other.* Walk peacefully. Walk confidently. Walk without fear and without envy. Be reassured of Heavenly Father's abundance to you always.

As we do this, we can help others, calling down blessings on them even as they make supplication for us. We can cheer every talent and ability, wherever it is bestowed, thus making life here more nearly what it will be like in heaven.

### "The greatest of these is charity"

It will help us always to remember Paul's succinct prioritizing of virtues—"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."<sup>11</sup> He reminds us we are *all* of the body of Christ, and that *all* members, whether comely or feeble, are adored, essential, and important. We feel the depth of his plea that there be "no schism in the body; but that the members . . . have the same care one for another. And [when] one member suffer[s], all the members suffer with it; or [when] one member [is] honoured, all the members rejoice."<sup>12</sup> That incomparable counsel helps us remember that the word *generosity* has the same derivation as the word *genealogy*, both coming from the Latin *genus*, meaning of the same birth or

kind, the same family or gender.<sup>13</sup> We will always find it easier to be generous when we remember that this person being favored is truly one of our own.

### **The race is against sin, not each other**

Brothers and sisters, I testify that no one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. He doesn't measure our talents or our looks; He doesn't measure our professions or our possessions. He cheers on *every* runner, calling out that the race is against sin, *not* against each other. I know that if we will be faithful, there is a perfectly tailored robe of righteousness ready and waiting for *everyone*,<sup>14</sup> "robes . . . made . . . white in the blood of the Lamb."<sup>15</sup> May we encourage each other in our effort to win that prize is my earnest prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Luke 15:11–32; italics added.
2. See William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 3, scene 2, line 110.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:18.
4. Moses 4:1.
5. See Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Persones Tale," in *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (1929), 534–35.
6. See Daniel 5:27 (double entendre doubly intended).
7. See 1 Nephi 12:18.
8. Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992), 103.
9. See Ether 12:26; Moroni 10:32; Doctrine and Covenants 17:8.
10. See 2 Nephi 26:24–28; italics added.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
12. See 1 Corinthians 12:25–26.
13. I am indebted to Henri Nouwen for pointing out this etymological link; see *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 131–32.
14. See Isaiah 61:10; 2 Nephi 4:33; 9:14.
15. Revelation 7:14.

## **Bishop Richard C. Edgley**

### **Comforting those with heavy burdens**

Some time ago I received an anonymous letter from a heartbroken mother expressing her suffering and pain for a son who had committed grievous transgressions, badly hurting innocent loved ones.

Since her anonymous letter to me, and feeling her despair, I have had a great desire to express my love to her and others in similar circumstances in an attempt to give some comfort and hope to those who are anonymously and privately carrying heavy burdens, often known only to them and a loving Father in Heaven.

I know, Sister Anonymous, that what I say will only be a reminder, but still another testimony to what you already know.

### **God's plan puts trials in perspective**

When the Prophet Joseph Smith, suffering what had to be one of his darkest moments while confined to the dungeon called Liberty Jail, cried out, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1), the Lord comforted him with these words: "Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7). How difficult it is and painfully foreign it may seem to find the good out of our personal tragedy and suffering. How inconsistent the words "for thy good" may seem.

However, an understanding of Christ's plan of redemption helps put it all into perspective. In our preexistent state our

Father in Heaven presented His plan for mortality, which Alma described as the "plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). I believe we all understood that by coming to earth, we would be exposed to all of the experiences of earth life, including the not-so-pleasant trials of pain, suffering, hopelessness, sin, and death. There would be opposition and adversity.

If that was all we knew about the plan, I doubt if any of us would have embraced it, rejoicing, "That's what I have always wanted—pain, suffering, hopelessness, sin, and death." But it all came into focus, and it became acceptable, even desirable, when an Elder Brother stepped forward and offered that He would go down and make it all right. Out of pain and suffering He would bring peace. Out of hopelessness He would bring hope. Out of transgression He would bring repentance and forgiveness. Out of death He would bring the resurrection of lives. And with that explanation and most generous offer, each and every one of us concluded, "I can do that. That is a risk worth taking." And so we chose.

The unfathomable extent of Christ's mercy and His Atonement are explained by Amulek in the 34th chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon. Amulek explains that there must be a "great and last sacrifice" (Alma 34:10). And then he clarifies that this cannot be a sacrifice of beast or fowl similar to those already known to man. It had to be a sacrifice of a God—Jesus Christ. For this must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. And so the sacrifice was made, and by faith we find ourselves traveling this journey we call mortality. As a result, our hearts are saddened with the unexplained loss of a child or the supposed untimely illness or disability of a loved one. Single parents struggle to provide financial security and the reassuring influences of the gospel in their home. And maybe most difficult of all is the pain experienced of helplessly watching the

suffering of a loved one because of sin and transgression.

### **Have the same faith as when we first chose**

There are few of us, if any, who don't walk the refiner's fire of adversity and despair, sometimes known to others but for many quietly hidden and privately endured. Most of the heartache, pain, and suffering we would not choose today. But we did choose. We chose when we could see the complete plan. We chose when we had a clear vision of the Savior's rescue of us. And if our faith and understanding were as clear today as it was when we first made that choice, I believe we would choose again.

Therefore, perhaps the challenge is to have the kind of faith during the hard times that we exercised when we first chose; the kind of faith that turns questioning and even anger into acknowledging the power, blessings, and hope that can come only from Him who is the source of all power, blessings, and hope; the kind of faith that brings the knowledge and assurances that all that we experience is part of the gospel plan and that for the righteous, all that appears wrong will eventually be made right. The peace and understanding to endure with dignity and clarity of purpose can be the sweet reward. This kind of faith can help us to see the good, even when life's path seems to be layered only with thorns, thistles, and craggy rocks.

### **Response to trials manifests works of God**

When Jesus and His disciples passed a man who was blind since his birth, His disciples queried:

"Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2–3).

I do not believe our Father in Heaven causes the tragedies and heartbreak in our lives. But as the “works of God” were made manifest in the healing of a blind man, so also the way we face our personal trials may manifest the “works of God.”

From our sorrow we might seek out the sweetness and the good that are often associated with and peculiar to our challenge. We can seek out those memorable moments that are frequently hidden by the pain and agony. We can find peace in extending ourselves to others, using our own experiences to provide hope and comfort. And we can always remember with great solemnity and gratitude Him who suffered most to make it all right for us. And by so doing we can be strengthened to bear our burdens in peace. And then the “works of God” might be manifest.

### Atonement gives hope to the suffering

In speaking of Christ’s Atonement, I like the dictionary’s definitions of *infinite* and *eternal* because I believe they explain exactly what God meant. *Infinite*: “Having no boundaries or limits.” And the definition of *eternal*: “Being without beginning or end” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. [2000], “infinite,” “eternal,” 898, 611).

Do you see, Sister Anonymous? That means the Atonement was for you in your suffering. It is personal, as He is intimately acquainted with your trials and sorrows, for He has already suffered them. It means there can always be a new beginning for every one of us—even a son who has committed serious transgressions. It means that as we move ahead through life’s trials and tribulations, shackled with feelings of hopelessness, we focus not on where we have been but where we are going. We focus not on what has been but on what can be.

### “All these things . . . shall be for thy good”

Admittedly, most of us would rather learn the hard lessons of life in the secure comfort of a Sunday School class or in the radiant warmth of a fireplace during a family home evening. But may I point out, it was from the cold, dark corners of Liberty Jail that came some of the most beautiful, comforting scriptures given to man, concluding with the words, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” Likewise, out of our adversity we might seek our greatest triumphs, and the day may well come that from our challenges we will understand the familiar words “for thy good.”

From the scriptures we learn that when the Savior went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pay the ultimate price for our transgressions and our suffering, He bled from every pore (see D&C 19). I believe, Sister Anonymous, that in His excruciating pain, He bled a drop of blood for you. He bled a drop for your son, and He bled a drop for me.

I believe in prayer. I believe in faith. I believe in repentance. I believe in the power of the Redemption. And yes, Sister Anonymous, I believe in you. And so does a loving Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Sister Gayle M. Clegg, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us. She will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Where Can I Turn for Peace?”

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The choir and congregation sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## Sister Gayle M. Clegg

### A six-year-old prays and is comforted

When I was a young mother, my husband and I found ourselves taking our five children under the age of eight to live in South America. Although none of us spoke the language, my six-year-old had the greatest difficulty learning a new language. We decided to put her in preschool with four-year-olds, even though she should be starting first grade. Our hope was that interaction with younger children would be less intimidating to her and might facilitate her ability to communicate in Portuguese.

But the reality for my daughter was that she was as foreign to the children as they were to her. Each day was a struggle, and I anguished for her every morning as I walked her to school and then waited for her to return, dejected, at the end of the day.

One day some children were particularly unkind to her. A few even threw rocks and bullied her, laughing rudely at recess. She was scared and hurt and decided she couldn't go back into class. Sitting alone while the playground emptied, she remembered what we had taught her about loneliness. She remembered that Heavenly Father is always close to His children and she could speak to Him at any time, not just before bedtime. He would understand the language of her heart. In a corner of the playground, she bowed her head and said a prayer. She didn't know what to pray for, so she asked that her father and mother could be with her to protect her. While she was returning to the classroom, a Primary song came into her mind:

I often go walking in meadows of  
clover,  
And I gather armfuls of blossoms of  
blue.  
I gather the blossoms the whole  
meadow over;

Dear mother, all flowers remind me  
of you.

[“I Often Go Walking,” *Children’s Songbook*, 202]

As she opened her eyes, she noticed one little flower growing between the cracks of the cement. She picked it up and put it into her pocket. Her troubles with the other children did not disappear, but she walked back into the school feeling that her parents were with her.

### Universal language of an answered prayer

Each of us, like my six-year-old daughter, has felt lost or alienated in a foreign land. Perhaps your foreign land was learning the language of algebra or chemistry. Maybe you thought you had come to a foreign shore when you joined the Church, even if you joined in your native country. Put yourself in the place of a new convert. Words like *calling*, *Presiding Bishopric*, and even *General Authority* require a glossary entry.

What about our missionaries who have understood and responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit that the Church is true, but then have had the challenge of learning both the gospel and a foreign language at the same time? I marvel to think of their courage.

Our lives are filled with many instances of the frustration of learning a foreign tongue. Nevertheless, there is one language that is universal. “Dear mother, all flowers remind me of you” spoke to the heart of a young girl. A Primary song and a wildflower were the familiar language of an answered prayer.

### Jesus blesses and angels encircle children

After Jesus had been teaching for some time at the temple in Bountiful, He perceived the people did not understand all the words He spoke. He asked them to

go to their homes and ponder and pray with their families and prepare for Him to come the next day.

But when "he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, [he] beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. . . .

"He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them. . . .

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked . . . they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, . . . and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:5, 21, 23-24).

To "encircle" with the fire of our testimony is a language all of us must learn to speak and understand.

### Report card affirms a boy's strengths

The first lesson taught to every child in the world attending Primary is "I Am a Child of God." Children as young as 18 months might be pointing to themselves, acting out this finger play:

Heavenly Father knows me

And what I like to do.

He knows my name and where I live.

I know He loves me, too.

["Heavenly Father Knows Me," in *Primary 1: I Am a Child of God* (1994), 2]

When I was teaching sixth grade a number of years ago, a 14-year-old boy dressed in gang attire was marched into my classroom. He was two years older and four years larger than the other 30 students. Quickly I discovered Brian did not read, had not attended school with any regularity, and had lived with a variety of guardians in a number of cities.

Report card time was coming up, and I came to school on my day off to finish recording the children's work and mark

the report cards. As I entered the classroom to gather up the records, I could see Brian had the class in an upheaval. I suggested to my grateful co-teacher that I would take Brian with me. With some first-grade primers filled with pictures, we headed to the library, talking a little football on the way.

We settled ourselves at a table where I was marking report cards. I asked him if he had ever had a report card.

He shook his head and said, "No." I asked if he would like a report card.

He looked directly at me. "Only if it said I was a good boy."

I made out a special card for him, emphasizing his strengths. I wrote his full name on it and his ability to include everyone and make people laugh. I specifically mentioned his love of sports. It was not a traditional report card but seemed to please him. Not too long after that, Brian disappeared from our school, and the last I heard of him, he was living in another state. I hoped he had my report card saying that he was a good boy in his pocket, wherever he was.

Someday we will all be given final report cards. Maybe we will be graded on how well we have reported each other's goodness. Every child needs regular reports affirming, "You are known. You are valued. You have potential. You are good."

### A wagon driver helps a pioneer girl

I love the stories of pioneer children. We always hear about their parents walking to the Salt Lake Valley. But in the words of a Primary song:

Whenever I think about pioneers,

I think of brave women and men.

I like to remember that children came, too;

I would like to have been a child then.

["Whenever I Think about Pioneers," *Children's Songbook*, 222]

Susan Madsen tells the story of Agnes Caldwell in the Willie handcart company. They were caught in heavy storms and suffered terrible hunger and cold. Relief wagons came to deliver food and blankets, but there were not enough wagons to carry all the people. Even after rescue, the majority of the people still had to trudge on many more miles to the safety of the valley.

Little nine-year-old Agnes was too weary to walk any farther. The driver took notice of her determination to keep up with the wagon and asked if she would like a ride. She tells in her own words what happened next:

"At this he reached over, taking my hand, clucking to his horses to make me run, with legs that . . . could run no farther. On we went, to what to me seemed miles. What went through my head at that time was that he was the meanest man that ever lived or that I had ever heard of. . . . Just at what seemed the breaking point, he stopped [and pulled me into the wagon]. Taking a blanket, he wrapped me up . . . , warm and comfortable. Here I had time to change my mind, as I surely did, knowing full well by doing this he saved me from freezing when taken into the wagon" (in *I Walked to Zion* [1994], 59).

The driver of that relief wagon made the little girl run as far and as fast as she could to push blood back into her frozen feet and legs. He saved her legs, possibly her life, by letting her help herself.

Our children today have journeys as terrible and taxing as the westward migration. They are faced with every calamity along the trail. We need to build their backs to bear their burdens and build

their legs for dancing under starry skies. Sometimes we must run to keep up with our children's faith.

### **Speak the language of love to children**

Another time in 3 Nephi when Christ was blessing the disciples, "his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them" (3 Nephi 19:25).

A smiling countenance says you are good. Children are trying to be like Jesus. They want to be like someone who smiles. They want to be with someone who responds to them joyfully.

President Hinckley has said: "Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

This should be the language of gospel instruction to our children. Whatever your mother tongue, learn to teach and speak in the language of heartfelt prayers and joyful testimony so that angels, earthly and heavenly, can encircle and minister to us. We need gospel mentors who speak the language of praise and friendship. We need to give regular spiritual report cards that affirm our goodness in each other's eyes. It is a blessing to allow children to run as far as they can under their own power, to build strength for their own testimonies, and we should smile upon them and wrap them in the blanket of our affection throughout the great journey in the universal language of love.

I give thanks for the great blessing to "behold [our] little ones." I like to remember that children come too, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Robert D. Hales**

### **Out of darkness into His marvelous light**

Isaiah, a great prophet of the Old Testament, prophesied, "And it shall come to

pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it."<sup>1</sup> Referring to the

citizens of those nations, President John Taylor said, "They will come, saying, we do not know anything of the principles of your religion, but we perceive that you are an honest community; you administer justice and righteousness."<sup>2</sup>

As Salt Lake City has hosted the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have seen a partial fulfillment of many prophecies. The nations of the earth and many of their leaders have come. They have seen us serving alongside our friends in this community and our neighbors of other faiths. They have seen the light in our eyes and felt the clasp of our hands. "The mountain of the house of the Lord,"<sup>3</sup> with its brightly lit spires, has been witnessed by 3.5 billion people around the world. The nations have heard the glorious sound of this Tabernacle Choir. Hundreds of thousands have attended a live production in this auditorium entitled *The Light of the World: A Celebration of Life—Spirit of Man, Glory of God*, which included a declaration of our belief in Jesus Christ. I humbly express gratitude that by these and many other means, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to be brought "forth out of obscurity and out of darkness."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the Olympics there have been many expressions of light, such as the Olympic flame; the child of light; and the theme, "Light the Fire Within."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most memorable light was found in the eyes of the competitors themselves. But what moved us most was not the competition or the spectacle. It was the deeper truth these things symbolized—the source of the light within each of us.

This morning I speak to those who asked, "What was that light I saw and felt? Where did it come from? How can I have it for myself and my loved ones always?"

### Light of Christ and gift of the Holy Ghost

Each of us brings a light to the earth—the Light of Christ. "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into

the world,"<sup>6</sup> the Savior said. Through Him comes "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things."<sup>7</sup>

This light, which "inviteth and enticeth to do good continually,"<sup>8</sup> is "given to every man, that he may know good from evil."<sup>9</sup>

By using the Light of Christ to discern and choose what is right, we can be led to an even greater light: the gift of the Holy Ghost. I testify that through the restoration of the gospel and the holy priesthood of God, disciples of Jesus Christ in these latter days have the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is bestowed by the laying on of hands by those who have the authority of the priesthood, and it is received by those who have followed the principles of faith and repentance and have received the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, a personage of spirit.<sup>10</sup> He is the Comforter, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of Promise. He testifies of Jesus Christ, His work, and the work of His servants upon the earth. He acts as a cleansing agent to purify and sanctify us from sin.<sup>11</sup> He comforts us and brings peace to our souls. The right to His constant companionship is among the greatest gifts we can receive in mortality, for by the light of His promptings and His cleansing power we can be led back into the presence of God.<sup>12</sup>

### Light dispels darkness

As children, we learned how to keep darkness away by turning on a light. Sometimes when our parents went away for the evening, we would turn on every light in the house! We understood the physical law that is also a spiritual law: light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Light dispels darkness. When light is present, darkness is vanquished and must depart. More importantly, darkness cannot conquer light unless the light is dimin-



ished or departs. When the spiritual light of the Holy Ghost is present, the darkness of Satan departs.

Beloved young men and young women of the Church, we are engaged in a battle between the forces of light and darkness. If it were not for the Light of Jesus Christ and His gospel, we would be doomed to the destruction of darkness. But the Savior said, "I am come a light into the world."<sup>13</sup> "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>14</sup>

The Lord is our light and, literally, our salvation.<sup>15</sup> Like the sacred fire that encircled the children in 3 Nephi,<sup>16</sup> His light will form a protective shield between you and the darkness of the adversary as you live worthy of it. You need that light. We need that light. Carefully study the scriptures and *For the Strength of Youth* and listen to the teachings of your parents and leaders. Then, by obedience to wise counsel, learn to claim the protective light of the gospel as your own.

You may wonder, "How can I do that?" There is only one way: you must learn to generate that light each day by believing on Jesus Christ and following His commandments.

### Generating the light by daily pedaling

This past winter I had the opportunity to learn more about my lungs. I became very aware that we cannot store oxygen. We cannot save the air we need to breathe, no matter how hard we try. Moment by moment, breath by breath, our lives are granted to us and are renewed. So it is with spiritual light. It must be renewed in us on a regular basis. We must generate it day by day, thought by thought, and with daily righteous action if we are to keep the darkness of the adversary away.

When I was a boy, I used to ride my bicycle home from basketball practice at night. I would connect a small pear-shaped generator to my bicycle tire. Then as I pedaled, the tire would turn a tiny rotor,

which produced electricity and emitted a single, welcome beam of light. It was a simple but effective mechanism. But I had to pedal to make it work! I learned quickly that if I stopped pedaling my bicycle, the light would go out. I also learned that when I was "anxiously engaged"<sup>17</sup> in pedaling, the light would become brighter and the darkness in front of me would be dispelled.

The generation of spiritual light comes from daily spiritual pedaling. It comes from praying, studying the scriptures, fasting, and serving—from living the gospel and obeying the commandments. "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light,"<sup>18</sup> said the Lord, "and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, that perfect day will be when we will stand in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people ask, "Why do I have to go to sacrament meeting? Why do I have to live the Word of Wisdom, pay tithing? Why can't I have one foot in Babylon?" May I tell you why? Because spiritual pedaling takes both feet! Unless you are fully engaged in living the gospel—living it with all of your "heart, might, mind and strength"<sup>20</sup>—you cannot generate enough spiritual light to push back the darkness.

And in this world the darkness is never far away. In fact, it is always just around the corner, waiting for an opportunity to come in. "If thou doest not well," the Lord said, "sin lieth at the door."<sup>21</sup>

It is as predictable as any physical law: if we let the light of the Spirit flicker or fade by failing to keep the commandments or by not partaking of the sacrament or praying or studying the scriptures, the darkness of the adversary will surely come in. "That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience."<sup>22</sup>

In the scriptures we read that some individuals “grope in the dark without light” and “stagger like a drunken man.”<sup>23</sup> Stumbling along, we may become accustomed to the dimness of our surroundings and forget how glorious it is to walk in the light.

### **The path to the light**

There is a way out of the “mists of darkness”<sup>24</sup> and onto the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. The Lord told Isaiah, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them.”<sup>25</sup>

The prophet Nephi outlined the path: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>26</sup>

The covenant we make at baptism and renew as we partake of the sacrament—to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments—includes the promise that we will always have His Spirit, that we will always have that light to be with us.<sup>27</sup> The emblems of the Savior’s Atonement remind us that we need not stumble in darkness. We can have His light with us always.

### **“Let your light so shine”**

Growing up on Long Island, in New York, I understood how vital light was to those traveling in the darkness on the open sea. How dangerous is a fallen light-house! How devastating is a lighthouse whose light has failed!

We who have the gift of the Holy Ghost must be true to its promptings so we can be a light to others.

“Let your light so shine before men,” said the Lord, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>28</sup>

We never know who may be depending on us. And, as the Savior said, we “know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.”<sup>29</sup>

### **A special witness of His light**

Now, my brothers and sisters, in this, the last great conflict between light and darkness, I am grateful for the opportunity to “endure hardness, as a [disciple] of Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup> With Paul, I declare, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”<sup>31</sup> I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ “is the light and the life of the world; yea, [the] light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”<sup>32</sup>

He is the Light of Bethlehem, born of Mary, His mortal mother, and His Father, Almighty God.

He is the Light who was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, upon whom the Holy Ghost was manifest in the spirit like a dove descending.

He is the Light in whom His Father was well pleased.

He is the Light at the head of the ancient Church, organized with Twelve Apostles, prophets, and Seventies.

He is the Light of the Atonement, fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation.

He is the Light of the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord with a glorified body of flesh and bone, who broke the bands of

death and gained an everlasting victory over the grave.

He is the Light that ascended into heaven before the eyes of His disciples, with a promise that in like manner He would come again.

He is the Light that appeared with His Father and restored, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the same Church He established during His ministry on earth.

He is the Light that leads and guides this Church today through revelation to a prophet, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles.

He is *my* Light, *my* Redeemer, *my* Savior—and yours.

I know that God lives. I know that He hath called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light.”<sup>33</sup> I pray that the light of His restored gospel will continue to spread throughout the world so that all may have the opportunity to hear and choose, and that His Church will “come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun,” so that His “glory may fill the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:2.
2. John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 27 Jan. 1880, 1.
3. Micah 4:1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
5. <sup>TM</sup>Salt Lake Olympic Committee.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:13.
8. Moroni 7:13.
9. Moroni 7:16.

10. See Articles of Faith 1:1; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.

11. See Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704.

12. See John 14:16–18, 26–27.

13. John 12:46.

14. John 8:12.

15. See Psalm 27:1.

16. See 3 Nephi 17:24.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.

18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:28.

19. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.

21. Genesis 4:7.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 93:39.

23. Job 12:25.

24. 1 Nephi 12:17.

25. Isaiah 42:16.

26. 2 Nephi 31:13.

27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77, 79.

28. Matthew 5:15–16.

29. 3 Nephi 18:32.

30. 2 Timothy 2:3.

31. Romans 13:12.

32. Mosiah 16:9.

33. 1 Peter 2:9.

34. Doctrine and Covenants 109:73–74.

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The choir sang “Where Can I Turn for Peace?”

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## President Hinckley

We express appreciation to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A call for greater faith

From where we speak, it is a beautiful April Sabbath morning. The tulips are well out of the ground and will soon be bursting into flowering beauty. In the

winter of our doubt there came the hope of spring. We knew it would come. Such was our faith, based on the experiences of earlier years.

And so it is with matters of the spirit and soul. As each man or woman walks

the way of life, there come dark seasons of doubt, of discouragement, of disillusionment. In such circumstances, a few see ahead by the light of faith, but many stumble along in the darkness and even become lost.

My call to you this morning is a call to faith, that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), as Paul described it.

### **Faith lights the way in our eternal journey**

In the process of conversion, the investigator of the Church hears a little. He may read a little. He does not, he cannot comprehend the wonder of it all. But if he is earnest in his search, if he is willing to get on his knees and pray about it, the Spirit touches his heart, perhaps ever so lightly. It points him in the right direction. He sees a little of what he has never seen before. And with faith, whether it be recognized or not, he takes a few guarded steps. Then another, brighter vista opens before him.

Long ago I worked for one of our railroads whose tracks threaded the passes through these western mountains. I frequently rode the trains. It was in the days when there were steam locomotives. Those great monsters of the rails were huge and fast and dangerous. I often wondered how the engineer dared the long journey through the night. Then I came to realize that it was not one long journey, but rather a constant continuation of a short journey. The engine had a powerful headlight that made bright the way for a distance of 400 or 500 yards. The engineer saw only that distance, and that was enough, because it was constantly before him all through the night into the dawn of the new day.

The Lord has spoken of this process. He said:

"That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light grow-

eth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:23-24).

And so it is with our eternal journey. We take one step at a time. In doing so we reach toward the unknown, but faith lights the way. If we will cultivate that faith, we shall never walk in darkness.

### **A man's faith grows step by step**

Let me tell you of a man I know. I will not mention his name lest he feel embarrassed. His wife felt there was something missing in their lives. She spoke with a relative one day who was a member of the Church. The relative suggested that she call the missionaries. She did so. But the husband was rude to them and told them not to come again.

Months passed. One day another missionary, finding the record of this visit, decided that he and his companion would try again. He was a tall elder from California who carried a big smile on his face.

They knocked on the door; the man answered. Could they come in for a few minutes? they asked. He consented.

The missionary said, in effect, "I wonder if you know how to pray." The man answered that he knew the Lord's Prayer. The missionary said, "That is good, but let me tell you how to give a personal prayer." He went on to explain that we get on our knees in an attitude of humility before the God of heaven. The man did so. The missionary then went on to say, "We address God as our Father in Heaven. We then thank Him for His blessings, such as our health, our friends, our food. We then ask for His blessings. We express our innermost hopes and desires. We ask Him to bless those in need. We do it all in the name of His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, concluding with 'amen.'"

It was a pleasant experience for the man. He had gleaned a little light and understanding, a touch of faith. He was ready to try another step.

Line upon line, the missionaries patiently taught him. He responded as his

faith grew into a dim light of understanding. Friends from his branch gathered around to reassure him and answer his questions. The men played tennis with him, and he and his family were invited to their homes for dinner.

He was baptized, and that was a giant step of faith. The branch president asked him to be a Scoutmaster to four boys. That led to other responsibilities, and the light of faith strengthened in his life with each new opportunity and experience.

That has continued. Today he stands as a capable and loved stake president, a leader of great wisdom and understanding, and, above all, a man of great faith.

The challenge which faces every member of this Church is to take the next step, to accept that responsibility to which he is called, even though he does not feel equal to it, and to do so in faith with the full expectation that the Lord will light the way before him.

### **A woman pays her tithing faithfully**

Let me give you a story of a woman in São Paulo, Brazil. She worked while going to school to provide for her family. I use her own words in telling this story. She says:

"The university in which I studied had a regulation that prohibited the students that were in debt from taking tests. For this reason, when I received my salary I would first separate the money for tithing and offerings, and the remainder was allotted for the payment of the school and other expenses.

"I remember a time when I . . . faced serious financial difficulties. It was a Thursday when I received my salary. When I figured the monthly budget, I noticed that there wouldn't be enough to pay [both] my tithing and my university. I would have to choose between them. The bimonthly tests would start the following week, and if I didn't take them I could lose the school year. I felt great agony. . . . My heart ached.

I had a painful decision before me, and I didn't know what to decide. I pondered between the two choices: to pay tithing or to risk the possibility of not obtaining the necessary credits to be approved in school.

"This feeling consumed my soul and remained with me up to Saturday. It was then that I remembered that when I was baptized I had agreed to live the law of tithing. I had taken upon myself an obligation, not with the missionaries, but with my Heavenly Father. At that moment the anguish started to disappear, giving place to a pleasant sensation of tranquility and determination. . . .

"That night when I prayed, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my indecision. On Sunday, before the beginning of sacrament meeting, I contacted the bishop, and with great pleasure I paid my tithing and offerings. That was a special day. I felt happy and peaceful within myself and with Heavenly Father.

"The next day I was in my office; I tried to find a way to be able to take the tests that would begin on Wednesday. The more I thought, the further I felt from a solution. At that time I worked in an attorney's office, and my employer was the most strict and austere person I had ever met.

"The working period was ending when my employer approached and gave the last orders of the day. When he had done so, with his briefcase in his hand he bid farewell. . . . Suddenly he halted, and looking at me he asked, 'How is your college?' I was surprised, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The only thing I could answer with a trembling voice was, 'Everything is all right!' He looked thoughtfully at me and bid farewell again. . . .

"Suddenly the secretary entered the room, saying that I was a very fortunate person! When I asked her why, she simply answered: 'The employer has just said that from today on the company is going to pay fully for your college and your books. Before you leave, stop at my desk

and inform me of the costs so that tomorrow I can give you the check.'

"After she left, crying and feeling very humble, I knelt exactly where I was and thanked the Lord for His generosity. I . . . said to Heavenly Father that He didn't have to bless me so much. I only needed the cost of one month's installment, and the tithing I had paid on Sunday was very small compared to the amount I was receiving! During that prayer the words in Malachi came to my mind: 'Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Malachi 3:10). Up to that moment I had never felt the magnitude of the promise contained in that scripture and that this commandment was truly a witness of the love that God, our Heavenly Father, gives to His children here on earth."

### **Great promises to those who walk by faith**

Faith is the very fiber that gives strength to this work. Wherever this Church is established across this broad world, it is evident. It is not limited to one country or one nation or one language or one people. It is found everywhere. We are a people of faith. We walk by faith. We move forward on our eternal journey, one step at a time.

Great is the promise of the Lord to the faithful everywhere. He has said:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

"And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come. . . .

"Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know. . . .

"And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

"For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man" (D&C 76:5–10).

How could anyone ask for more? How glorious is this work in which we are engaged. How wondrous are the ways of the Almighty when we walk in faith before Him.

### **By faith we lift each other**

The faith of an investigator is like a piece of green wood, thrown on a blazing fire. Warmed by the flames, it dries and begins to burn. But if it is pulled away, it cannot sustain itself. Its flickering flame dies. But if left with the fire, it gradually begins to burn with brightness. Soon it is part of the flaming fire and will light other, greener wood.

And so goes, my brothers and sisters, this great work of faith, lifting people across this broad earth to increased understanding of the ways of the Lord and greater happiness in following His pattern.

May God, our Eternal Father, continue to smile upon this, His Kingdom, and cause it to prosper as we, His children, walk in faith is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 2002. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

### How firm our foundation

About two decades ago when a temple was to be built in Mexico City, architects faced a great challenge. Because Mexico City is situated on a basin over water, some of its buildings settle and become tilted with the passage of time. Construction of a temple there required a special foundation. Two hundred twenty-one large, reinforced concrete piles<sup>1</sup> were driven more than 100 feet deep into the ground. Onto those pilings, steel straps were anchored

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Redeemer of Israel." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."  
Elder Monte J. Brough offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We shall then hear from Elders John M. Madsen, Carlos H. Amado, and Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

and fastened to a unit that can be adjusted if need be to keep the building level.<sup>2</sup> With this unseen but sure foundation, that temple today stands steady and straight.

A firm foundation is necessary for any building, institution, or individual to endure. With that in mind, let us consider the foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Then let us see how the solid foundation of the Church supports our foundation of faith as individual members of the Church.

## I. Foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This Church stands on a unique foundation, anchored to a bedrock of timeless truth. Brothers and sisters, the holy cause in which we are engaged did not begin in 1820 in the state of New York. It did not begin in Bethlehem. It did not begin in the Garden of Eden. The underpinnings of the everlasting gospel were in place even before the world was.

This reality is affirmed repeatedly in holy writ. I have studied the scriptures pertaining to that part of eternity before the earth was formed. Don't worry. I won't quote them all. But I will append some of those citations to the published text of this message. These unseen and timeless truths constitute "premortal pillars" that undergird the foundation of this Church.

### *The plan of redemption and possibility of an inheritance in the kingdom of God*

Before the foundation of the earth, the plan of salvation was prepared.<sup>3</sup> It included the glorious possibility of a divine inheritance in the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Atonement of Jesus Christ*

Central to that plan was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In premortal councils, He was foreordained by His Father to atone for our sins and break the bands of physical and spiritual death.<sup>5</sup> Jesus declared: "I . . . was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name."<sup>6</sup> Later, Paul added that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."<sup>7</sup>

### *Opposition from the adversary*

Even before the world was formed, the Lord was opposed by Satan.<sup>8</sup> He and

his minions have always fought against the Savior's sacred work and will continue to do so.

### *Foreordination for and conferral of the priesthood*

Before the foundation of the world, each of us existed as spirit children with our Father in Heaven. Among us were noble and great men foreordained to bear the priesthood.<sup>9</sup> Abraham,<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah,<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith,<sup>12</sup> and others<sup>13</sup> were destined to become prophets of God. Also foreseen was that the blood of prophets would be shed in this holy cause.<sup>14</sup> The manner of conferring the priesthood was to come down from the fathers "from the beginning of time, . . . even . . . before the foundation of the earth."<sup>15</sup>

### *Sisters empowered to glorify God*

Sisters received special gifts. They, according to the Lord, were empowered "to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, . . . for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; . . . herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified."<sup>16</sup> Think of it: When a mother bears and cares for a child, she not only helps the earth answer the end of its creation,<sup>17</sup> but she glorifies God!

### *Children of the covenant*

Children of the covenant were designated in the premortal realm. Paul taught that the Lord "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."<sup>18</sup>

### *Blessings predicated upon obedience to law*

Then conditions were established that allowed us to receive blessings from God—upon obedience to laws upon which those blessings were predicated.<sup>19</sup>



*Sacred things to be revealed in the latter days*

Another pillar pertains to revelation reserved for the latter days. The Lord had long planned to reveal "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."<sup>20</sup> Those things included revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon.<sup>21</sup> They also included ordinances and covenants of the holy temple.<sup>22</sup> To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared that "I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times."<sup>23</sup>

*Redemption of the dead*

The Lord revealed that "the ordinance of baptizing for the dead . . . was instituted from before the foundation of the world."<sup>24</sup> Salvation was thus made available for those "who should die without a knowledge of the gospel."<sup>25</sup> A welding link between generations was provided, that a whole, complete, and perfect union of dispensations, keys, powers, and glories should take place.<sup>26</sup>

Brothers and sisters, these unseen but sure pillars were in place before the world was. They undergird the everlasting gospel—now restored in its fulness.<sup>27</sup> With such a foundation, this Church will not be moved from its place,<sup>28</sup> even through the Millennium.<sup>29</sup>

**II. Foundation of individual members of the Church***Christ is the only sure foundation*

Just as buildings and institutions have foundations, so do we as individuals have foundations that support our faith. Some are weak; some are strong. We can waffle "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,"<sup>30</sup> or we can stand on a firm foundation and anchor ourselves with straps of spiritual steel, rooted and

grounded to the timeless pillars of the gospel.<sup>31</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley has asked that new converts be sustained in the Church by a friend and a call to serve and be nourished by the good word of God.<sup>32</sup> Often we sing, "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord, / Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!"<sup>33</sup> When we receive that nurturing word of God, we feast upon His love.<sup>34</sup>

Remember: "It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power . . . to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation."<sup>35</sup>

*Firm foundations help us bear life's burdens*

Even firm foundations cannot prevent life's problems. Wayward children cause parents to grieve. Some broken families don't get fixed. Gender disorientation is poorly understood. Married couples, for whatever reason, may not be blessed with children. Even in our day, "the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money."<sup>36</sup> Some things just don't seem fair.<sup>37</sup>

With strong underpinnings, however, we are better able to reach upward for help, even when faced with questions without easy answers. The poet so wrote:

Who Thou art I know not,  
But this much I know:  
Thou hast set the Pleiades  
In a silver row;

Thou hast sent the trackless winds  
Loose upon their way;  
Thou hast reared a colored wall  
"Twixt the night and day;

Thou hast made the flowers to bloom  
And the stars to shine;

Hid rare gems of richest ore  
In the tunneled mine;  
But chief of all Thy wondrous works,  
Supreme of all Thy plan,  
Thou hast put an upward reach  
In the heart of Man.<sup>38</sup>

Though we don't know all things,<sup>39</sup> we know that God lives and that He loves us.<sup>40</sup> Standing on that firm foundation, we can reach up and find strength to endure the heavy burdens of life.

### *Two faithful parents*

For example, I honor those special souls who face challenges of parenthood with unwavering faith in their Maker. To a family dear to Sister Nelson and me, a son was recently born. This child was afflicted with multiple anomalies affecting virtually every system of his little body. Two operations were required in his first week of life. More will be necessary. When I spoke with the child's parents, they did not ask, "Why did this happen to us?" Instead, they declared, "We know that this child is meant for us. God has entrusted this special baby to us. We will love him and care for him to the best of our ability." Thank the Lord for such parents!

### *A faithful wife*

Not long ago, death came to the husband of a friend of ours, suddenly and without warning. Of her, these words were penned by her own sister:

"Searching the years and days just past, she is awestruck, recognizing specific skills and experiences put into her life by a loving Father, things that might have seemed circumstantial at the time but that have specifically prepared her to cope successfully with this heartbreaking loss. Rather than feeling abandoned and bitter, she feels cradled and cared for. . . . She said to me, 'When I see how carefully Heavenly Father has prepared and planned for my present circumstance,

how can I be frightened about my future? Surely He is putting into place today all that I will need to face the unknown times ahead.'"<sup>41</sup>

### *A faithful missionary*

From a missionary I received an unforgettable letter. He wrote:

"I still am not certain why it was that I was [afflicted] with [cancer], particularly during the time I was serving the Lord on a mission, but I can say with all honesty and sincerity that I am eternally grateful to our gracious Heavenly Father for allowing me to have that experience. . . .

"Not a day goes by," he continued, "that I don't think about the days I spent lying in the hospital suffering through chemotherapy or grimacing with the pain from another operation. . . . Not a day . . . passes when I don't think of the days I spent studying the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and remembering the overwhelming feelings of comfort and peace which I felt. I often think of the nights when I would retire to bed and pour out my soul to my Heavenly Father and thank Him for preserving my life."

Then the elder shared this wonderful news: "I returned to the doctor this week . . . and . . . he found no evidence of any disease in my body."<sup>42</sup>

I love such faithful missionaries!

How firm our foundation? The foundation of this Church was forged long before the world was. It is strong. It is true. It is eternal. The foundation of one's individual faith, if anchored firmly to eternal truth, allows each of us to reach upward with an eternal perspective.<sup>43</sup> That faith will give hope when there is no hope. It will give us joy here and eternal life hereafter. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Each pile was 18 inches in diameter.
2. See John Forbes O'Donnal, *Pioneer in Guatemala* (1997), 288.

3. See 1 Nephi 10:18; Mosiah 15:19; Alma 12:25, 30; 18:39; 22:13–14; 42:26; Doctrine and Covenants 76:12–13.
4. To people of the Old World, the Lord said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). People of ancient America were also taught that “they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world” (2 Nephi 9:18; see also Ether 4:19).
5. See John 17:5, 24; 1 Peter 1:19–20; Mosiah 4:6–7; 18:13; 3 Nephi 26:3–5; Doctrine and Covenants 93:7–9; Moses 5:57; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 5:43; 14:30–31.
6. Ether 3:14.
7. Ephesians 2:20.
8. See Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:6–8.
9. See Alma 13:3, 5, 7; Doctrine and Covenants 132:28; 138:55–56; Abraham 3:22–23.
10. See Abraham 3:23.
11. See Jeremiah 1:4–5.
12. See 2 Nephi 3:5–15; Doctrine and Covenants 127:2; 138:53–55.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:53.
14. See Luke 11:49–51.
15. Abraham 1:3.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:63.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:16–17.
18. Ephesians 1:4; see also verse 5. Paul also taught that the power of God, “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, . . . was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9; see also D&C 38:1–4; Abraham 3:22–26). It is important to note that the Book of Mormon serves “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord” (Book of Mormon, title page).
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21; 132:5, 11–12.
20. Matthew 13:35.
21. See 2 Nephi 27:10.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 124:41.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 124:33.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 128:5.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
27. See Acts 3:20–21.
28. See Daniel 2:28, 31–44; Doctrine and Covenants 65:2–6; 124:45.
29. See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* (1982), 672.
30. James 1:6.
31. See Ephesians 3:17–19; Colossians 2:6–7.
32. See Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51; see also Jacob 6:7; Moroni 6:4.
33. *Hymns*, no. 85; see also 2 Nephi 28:27–30.
34. See Jacob 3:2.
35. Helaman 5:12. Remember also that a wise man builds his house upon a rock and not upon shifting sand (see Matthew 7:24–27).
36. Helaman 7:5.
37. Whether things seem “fair” relates to the limits of one’s perspective. Paul taught, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).
38. Harry Kemp, “God the Architect,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 46–47.
39. Compared with the omniscience of our Creator, we know relatively little about dinosaurs or the details of the Creation, for example. But this we do know: “Verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven” (D&C 101:32–34; see also D&C 121:29–32).
40. See 1 Nephi 11:16–17.
41. Virginia H. Pearce, in *Why I Believe* (2002), 245–46.

42. Personal correspondence, 15 Jan. 2002.
43. Our mortal probation has been likened to the second act of a three-act play. When the curtain comes down on act two, the play is not over. Without the vision gained from acts one and three, the

second act could seem either too short, too long, too hard, or too confusing. When we know about all three acts, the second act acquires greater significance; thus the need for an eternal perspective.

## Elder John M. Madsen

### **"He that hath eternal life is rich"**

Almost 2,000 years ago a rich young man asked an extremely important question of the Savior: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16).

Having heard the Savior's instructions and His gentle invitation to "come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21), the rich young man "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22).

Tragically, millions in the world today still prize and choose "the riches of the earth" over the "riches of eternity" (D&C 38:39), not knowing or fully understanding that "*he that hath eternal life is rich*" (D&C 6:7; italics added) and that *eternal life is God's greatest gift to man* (see D&C 14:7). Simply stated, eternal life is to live forever as families in the presence of God (see D&C 132:19–20, 24, 55).

### **Know God and Christ to obtain eternal life**

In His great Intercessory Prayer, the Savior gives to all mankind the key to obtaining eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

But how can man come to know the only true God? The Savior answers:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly

Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

### **The identity and role of Jesus Christ**

But who *is* Jesus Christ that we should come unto Him and *know* Him? I know of no more wonderful summary of the identity and role of the Lord Jesus Christ than the declaration of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve entitled "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," from which I quote:

"[Jesus Christ] was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. . . .

" . . . He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. . . .

" . . . He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

"He rose from the grave to 'become the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He . . . ministered among His 'other sheep' (John 10:16) in ancient America. . . . He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised 'dispensation of the fulness of times' (Ephesians 1:10). . . .

" . . . His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—'built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone' (Ephesians 2:20).

“... He will someday return to earth ... [and] rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords. ... Each of us will stand to be judged of Him. ...

“... His duly ordained Apostles [bear testimony] that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel. ... He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world” (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

It is wonderful, and absolutely essential, to know who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

But again, I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

### **To know Jesus, we must receive Him**

What does it mean to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and how can we come to know Him? The Savior answers:

“Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

“But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me” (D&C 132:22–23).

Can we truly and fully comprehend His words? “If ye receive me”—the Great Jehovah, the Messiah, the Creator of the earth, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the immortal Son of God—“*If ye receive me ... , then shall ye know me*” (D&C 132:23; italics added).

To know the Lord Jesus Christ, we and all mankind must receive Him. And to receive Him, we must receive His servants (see Matthew 10:40; D&C 1:38; 68:8–9; 84:36; 112:20).

To receive Him, we must receive the fulness of His gospel, His everlasting covenant, including all those truths or laws,

covenants, and ordinances needed for us to enter back into the presence of God (see D&C 39:11; 45:9; 66:2; 76:40–43; 132:12; 133:57).

To receive Him, faithful sons of God must receive His priesthood and magnify their callings (see D&C 84:33–35).

But ultimately, to receive Him and know Him, we and all mankind must, as Moroni exhorts, “*come unto Christ, and be perfected in him*” (Moroni 10:32; italics added). In other words, we must come unto Christ and strive to “become” like Him (see Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–44; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34).

Said the risen Lord: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). The meaning of the word *ought*, as used in His question “What manner of men ought ye to be?” is crucial to understanding His answer, “Even as I am.” The word *ought* means “to be necessary” or “to be held or bound in duty or moral obligation” (*Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*, 7th ed. [1993], “ought”; see also Luke 24:26), suggesting—and the holy scriptures, ancient and modern, confirm—that it is “necessary,” and that we are “bound,” as by covenant, “to be,” as He declared, “even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3 Nephi 12:48; Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2; Moroni 7:48).

It is my prayer that the time may soon come “when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20; see also Moses 7:62; Isaiah 11:9), that all who will may receive Him, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and know Him, that they may come unto our Heavenly Father, and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Carlos H. Amado

### Teachings from the history of Joseph Smith

The history of Joseph Smith was written to share the story of the Restoration of the Church in these latter days. The essence of the story is a demonstration of trust in the promises of the Lord, and a source of joy and certainty for all those who believe.

I have been able to read it many times and in different circumstances. It impressed me as a child; it was a guide and source of strength when I was a teenager; I shared it with courage and enthusiasm as a young missionary; and even now it continues to fill me with astonishment and a deep sense of gratitude. Since Joseph Smith first recorded it, it remains as a blessing and a gift of faith, a legacy, for the sincere believer; it is an open invitation for those who look for the truth and a permanent challenge to the unbeliever.

For those who are not yet members of the Church, I suggest you read the testimony of Joseph Smith with an open mind and real intent. You will feel his sincerity, and you will discover the establishment of the Church, restored in a miraculous way!

Although there is ample spiritual content to this fascinating story, I will limit my remarks to sharing five principles which, just as they did for the Prophet, will help you to come to know God.

### A sincere desire to know the truth

*Principle 1: Have a sincere desire to know the truth.* Joseph Smith had an intense desire to know God and to do His will. You can develop that same desire, and God Himself can lead you to the truth. When you recognize that truth, do all that you can to live your life in accordance with it.

### The importance of reading the scriptures

*Principle 2: Learn the importance of reading the scriptures.* Joseph Smith knew them because he studied them. He said:

"I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:11).

During his short ministry, Joseph Smith also received many other important revelations which were the result of reading the scriptures. You need to study them in order to come to know God, who is the source of all truth.

### The value of prayer

*Principle 3: Learn the value of prayer.* The young Joseph said:

"At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. . . .

"... It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

"... I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

"... I had found the testimony of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided" (Joseph Smith—History 1:13–15, 26).

Our Heavenly Father, as a perfect father, knows all your spiritual and material needs and wants to bless you, which is why He has given you the commandment to seek Him and ask Him.

Joseph came to know the truth because he prayed. In our time, millions of members of this Church also testify of the

reality of the Restoration because, following that counsel, they asked the Lord with faith. You have the same right to receive an answer to your prayers because *a testimony is a gift that God gives only to those who ask with real intent*. Try it, and the promise will be fulfilled.

### **The blessing of meditation**

*Principle 4: Discover the blessing of meditation.* Joseph Smith meditated often; he thought, analyzed, and compared; he tried to find answers to what he read in the scriptures. He said:

“During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness. . . .

“ . . . I often said to myself: . . . Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again” (Joseph Smith—History 1:8, 10, 12).

To meditate about eternal truths is to think and to ask ourselves, over and over: “How can I know?” “How have others come to know?”

How can you come to a knowledge of these things? Please meditate about it seriously.

### **The joy of going to church**

*Principle 5: Experience the joy of going to church.* In his desire to know the truth, Joseph Smith went to various denominations in his community. About his experience with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith described clearly the instructions he received about other churches:

“I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. . . .

“ . . . It was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18, 26).

All of us need to come to know the kingdom of God on earth and to receive a testimony of its truth. We go to church to feel the Spirit, learn His doctrine, renew our covenants, and receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to return to the presence of God with our families. You are cordially invited to come to church and see for yourself all these things.

### **Seek with real intent to be converted**

Conversion is a personal and spiritual process. Every individual must examine these principles for himself. It is not enough to make a halfhearted attempt, accompanied by doubts, fear, or lack of trust. God promises us, because of His mercy, that He will answer our petitions in accordance with our sincerity. Only those who seek with real intent will receive their answer, as a gift from God, through the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is also called the Comforter and the Witness. To Him we owe our knowledge and our testimony that Christ is the Son of God.

After you are baptized, if you remain worthy and faithful to your covenants, you will have the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost, through whisperings, impressions, feelings, dreams, and warnings.

### **Why some people do not remain true**

History and the scriptures tell us of people who heard, talked with, or in some other way had concrete evidence of the existence of God and His plan for our sal-

vation. Nevertheless, many of them did not remain true to their convictions.

We learn from this that it is not what we learn through our physical senses but that which comes under the influence of the Holy Ghost which allows us to understand God's purposes and to follow Him.

When someone has learned these basic principles and ceases to practice them, he loses the light and guide which helps him to understand God and His prophets. The outward sign we see is that they separate themselves, become less active, or even contend against the Church. The inward sign is that they have ceased to practice one or more of these five things:

1. They no longer have a sincere desire to know all the truth.
2. They no longer read the scriptures.
3. They no longer pray.
4. They no longer meditate about eternal truths.
5. They no longer go to church.

## Draw closer to God each day

It is wonderful that in a time of great religious confusion, while not yet 15 years old, in the midst of opposition and even persecution, Joseph Smith patiently and diligently demonstrated obedience and showed us the simple but effective way to draw closer to God.

This process requires that we learn, precept upon precept, a little here and a little there, until we develop faith and clear understanding of our divine potential (see 2 Nephi 28:30).

It is our responsibility to strengthen, day by day, the impressions that we feel through the Spirit, by applying these five principles.

It is my prayer that we may do this, constantly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gene R. Cook

### Charity—perfect and everlasting love

My dear brothers and sisters, I desire more than anything this hour to bear witness, a personal witness, of the love of God for me, for you, and for all mankind. What man is sufficiently adequate to be able to express the depth of his gratitude in recognition of the love of God? How blessed I have been for so many years to be with you and to have found the pure love of Christ emanating from you. I am deeply indebted to you and to God.

### Defining charity

The Lord said that charity is "the pure love of Christ,"<sup>1</sup> that which is "most joyous to the soul,"<sup>2</sup> "the greatest of all the gifts of God,"<sup>3</sup> "perfect" and "everlasting."<sup>4</sup>

As difficult as charity is to describe, it is rather easily recognized in the lives of those who possess it.

- An aged, crippled grandmother who subscribes to an afternoon newspaper, knowing it will bring her delivery-boy grandson to her home every day where, at her knee, she teaches him to pray.

- A mother who, in hard economic times and scarcity of meat, seems to savor only chicken wings, to the puzzlement of all.

- A man who suffers an undeserved public chastisement but humbly receives it anyway.

Is not the common thread in these examples charity, a selflessness, a not seeking for anything in return? All of our divine attributes seem to flow from and be encompassed by this one.<sup>5</sup> All men may have the gift of love, but charity is bestowed only upon those who are *true* followers of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The very power of God is found in His attributes of godliness.<sup>7</sup> The power of



the priesthood is maintained by these attributes.<sup>8</sup> We seek these attributes, especially charity, the pure love of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

### Destroyers of love and peace

Yet there stands the devil, the destroyer of this love, replacing it with anger and hostility.<sup>10</sup> My friend William felt that way—hostile. It seemed that whatever happened, it was the Lord's fault—an illness, a death, a wayward child, a personal weakness, an "unanswered" prayer—all of which hardened his heart. His inner anger, which could flare up in but a moment, was directed toward God, his fellowman, and himself. From his heart emanated unbelief, stubbornness, pride, contention, and a loss of hope, love, and direction. He was miserable!

These destroyers of peace<sup>11</sup> blinded William to God's feelings for him. He could neither discover nor *feel* God's love. He did not see, especially in those dark moments, that God was richly blessing him even still. Instead he returned anger for love. Have we not all felt that at times? Even when we have merited love the least, He has loved us the most. Truly, He loves us first.<sup>12</sup>

### Suffering with purpose: charity is empowering

Now, my Christlike friend Betty was just the opposite. She encountered many of the same difficulties as did William, but because she *felt* God's love, she suffered tribulation in the Savior's name,<sup>13</sup> partook of His divine nature,<sup>14</sup> and thus gained a deeper faith in and a love for God, along with the strength to handle whatever might come.

Her love for others increased. She seemed to even forgive others *in advance*. She learned how to cause them to *feel* her love. She learned that love shared is love multiplied.

Finally, she learned to love herself more, being more kind, gentle, and long-

suffering. She stopped her struggle for self-esteem and started loving herself the way God loved her. Her image of herself became His image of her.

### Recognizing, receiving, and conveying God's love

How, then, can we better "clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, . . . of perfectness and peace"?<sup>15</sup> May I share with you three suggestions.

1. *Recognize His love.* "Pray . . . with all the energy of heart"<sup>16</sup> for this gift. Do so in meekness with a broken heart, and you will be filled with hope and love from the Holy Ghost Himself. He will reveal Christ to you.<sup>17</sup>

It is part of the gift of charity to be able to recognize the Lord's hand and feel His love in all that surrounds us. At times it will not be easy to discover the Lord's love for us in all that we experience, because He is a perfect, *anonymous* giver. You will search all your life to uncover His hand and the gifts He has bestowed upon you because of His intimate, modest, humble way of granting such wonderful gifts.

Ponder with me a moment the following majestic gifts: the glories of all creation,<sup>18</sup> the earth, the heavens; your feelings of love and joy; His responses of mercy, forgiveness, and innumerable answers to prayer; the gift of loved ones; and finally the greatest gift of all—the Father's gift of His atoning Son, the perfect one in charity, even the God of love.<sup>19</sup>

2. *Receive His love in humility.* Be grateful for the gift and especially for the giver of the gift.<sup>20</sup> True gratitude is the ability to humbly see, feel, and even receive love.<sup>21</sup> Gratitude is a form of returning love to God. Recognize His hand; tell Him so; express your love to Him.<sup>22</sup> As you come to truly know the Lord, you will find an intimate, sacred relationship built on trust. You will come to know He understands your anguish<sup>23</sup> and will, in compassion, always respond to you in love.

Receive it. *Feel* it. It is not enough just to know that God loves you. The gift is to be *felt* continually day by day.<sup>24</sup> It will then be a divine motivator throughout your life. Repent. Remove any worldliness from your life,<sup>25</sup> including anger. Receive a continual remission of your sins,<sup>26</sup> and you will bridle all your passions and be filled with love.<sup>27</sup>

3. *Convey His love.* The Lord's response to us is always filled with love. Should not our response to Him be in kind, with *real* feelings of love? He gives grace (or goodness) for grace, attribute for attribute. As our obedience increases, we receive more grace (or goodness) for the grace we return to Him.<sup>28</sup> Offer Him the refinement of your attributes so that when He does appear, you will be *like* Him.<sup>29</sup>

As a man first immerses his thoughts in love and conveys those feelings to God, man, or self, a magnified portion of that attribute will surely follow from the Spirit. That is true of all godly attributes. Righteous feelings generated by a man seem to precede the increase of those feelings from the Spirit. Unless you are feeling love, you cannot convey true love to others. The Lord has told us to love one another as He loves us,<sup>30</sup> so remember: to be loved, *truly* love.<sup>31</sup>

### The fruits of the gift of charity

Brothers and sisters, as an especial witness of Christ, I bear testimony to you again of the overwhelming love of God for each of us personally. Magnifying that gift from God will bring a new heart, a pure heart, and ever-increasing love and peace. As we increasingly think and act like Him, the attributes of the natural man will slip away to be replaced by the heart and the mind of Christ.<sup>32</sup> We will become like Him and then truly receive Him.<sup>33</sup>

The prophet of the Lord here before you loves you, as do all these, my Brethren. May the Lord bless us to always have "the affections of [our] heart . . . placed

upon [Him] forever."<sup>34</sup> "That [our] burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son"<sup>35</sup> is my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moroni 7:47.
2. See 1 Nephi 11:22–23; 8:10–12.
3. 1 Nephi 15:36.
4. Moroni 8:17.
5. "There is one virtue, attribute, or principle, which, if cherished and practiced by the Saints, would prove salvation to thousands upon thousands. I allude to charity, or love, from which proceed forgiveness, long suffering, kindness, and patience" (Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, 11 Jan. 1860, 353).
6. See Moroni 7:48. Is there a difference between charity and love? The Lord referred to them separately a number of times, such as in Doctrine and Covenants 4:5. Some have said charity is love plus sacrifice—a seasoned love. Perhaps charity is to love as faith is to belief. Both faith and charity take action, work, and sacrifice. Charity encompasses His love for us, our love for Him, and Christlike love for others.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–24.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46.
9. "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:227).
10. When real suffering occurs in life, the devil is always there to sour men's hearts in anger, while the Lord continually emanates love. In the same suffering "many had become hardened . . . and many were softened because of their afflictions" (Alma 62:41). What a wonderful example of how to respond to affliction.
11. Some destroyers of men's love and peace include but are not limited to fear, perfectionism, envy, unsubmitiveness, doubt, anger, jealousy, unrighteous control, unbelief, impatience, judging, fostering hurt feelings, pride, contention, murmuring,

seeking for honor, competition, and lying. All of these are of the natural man, and not of the man of Christ.

12. See 1 John 4:19.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:13. My friend knew the suffering would help her prove herself (see Abraham 3:24–25; D&C 98:13–14); learn to choose between good and evil (see 2 Nephi 2:18); learn that blessings come after the trials (see D&C 58:2–4); learn obedience, patience, and faith (see D&C 105:6; Mosiah 23:21; Romans 5:3–5); obtain a forgiveness of sin (see Helaman 15:3; D&C 132:50, 60; 95:1).
14. See 2 Peter 1:1–8.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:125.
16. Moroni 7:48.
17. See Moroni 8:25–26; Romans 5:5; 2 Nephi 26:13.
18. See Moses 6:63; Alma 30:44.
19. See 1 John 4:8.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.
21. See Alma 5:26.
22. See Alma 26:16; Moroni 10:3.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:52–53.
24. See Alma 34:38.
25. See 1 John 2:15–17.
26. See Mosiah 4:11–12.
27. See Alma 38:12.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–13, 20.
29. See 1 John 3:1–3.
30. See John 13:34; Doctrine and Covenants 112:11.
31. “Beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each oth-

er’s good” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 155).

32. See 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5.
33. “That man is most truly great who is most Christlike. What you sincerely in your heart think of Christ will determine what you are, will largely determine what your acts will be. . . . By choosing him as our ideal, we create within ourselves a desire to be like him, to have fellowship with him” (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 93, 98). If you think about Him long enough, you will begin to act like Him. If you act like Him long enough, you’ll truly become like Him.
34. Alma 37:36.
35. Alma 33:23.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “How Firm a Foundation.” Following the singing, we will hear testimonies from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, the new general president of the Relief Society, and Elders Gerald N. Lund and William R. Walker, newly called members of the Seventy. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

### Expressions of gratitude

Brothers and sisters, there is a saying: “Welcome the opportunity that takes you beyond your ordinary self if you would grow.” And I’m sure I’m going to grow. May I express our thanks to Sister Smoot, Sister Jensen, and Sister Dew for the great service they’ve given to all of us as members of the Church. I express my gratitude

to my counselors, Kathleen Hughes and Anne Pingree, for their willingness to serve. They are women of faith.

I am so grateful this day for my mother and father, for the teachings they gave me, for their love, for teaching me to work. I do know how to work. I am grateful for my husband. Jim is a wonderful companion. I love him, and I’m grateful for his support. He’s a man of integrity.

I'm grateful for sons and for their wives, who have helped them become better men. I'm grateful for grandchildren. The other evening we drove down to the home of one of our sons to tell him about this calling. They had their children tucked in bed. I said to Brett and Angie, "I've been called to be the general Relief Society president." And Brett said, "You? The president of the Relief Society for the whole Church?" Aren't your children wonderful? He said what I have been feeling for the past few weeks.

Yesterday when we arrived home, I had a fax from our son David and his wife, Jennifer, in Belgium. David said, "Mother, I know you can do it. You may not remember, but you used to have a scripture on the fridge that said, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15)." He said, "I was in and out of the fridge a lot, and I knew that you and Dad meant that." I'm so grateful for our children.

I'm grateful to the women of the Church who have mentored me, who have loved me, who have taught me, who have believed in me. I'm grateful for the missionaries in the England London South Mission, for their goodness, for the way they keep their covenants. I'm grateful for the British Saints who loved me and helped me be part of that great land.

Now, brothers and sisters, I do not know why I was called, but I do know that I was called. I pledge to you my love, my support, and I ask that you be patient as I learn.

I invite the young adult women of the Church, wherever you are, to look at Relief Society and know that you are needed there, that we love you, that together we can have a grand time. Please come and be with us.

### Feel the love of the Lord

As Wallace Stegner wrote of the Mormons, "Their women were incredible."<sup>1</sup> And they are today! I know that the Lord loves the women of the Church. If I could have one thing happen for every woman in this Church, it would be that they would feel the love of the Lord in their lives daily. I have felt the love of the Lord in my life, and I am so thankful for that. I'm thankful for the peace that I have felt.

I testify of my Savior Jesus Christ. I know He lives. I have felt His love; I have felt His forgiveness. I think of a sister missionary as she departed the mission. In her final testimony she said, "I came on a mission to let Heavenly Father know I loved Him, to express appreciation to Him, and to pay Him back," and she said, "I'm leaving more in His debt than I ever was before I came."

I give testimony of the power of a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and I'm thankful for him and for his love and for all prophets who have had confidence in me. I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTE

1. *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1964), 13.

## Elder Gerald N. Lund

### Fulfilling the Lord's desires, not our own

After 34 years in the Church Educational System, my wife and I decided about three years ago to retire and set our feet on some different paths in life. At that point we began to make plans. We changed

our residence to be closer to children and grandchildren. I began to develop what I thought were some wonderful projects. Some were absolutely brilliant, I thought. And then one of those pivotal moments in life happened.

It was our privilege at that time to be living across the street from Elder F. Enzo Busche, now an emeritus Seventy, and his wife. One day Elder Busche taught our high priests quorum, and he cited a scripture in the book of Alma where Alma longs to have the voice of an angel. Then Alma immediately repents of those feelings, and in verse four makes a remarkable statement. He suggests that we have to be careful what we desire, for the Lord grants unto us the desires of our heart. And then came what was to me almost a stunning statement: "Whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction." God will grant unto us, according to our will, the things which we desire (see Alma 29:1-5).

I went home that day—and it's not that I felt any of my desires were wrong—but in that moment I realized that those desires were *mine*. That day I began to try to let the Lord know that what I'd like to do is fulfill *His* desires. Even then, I thought I really meant it, but I came to know that that's an easy thing to say and a difficult thing to do. As Elder Maxwell said yesterday, only when we truly yield our hearts to God can He begin to accelerate the purification and the sanctification and the perfecting process (see Helaman 3:35). We have found in the three years that have come since that time that the Lord has set our feet on different paths than we expected, and this one is the latest.

### **Gratitude for the opportunity to serve**

Just the other day, after President Hinckley called my wife and me, I was reading in the book of Deuteronomy and found a verse in the 12th chapter that came to mean a lot to me. It's put in the

form of a commandment. The Lord says, "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto" (Deuteronomy 12:18). We are grateful for this privilege to rejoice in the Lord at this new opportunity.

Since starting on those paths, we have come to learn how truly merciful God is, how deeply He loves us, and how perfectly compelling His love is for us. When I was 16 years old and not smart enough to know very much at all, the Spirit touched my heart and I realized the significance of the woman that you marry. Starting at that time I began to pray that the Lord would find for me the woman who would be my eternal companion. Those prayers were answered, and all that we now enjoy in our family with children and grandchildren is largely responsible to her.

### **Testimony**

I've come to know that Jesus is the Christ, that His and the Father's mercies are infinite and never ending, even when we're not deserving. I've always loved the Prophet Joseph Smith, but it was my privilege to spend about 10 years in an intensive and extensive study of his life, of his writings, of his teachings, and of those who knew and loved him, and I came to know that here is a prophet of prophets, one who was worthy to bring about the Restoration of this last great dispensation. And I've come to know with great power that those keys that he restored have continued unbroken to this day and now reside in our living prophet, even Gordon B. Hinckley.

Again, we rejoice in this opportunity to serve. We are deeply humbled and greatly honored, and I leave that testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder William R. Walker

### **"I'll go where you want me to go"**

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is with deep humility and great appreciation that I stand in this holy place. As a little boy growing up in Raymond, Alberta, Canada, I loved it every time we sang, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord" (*Hymns*, no. 270). Those words, each time we sang them in a sacrament meeting or Sunday School, burned commitment into my heart and soul, that I always wanted to go where the Lord wanted me to go, to say what He wanted me to say—"I'll be what you want me to be," dear Lord. That commitment seems appropriate to restate today.

I'm grateful for the sustaining vote of yesterday, and with you I sustain Presi-

dent Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, President Monson and President Faust, and President Packer and all of the Twelve as prophets, seers, and revelators. I bear witness that indeed they are prophets, seers, and revelators.

I love the Lord. I love this Church. I love the wonderful, faithful Saints throughout the world who do all that they can to honor their commitments and to live their religion. I bear witness that God lives and that Jesus Christ, His Son, is our Savior and our Redeemer. I love Him. I want to do all that I can to serve as He would have me serve, and I say these words and bear my witness to the truthfulness of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, may I, on behalf of all of us, express appreciation also to the Relief Society presidency and their board who have served us so well and are just recently released.

### **Finding peace in Jesus Christ**

Once again we are approaching the close of another uplifting and inspiring general conference. I always feel so energized and enlightened during these marvelous days of teaching and testimony. I know that most of you feel the same way.

Perhaps what we feel during conference is similar to the feeling experienced by the Savior's earliest disciples as they followed Him from place to place to hear Him teach the good news of His gospel. In many ways those were disheartening days for the children of Israel. Toiling under the domination of the Roman Empire, they yearned for freedom and peace. They

awaited the Messiah; they were sure He would come to deliver them from physical and political oppression. And some responded to the Savior's gospel of happiness and peace, although they did not yet fully appreciate all of its spiritual implications.

On one particular day early in the Lord's mortal ministry, a great multitude followed Him to the Sea of Galilee and pressed around Him as He stood on the shore. "So . . . he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables" (Mark 4:1-2).

Great and wonderful things were taught that day, including the parable of the sower (see Mark 4:3-20). At the end of a full day of teaching and instruction, the Lord suggested to His disciples that they cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

While they were sailing that night, "there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:37-39).

Can you imagine what the Apostles must have been thinking as they watched the very elements—the wind, the rain, and the sea—obey their Master's calm command? Although they had only recently been called to the holy apostleship, they knew Him and they loved Him and believed in Him. They had left their work and their families to follow Him. In a relatively short period of time, they had heard Him teach incredible things, and they had seen Him perform mighty miracles. But this was beyond their comprehension, and the looks on their faces must have shown it.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

"And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:40-41).

In turbulent and sometimes frightening times, the Savior's promise of infinite and eternal peace resonates with special power to us, just as His ability to calm the crashing waves must have profoundly affected those who were with Him on the Sea of Galilee that stormy night so long ago.

### **Jesus promises inner peace**

Like those who were alive at the time of His mortal ministry, there are some among us who look for physical peace and prosperity as signs of the Savior's wondrous power. We sometimes fail to understand that the everlasting peace Jesus

promises is an inner peace, born in faith, anchored by testimony, nurtured with love, and expressed through continual obedience and repentance. It is a peace of spirit that echoes through the heart and the soul. If one truly knows and experiences this inner peace, there is no fear from worldly disharmony or discord. One knows deep down inside that all is well as far as the things that really matter are concerned.

### **There is no peace in sin**

As President Hinckley instructed the brethren last night, there is no peace in sin. There may be ease, popularity, fame, and even prosperity, but there is no peace. "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). One cannot be at peace if one is living a life out of harmony with revealed truth. There is no peace in being mean-spirited or contentious. There is no peace in vulgarity, promiscuity, or permissiveness. There is no peace in addiction to drugs, alcohol, or pornography. There is no peace in being abusive to others in any way, whether it be emotionally, physically, or sexually, for those who are abusive will remain in mental and spiritual turmoil until they come to Christ in all humility and seek forgiveness through complete repentance.

At one time or another I believe everyone yearns for the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). That peace for our troubled hearts comes to us only as we follow the Light of Christ, which is "given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16), as it leads us to repent of sins and seek forgiveness. For all there is a hunger to know "the peaceable things of the kingdom" (D&C 36:2) and to taste "the fruit[s] of righteousness," which are "sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18). In every home, neighborhood, and community we ought to strive for peace and never be party to stirring up contention or division.

### Jesus gives real peace, “not as the world giveth”

Throughout scriptural history, the Lord has promised peace to His followers. The Psalmist wrote, “The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace” (Psalm 29:11). Isaiah referred to the Savior as “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). And Nephi foresaw the day among his descendants when “the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him” (2 Nephi 26:9).

Just hours before He was to begin that glorious yet awful process of the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ made this significant promise to His Apostles: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

Was He promising His beloved associates the kind of peace the world recognizes—safety, security, with the absence of contention or tribulation? Certainly the historical record would suggest otherwise. Those original Apostles knew much of trial and persecution throughout the remainder of their lives, which is probably why the Lord added this insight to His promise: “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in *me* ye might have peace,” He continued. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; italics added).

Peace—real peace, whole-souled to the very core of your being—comes only in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When that precious truth is discovered and gospel principles are understood and applied, great peace can distill in the hearts and souls of our Heavenly Father’s children. Said the Savior through Joseph Smith, “He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even

peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

### “We will make Saints out of them”

It is sometimes amazing to see the difference this peace can have in the lives of those who accept it. While I was presiding over the Canada Toronto Mission many years ago, our missionaries began teaching a family that was in spiritual darkness. They were poor and uneducated, and their personal appearance reflected a lack of appreciation or concern for normal hygiene and grooming. But they were good, honorable people—among the honest in heart that we always pray for our missionaries to find—and they responded spiritually as they felt for the first time in their lives the peace the gospel offers.

When we learned that they were going to be baptized, Sister Ballard and I attended the baptismal service. I happened to be standing next to the bishop of the ward when the family arrived. In all honesty, I must tell you that they were quite a sight. They looked unkempt, unclean, and somewhat scruffy. Because he had been out of town for a period of time, the bishop had not yet met the newest members of his ward; so this first impression was, to say the least, unimpressive. As they walked away, I thought I could feel his knees begin to buckle.

I put my arm around this good bishop to give him my support—physically as well as spiritually. I felt prompted to say to him, “Bishop, isn’t this wonderful? We will make good Latter-day Saints out of them!”

He looked at me, and he smiled. I just couldn’t tell if he was smiling because he agreed with me, or if he thought that I might be just another overenthusiastic missionary.

The baptismal service proceeded, and the family was baptized. The next day we decided to attend that ward to make sure the family was well received when they



came to their meetings as new members of the Church.

As the family came into the chapel for sacrament meeting, I was sitting on the stand next to the bishop. The father was wearing a clean white shirt. It was not large enough for him to fasten the top button at the neck, and he was wearing a tie that I could remember seeing on one of my elders. But his face radiated with happiness and peace. The mother and daughters looked like they had been transformed from the previous day. Their dresses were not fancy, but they were clean and lovely. They also had that special gospel glow. The little boys wore white shirts that were several sizes too large for them, even with the sleeves rolled up. And they were wearing ties that almost extended down to their knees. It was obvious that the missionaries had put their own white shirts and ties on these little boys so they could come to sacrament meeting appropriately dressed.

They sat with their missionaries, and the light of the gospel literally shone from them. Alma describes this as “[receiving God’s] image in your countenances” (Alma 5:14). I leaned over to the bishop again and said, “See, Bishop? We will make Saints out of them!”

Of course that overnight physical transformation was superficial when compared to the overwhelming, more significant spiritual transformation that took place in that family as the gospel entered their hearts and lives. Through the instruction of the missionaries and the subsequent fellowshiping of their good bishop and the ward members, this entire family emerged from spiritual darkness into gospel light and truth. In that light the family was warmed, refreshed, and revitalized by the peace that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ lives. The light of the gospel truths restored to earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith began to show this family the way to the temple, where one year later they received their eternal blessings.

Again quoting the prophecies of Isaiah: “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13).

### **Be instruments of the Lord’s peace**

Once we have tasted the sweet fruit of God’s peace, we are naturally inclined to share it with others. Francis of Assisi was known as the “lover of creation” who lived most of his life ministering to the poor and the needy who were around him—including the animals. The peace he found in his service energized him and made him yearn to embrace others with it. He wrote:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not  
so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life.

On more than one occasion the Lord urged His followers to be “peacemakers,” promising that such would “be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). That concept is woven throughout the scriptures, creating a patchwork of peace through parable and proclamation:

- “Agree with thine adversary” (Matthew 5:25).
- “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44).
- “Judge not” (Matthew 7:1).
- “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).
- “Condemn not” (Luke 6:37).

- “Forgive” (Luke 6:37).
- “Love one another” (John 13:34).

Those are but a few of the scriptural instructions clearly indicating that God’s peace is not to be hoarded. Rather, it is to be shared liberally with our families, our friends, and our communities. It is to be shared with the Church as well as those who are not members of our Church. While those around us may not choose to taste the sweetness and peace of the fullness of the restored gospel for themselves, surely they will be blessed by seeing it in our lives and feeling the peace of the gospel in our presence. The message of peace will grow and expand through our example.

“Live in peace,” said the Apostle Paul, “and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

I am grateful that I can witness to you that Jesus is the Christ, and He is the Son of God. By following Him in faith and trust, all may find the sweet inner peace the gospel offers to us as it has been taught to us so beautifully during this conference. To this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

As we conclude this conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes, and the men’s choir from BYU—Idaho, and their conductors

and organists, for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries of the world.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey the traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. I testify to you, as one who knows, that he is God’s prophet here upon the earth at this time. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I too would like to express deep appreciation for the tremendous service of Sister Smoot, Sister Jensen, Sister Dew, and their board, who have served so very faithfully and well in this great and tremendous organization for women. It is a marvelous society, 4,900,000 strong. There is nothing like it, I think, in all the world, and it touches for such tremendous good the

lives of women everywhere across the earth. Thank you, dear sisters, for what you’ve done. Welcome to you, Sister Parkin and your counselors, and the board which you will select.

### **“Abide with me”**

We now conclude this great conference. We have enjoyed a wonderful feast

at the table of the Lord. We have been instructed in His ways after His pattern.

Each of us should be a little better for this rich experience. Otherwise, our gathering has been largely in vain.

When I conclude, the choir will sing:

Abide with me; 'tis eventide.  
The day is past and gone;  
The shadows of the evening fall;  
The night is coming on.  
Within my heart a welcome guest,  
Within my home abide.  
O Savior, stay this night with me;  
Behold, 'tis eventide.  
["Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide,"  
*Hymns*, no. 165]

That pretty well sums up the feelings of our hearts as we return to our homes.

### **Jesus Christ is our central focus**

May the Spirit of our Lord accompany us and remain with us. We know not what lies ahead of us. We know not what the coming days will bring. We live in a world of uncertainty. For some, there will be great accomplishment. For others, disappointment. For some, much of rejoicing and gladness, good health, and gracious living. For others, perhaps sickness and a measure of sorrow. We do not know. But one thing we do know. Like the polar star in the heavens, regardless of what the future holds, there stands the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, certain and sure as the anchor of our immortal lives. He is the rock of our salvation, our strength, our comfort, the very focus of our faith.

In sunshine and in shadow we look to Him, and He is there to assure and smile upon us.

He is the central focus of our worship. He is the Son of the living God, the First-born of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh, who left the royal courts on high to be born as a mortal in the most humble of circumstances. Of the loneliness of His living He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son

of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

He was a man of miracles. He reached out to those in distress. He healed the sick and raised the dead. Yet for all of the love He brought into the world, He was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . he was despised," and was esteemed not (Isaiah 53:3).

We look upon His matchless life and say with the prophet Isaiah:

"He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

When the great War in Heaven was fought, Lucifer, the son of the morning, came forth with a plan that was rejected. The Father of us all, with love for us, His children, offered a better plan under which we would have freedom to choose the course of our lives. His Firstborn Son, our Elder Brother, was the key to that plan. Man would have his agency, and with that agency would go accountability. Man would walk the ways of the world and sin and stumble. But the Son of God would take upon Himself flesh and offer Himself a sacrifice to atone for the sins of all men. Through unspeakable suffering He would become the great Redeemer, the Savior of all mankind.

With some small understanding of that incomparable gift, that marvelous gift of redemption, we bow in reverent love before Him.

### **We rejoice in Christ**

As a Church we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition, the creeds which came of

a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. They spoke to him. He spoke with Them. He testified openly, unequivocally, and unabashedly of that great vision. It was a vision of the Almighty and of the Redeemer of the world, glorious beyond our understanding but certain and unequivocating in the knowledge which it brought. It is out of that knowledge, rooted deep in the soil of modern revelation, that we, in the words of Nephi, "talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that [we and] our children may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

### Testimony

And so, my brothers and sisters, as we bid you good-bye for a season, we repeat our firm and enduring testimony. We do it as individuals with a sure and certain knowledge. As I have said many times before, and as I now say again, I know

that God our Eternal Father lives. He is the great God of the universe. He is the Father of our spirits, with whom we may speak in prayer.

I know that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son, the Redeemer of the world, who gave His life that we might have eternal life and who rules and reigns with His Father. I know that They are individual beings, separate and distinct one from another and yet alike in form and substance and purpose. I know that it is the work of the Almighty "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the great prophet of this dispensation through whom these truths have come. I know that this Church is the work of God, presided over and directed by Jesus Christ, whose holy name it bears.

Of these things I testify in solemnity as I leave with you, my beloved associates, my love and blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. "God be with you till we meet again" (*Hymns*, no. 152).

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The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A men's choir from BYU—Idaho provided music for the priesthood session. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference

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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-second  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 2002



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# Report of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 2002. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live worldwide over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander,

Charles Didier, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, Duane B. Gerrard, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, D. Lee Tobler, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Press Forward, Saints." President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many parts of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Press Forward, Saints" and will now favor us with "Secret Prayer." At the conclusion of the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Secret Prayer."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

Thank you, Brother Banks. It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### "O that I were an angel"

My beloved brethren and sisters, we greet you again in a great worldwide conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Alma declared, "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake

the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1).

We have reached a point where we can almost do that. The proceedings of this conference will be carried across the world, and the speakers will be heard and seen by Latter-day Saints on every continent. We have come a very long way in realizing the fulfillment of the vision set forth in the book of Revelation:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (14:6).

What a tremendous occasion this is, my brothers and sisters. It is difficult to comprehend. We speak from this marvelous Conference Center. I know of no other building to compare with it.

We are as one great family, representatives of the human family in this vast and beautiful world.

### **The Nauvoo Temple—a crowning jewel**

Many of you participated in the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple last June. It was a great and marvelous occasion, one to be long remembered. We not only dedicated a magnificent building, a house of the Lord, but we also dedicated a beautiful memorial to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

In 1841, two years after he came to Nauvoo, he broke ground for a house of the Lord that should stand as a crowning jewel to the work of God.

It is difficult to believe that in those conditions and under those circumstances a structure of such magnificence was designed to stand on what was then the frontier of America.

I doubt, I seriously doubt, that there was another structure of such design and magnificence in all the state of Illinois.

It was to be dedicated to the work of the Almighty, to accomplish His eternal purposes.

No effort was spared. No sacrifice was too great. Through the next five years men chiseled stone and laid footings and foundation, walls and ornamentation. Hundreds went to the north, there to live for a time to cut lumber, vast quantities of it, and then bind it together to form rafts which were floated down the river to Nauvoo. Beautiful moldings were cut from that lumber. Pennies were gathered to buy nails. Unimaginable sacrifice was made to pro-

cure glass. They were building a temple to God, and it had to be the very best of which they were capable.

In the midst of all of this activity, the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were killed in Carthage on the 27th of June 1844.

None of us living today can comprehend what a disastrous blow that was to the Saints. Their leader was gone—he, the man of visions and revelations. He was not only their leader. He was their prophet. Great was their sorrow, terrible their distress.

### **Feverish work to finish the temple**

But Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, picked up the reins. Joseph had placed his authority on the shoulders of the Apostles. Brigham determined to finish the temple, and the work went on. By day and by night they pursued their objective, notwithstanding all of the threats hurled against them by lawless mobs. In 1845 they knew they could not stay in the city they had built from the swamplands of the river. They knew they must leave. It became a time of feverish activity: first, to complete the temple, and secondly, to build wagons and gather supplies to move into the wilderness of the West.

Ordinance work was begun before the temple was entirely completed. It went on feverishly until, in the cold of the winter of 1846, the people began to close the doors of their homes and wagons moved slowly down Parley Street to the water's edge, then across the river and up the banks on the Iowa side.

Movement continued. The river froze over, it was so bitter cold. But it made it possible for them to move on the ice.

Back to the east they looked for the last time to the city of their dreams and the temple of their God. Then they looked to the west to a destiny they did not know.

The temple was subsequently dedicated, and those who dedicated it said

"amen" and moved on. The building was later burned by an arsonist who almost lost his life in the evil process. A tornado finally toppled most of what was left. The house of the Lord, the great objective of their labors, was gone.

### **Rebuilding the temple**

Nauvoo became almost a ghost city. It faded until it almost died. The site of the temple was plowed and planted. The years passed, and there slowly followed an awakening. Our people, descendants of those who once lived there, had stir within them the memories of their forebears, with a desire to honor those who had paid so terrible a price. Gradually the city came alive again, and there was a restoration of parts of Nauvoo.

Under the prompting of the Spirit, and motivated by the desires of my father, who had served as mission president in that area and who wished to rebuild the temple for the centennial of Nauvoo but was never able to do so, we announced in the April conference of 1999 that we would rebuild that historic edifice.

Excitement filled the air. Men and women came forth with a desire to be helpful. Large contributions of money and skills were offered. Again, no expense was spared. We were to rebuild the house of the Lord as a memorial to the Prophet Joseph and as an offering to our God. On the recent 27th of June, in the afternoon at about the same time Joseph and Hyrum were shot in Carthage 158 years earlier, we held the dedication of the magnificent new structure. It is a place of great beauty. It stands on exactly the same site where the original temple stood. Its outside dimensions are those of the original. It is a fitting and appropriate memorial to the great Prophet of this dispensation, Joseph the Seer.

### **Two temples stand as bookends**

How grateful I am, how profoundly grateful for what has happened. Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph's temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham's temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the suffering, the sorrow, the sacrifice, even the deaths of thousands who made the long journey from the Mississippi River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

### **A plea for members to use the temples**

Nauvoo became the 113th working temple. We have since dedicated another in The Hague, Netherlands, making 114 in all. These wonderful buildings of various sizes and architectural designs are now scattered through the nations of the earth. They have been constructed to accommodate our people in carrying forward the work of the Almighty, whose design it is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). These temples have been constructed to be used. We honor our Father as we make use of them.

At the opening of the conference, I urge you, my brethren and sisters, to utilize the temples of the Church.

Go there and carry forward the great and marvelous work which the God of heaven has outlined for us. There let us learn of His ways and His plans. There let us make covenants that will lead us in paths of righteousness, unselfishness, and truth. There let us be joined as families under an eternal covenant administered under the authority of the priesthood of God.



And there may we extend these same blessings to those of previous generations, even our own forebears who await the service which we can now give.

May the blessings of heaven rest upon you, my beloved brethren and sisters. May the Spirit of Elijah touch your hearts and prompt you to do that work for others who cannot move forward unless you do so. May we rejoice in the glorious privilege that is ours, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

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### **President Monson**

President Gordon B. Hinckley has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

We shall now hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

After the singing, Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "There Is Sunshine in My Soul."

## **Elder L. Tom Perry**

### **Sacred duty of parents**

The fifth article of faith states, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."<sup>1</sup>

One of our most important priesthood callings, one that requires our constant attention, is in our families and our homes. Brethren, as fathers and patriarchs in our families, we are "by divine design . . . to preside over [our] families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for [our] families."

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and

fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."<sup>2</sup>

### **The power of the priesthood**

We live in a world that is crying for righteous leadership based on trustworthy principles.

In our Church we have been taught, in our own unique way, correct principles of leadership, directed by priesthood authority. I believe few of us realize the potential of the priesthood and the blessing it is. The more we learn about holding the priesthood and understand its operation, the more we appreciate the blessings the Lord has given to us.

John Taylor once declared:

"I shall . . . briefly answer that [the priesthood] is the government of God, whether on the earth or in the heavens, for it is by that power, agency, or principle that all things are [upheld and] governed on the earth and in the heavens, and [it is] by that power that all things are upheld and sustained. It governs all things—it di-

rects all things—it sustains all things—and has to do with all things that God and truth are associated with.

“It is the power of God delegated to intelligences in the heavens and to men on the earth; and when we arrive in the celestial kingdom of God, we shall find the most perfect order and harmony existing, because there is the perfect pattern, the most perfect order of government carried out, and when or wherever those principles have been developed in the earth, in proportion as they have spread and been acted upon, just in that proportion have they produced blessings and salvation to the human family; and when the government of God shall be more extensively adopted, and when Jesus’ prayer that He taught His disciples is answered, and God’s kingdom comes on the earth, and His will is done here as in heaven, then, and not till then, will universal love, peace, harmony, and union prevail.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord gave us a vision of what the priesthood can be as He directed His Apostles, who were to carry on the work following His death. He declared to them, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”<sup>4</sup>

### **A priesthood quorum serves a widow**

One of the blessings received from the priesthood is having the opportunity of belonging to a quorum. A quorum of the priesthood consists of a specific group of men holding the same priesthood office, organized for the more effective advancement of the kingdom of God.

President Stephen L. Richards at one time gave us a threefold definition of a priesthood quorum. He said a priesthood quorum is three things: “first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit.”<sup>5</sup>

I was taught how a quorum works in these three aspects many years ago when I attended a high priests group meeting in a small community in southern Wyoming. The lesson that week was on justification and sanctification. It was evident, as the lesson began, that the teacher was well prepared to instruct his brethren. Then a question prompted a response that changed the whole course of the lesson. In response to the question, one brother commented, “I have listened with great interest to the lesson material. The thought has crossed my mind that the information presented will soon be lost if we do not find application to put the material presented into practice in our daily lives.” Then he went on to propose a course of action.

The night before, a citizen of the community had passed away. His wife was a member of the Church, but he had not been. This high priest had visited the widow and offered his sympathy. As he left the home after the visit, his eyes wandered over the beautiful farm of the deceased brother. He had put so much of his life and labor into building it up. The alfalfa was ready to cut; the grain would soon be ready to harvest. How would this poor sister cope with the sudden problems now falling on her? She would need time to get herself organized for her new responsibilities.

Then he proposed to the group that they apply the principles they had just been taught—by working with the widow to keep her farm operating until she and her family could find a more permanent solution. The balance of the meeting was spent in organizing the project to assist her.

As we left the classroom, there was a good feeling among the brethren. I heard one of them remark as he passed through the doorway, “This project is just what we needed as a group to work together again.” A lesson had been taught; a brotherhood

had been strengthened; a service project had been organized to assist someone in need.

### **Priesthood leadership in the home**

Now these principles taught to us in the organization of a quorum apply not only to a quorum, but the same principles apply to the priesthood leadership in the home. We are under divine command to "bring up [our] children in light and truth."<sup>6</sup> If fathers do not raise their children in light and truth, then the Lord is displeased with them. This is the message:

"But verily I say unto you, my servant . . . , you have continued under . . . condemnation;

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house."<sup>7</sup>

The Church must retain its family-based orientation. We need to teach the concept of building successive generations of members who are married in the temple and faithful. We need to teach basic doctrines and understand the relationship between personal spiritual growth and that of the family. We need to make the outcome clear: inviting members to come unto Christ and endure to the end.

### **Marriage is ordained of God**

Among the first instructions given to man and woman was, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."<sup>8</sup>

God, in His divine plan, ordained marriage to bring about His basic organizational unit—the family. One of the first

principles He taught Adam and Eve was to develop a working relationship. The scripture states:

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord."<sup>9</sup>

Then the Lord instructed our first earthly parents to teach their children about obedience to His laws, "and Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters."<sup>10</sup>

### **Formula for an eternal family**

President Spencer W. Kimball has taught us about the eternal nature of the family:

"The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

"First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters that are of importance to the individuals. Then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

"Second, there must be great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, and subjugating self.

"Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

"Fourth, there must be complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup>

Homes should be an anchor, a safe harbor, a place of refuge, a happy place where families dwell together, a place where children are loved. In the home, parents should teach their children the great lessons of life. Home should be the center of one's earthly experience, where love and mutual respect are appropriately blended.

### **You can have this house—or a father**

Second only to the importance of being eternal companions is being an earthly parent. Fathers and mothers need to consider their roles in this great responsibility. My children taught me a great lesson many years ago. Our family had moved from California to New York, where I had accepted a position with a new company. We began the process of finding a new home by looking in communities closest to the city. Gradually, however, we moved farther away from the city to find a home in a neighborhood that suited our needs. We found a beautiful home some distance from New York City. It was a one-story house nestled in the lovely deep woods of Connecticut. The final test before purchasing the home was for me to ride the commuter train into New York and check the time and see how long the commute would take. I made the trip and returned quite discouraged. The trip was one and one-half hours each way. I walked into our motel room where our family was waiting for me and presented to my children a choice.

"You can have either this house or a father," I said. Much to my surprise they responded, "We will take the house. You are never around much anyway." I was devastated. What my children were telling me was true. I needed to repent fast. My children needed a father who was home more. Eventually we reached a compro-

mise and bought a home closer to the city, with a much shorter commute. I changed my work habits to allow me to have more time with my family.

Throughout the ages the Lord has commanded His people to teach their children truth and righteousness. We encourage you to gather your families around you for family prayer, gospel study, family work, and family activities. We urge you to counsel with your family members and encourage them to participate in the important decisions like planning family activities.

### **Use the priesthood to bless family, others**

President Brigham Young taught that "the Priesthood . . . is [the] perfect order and system of government, and this alone can deliver the human family from all the evils which now afflict its members, and insure them happiness and felicity hereafter."<sup>12</sup>

We have been given the great power of the priesthood. It blesses us individually and provides blessings for our family; it blesses the quorums to which we belong; it blesses the congregations in which we are called to serve; and it even blesses the world in which we live. We need to learn how to righteously follow the doctrines and teachings the Lord has given to us as bearers of His holy priesthood. We are counseled:

"Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand."<sup>13</sup>

May the Lord bless us, as members of His Church, that we may realize what a blessing it is to have the priesthood on earth and to be able to use it for the benefit of our families and of all mankind. May we grow to understand our relationship to God our Eternal Father and the priest-

hood He has given to us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:5.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. "On Priesthood," *Improvement Era*, June 1935, 372.
4. John 15:16.

5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 93:41–43.
8. Moses 3:24.
9. Moses 5:4–5.
10. Moses 5:12.
11. *Marriage and Divorce* (1976), 17–18.
12. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 130.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99–100.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Pioneers are our spiritual ancestors

What a joy and privilege it is to be part of this worldwide Church and be taught and uplifted by prophets, seers, and revelators! This conference is being broadcast to 68 countries and translated into 55 languages. This is truly a global Church, with members spread across the nations of the earth. We are all children of a living and loving God, our Heavenly Father. I express my love to you, my dear brothers and sisters.

Just three months ago we joined under the inspired leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley in the dedication of the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple. It brought us back to the Prophet Joseph and renewed our memories of the early Saints—their sacrifices, sorrows, and tears, but also their courage, faith, and trust in the Lord. I have no ancestors among the 19th-century pioneers. However, since the first days of my Church membership, I have felt a close kinship to those early pioneers who crossed the plains. They are my spiritual ancestry, as they are for each and every member of the Church, regardless of nationality, language, or culture. They have established not only a safe place in the West but also a spiritual foundation for the building of the kingdom of God in all the nations of the world.

### Gospel brings spiritual refuge after war

As the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is now being embraced around the world, we are all pioneers in our own sphere and circumstance. It was in the turmoil of post-World War II Germany when my family first learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. George Albert Smith was the President then. I was only a young child, and we had lost all material belongings twice within only seven years. We were refugees with an uncertain future. However, during those same seven years, we gained more than any amount of money could ever buy. We found a supernal refuge, a place of defense from despair—the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church, led by a true and living prophet.

During this time of my childhood I played in bombed-out houses and grew up with the ever-present consequences of a lost war and the awareness that my own country had inflicted terrible pain on many nations during the horrific World War II.

The good news that Jesus Christ has made the perfect Atonement for mankind, redeeming all from the grave and rewarding each individual according to his or her works, was the healing power which brought hope and peace back into my life.

Whatever our challenges in life may be, our burdens may become light if we not only believe in Christ, but also believe in His ability and His power to cleanse and console our lives, and if we accept His peace.

### **Prophets and Apostles gave strength**

President David O. McKay was the prophet during my teenage years. I seemed to know him personally: I could feel his love, kindness, and dignity; he gave me confidence and courage in my young life. Even though I grew up thousands of miles away in Europe, I felt he trusted me, and I did not want to disappoint him.

Another source of strength was a letter written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison, addressed to Timothy, his trusted assistant and friend. He wrote:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:7–8).

These words from one of the ancient Apostles of our Savior rang with great importance for me in postwar times, even as they do today. Yet how many of us permit our fears to take control in this time of international tension, economical and political uncertainties, and personal challenges.

### **God speaks to us through prophets**

God is speaking to us in a consistent voice. He will deal with all the human family equally. We might be in a large ward or a small branch, our climate or vegetation may differ, the cultural background and language might vary, and the color of our skin could be totally different. But the universal power and blessings of the restored gospel are available to all, irrespective of culture, nationality, political system, tradition, language, economic environment, or education.

Today we have again apostles, seers, and revelators who are watchmen on the tower, messengers of supernal, healing truth. God speaks to us through them. They are profoundly aware of the different circumstances we members are living in. They are in this world but not of this world.

We have a living prophet on the face of the earth, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. He knows our challenges and fears. He has inspired answers. A year ago he taught us in his optimistic and clear way. He said:

“There is no need to fear. We can have peace in our hearts and peace in our homes. We can be an influence for good in this world, every one of us.”

“Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 74).

The prophets speak to us in the name of the Lord and in plainness. As the Book of Mormon confirms, “the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3).

### **Follow prophets’ inspired counsel**

It is our responsibility not only to listen but also to act upon His word, that we may claim the blessings of the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel. He said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

There may be times when we may feel overwhelmed, hurt, or on the edge of discouragement as we are trying so hard to be perfect members of the Church. Be assured, there is balm in Gilead. Let us listen to the prophets of our day as they help us to focus on the things that are central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal des-

tiny of His children. The Lord knows us, He loves us, He wants us to succeed, and He encourages us by saying:

"And see that all . . . things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that [men or women] should run faster than [they have] strength. . . . [But] it is expedient that [they] should be diligent" (Mosiah 4:27).

Are we diligent in living the commandments of God without running beyond our strength? Or are we just leisurely strolling along? Are we using our time, talents, and means wisely? Are we focused on the things which matter most? Are we following the inspired counsel of the prophets?

### Prophets' counsel about families

One example of great importance for humanity is strengthening our own families. The principle of family home evening was given to us in 1915. President McKay reminded parents again in 1964 that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" (quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5). In 1995 the prophets of our day called upon all the world to strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society. And only three years ago the First Presidency

and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles lovingly stated:

"We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80).

### Renew commitment to following prophets

Let us in humility and faith refresh our dedication and our commitment to follow the prophets, seers, and revelators in all diligence. Let us listen and be instructed and edified by those who hold all the keys of the kingdom. And as we attend this conference, may our hearts be changed, that there will be a great desire to do good (see Alma 19:33), and that we will be pioneers in building a spiritual foundation that will establish the Church in our part of the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Come, O Thou King of Kings."

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## Sister Coleen K. Menlove

### A voice of gladness and hope

I like exclamation marks! I use them often when writing notes to myself and to others. It is a way to show enthusiasm and commitment. One of my favorite scriptures is punctuated with an exclamation mark: "Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness!"

There are 14 more exclamation marks in the rest of the verse and the next four verses that follow. They read in part:

"A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; . . . a voice of . . . glad tidings of great joy. . . .

" . . . Glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation . . . !" <sup>1</sup>—with an exclamation mark.

We can hear a voice of gladness that brings exclamations of hope and joy into our lives. The joy of our testimonies of the Savior can punctuate every aspect of our lives as we seek to come unto Christ.

### **Bring up children in light and truth**

What about our children? Do they hear exclamations of joy and hope in the gospel? After a Primary lesson about Joseph Smith's First Vision, the class was asked to draw pictures to take home and share with their families. The children had been taught about the darkness Joseph experienced before the appearance of the Father and the Son. A six-year-old girl picked up a black crayon and started to draw. She colored the bottom and up one side of the page as dark as she could. When her teacher asked her about the picture, she said she was drawing Joseph Smith in the darkness.

Her teacher inquired, "Do you know that when Heavenly Father and Jesus appeared, all the darkness had to leave? Heavenly Father and Jesus are always more powerful than Satan, and They will protect you." The child turned back to her paper. In the top corner, she drew an outline of two figures; and then, trading her black crayon for a bright yellow one, she filled the rest of the page with light.

It is this light, the light of the restored gospel—a "voice of gladness"—that parents can help their children come to know. The adversary is real, but children can feel the peace and the joy that come as they exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Our children will not experience this light unless we teach them the gospel.

The Lord directed parents to "bring up [their] children in light and truth."<sup>2</sup> He also instructed us to teach our children "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord,"<sup>3</sup> and "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ . . . , and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup> We help tune their ears, minds, and hearts to

recognize "a voice of gladness" and desire to be worthy to obtain eternal joy when we teach the truths of the gospel.

This is exemplified in the Book of Mormon. Enos's father taught him "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This great blessing caused Enos to proclaim, "Blessed be the name of my God for it."<sup>5</sup> Enos then explains, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart."<sup>6</sup>

### **A mother teaches of Christ**

A friend shared an experience she had as a small child in a branch of the Church where she was the only child of Primary age. Week after week, her mother held home Primary on the same day and at the same time. She eagerly anticipated sitting on the sofa with her mother and learning the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to live it. Minutes carefully recorded by her mother in a notebook revealed that the home Primary meetings always included prayers, songs, and a lesson.

The desire of this mother's heart was for her little daughter to develop a testimony of Jesus Christ and to feel the joy of the gospel. She provided her daughter with what had been so important to her as a child. This little girl, now a woman of faith and covenant, looks back on her childhood with deep appreciation for her mother's enthusiasm and commitment to teach her of the Savior. This mother's diligence became her daughter's delight—with an exclamation mark!

### **Give highest priority to family**

Living prophets are clear regarding our sacred duty to teach our children.<sup>7</sup> In a letter issued by the First Presidency, we are instructed "to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activ-



ities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”<sup>8</sup>

Yes, life can be fast-paced for parents and is becoming so for children. It would be easy to say there is not enough time to fit everything in. Looking back at a time that passed all too quickly, I can now see that each day was filled with precious little moments full of opportunity to help our children hear the “voice of gladness” in the gospel. Children are always learning from us. They are learning what is important by what we choose to do, as well as what we choose not to do. Casual, infrequent family prayers, scripture study, and family home evenings will not be enough to fortify our children. Where will children learn the gospel and standards such as chastity, integrity, and honesty if not at home? These values can be reinforced at church, but parents are the most capable and most effective in teaching them to their children.

### Helps in teaching children

Understanding who these children are and their potential in God’s kingdom can help us have a greater desire to meet the challenges more patiently—more lovingly. The Lord will help us teach our children if we will do all that is within our power. Families are forever, and the Savior wants us to succeed. As we seek the Spirit, we can receive the comfort, guidance, and reassurance we need to fulfill the responsibilities and receive the blessings of parenthood.

The divinely inspired programs of the Church and those called to minister to our children can help us. My husband and I are grateful for bishops, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and home and visiting teachers who helped strengthen our family. Whether we have children in our own home or not, each of us can play an important part in assisting parents.

### Children teach their parents

Children are so capable of learning the significant things of the kingdom. As we listen to them, we can better understand how they are applying what they are learning about the gospel. A father explained to his four-year-old daughter that the family had spent most of the day cleaning the house and every room was clean except one.

“Do you know which room is not clean?” he asked her.

“Mine,” she quickly replied.

“Do you know anyone who could help clean your room?” he asked, expecting her to answer that she could.

Instead she replied, “Well, Daddy, I know that any time you are scared, worried, or need help, you can get down on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to help.”

It is interesting to note that as we listen to our children, they can also teach us. A father shared an experience he had with his eight-year-old daughter. He said:

“While I was contemplating remarks for my sacrament meeting talk on ‘Becoming like Little Children,’ I asked my daughter why we needed to become like little children. She responded, ‘Because we are all little children compared to Jesus, and because little children have a good imagination.’”

Surprised by the last part of her answer, he asked why we need a good imagination. She replied, “So we can imagine Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, and when we take the sacrament we can think about Him.”

### The Savior’s example of loving children

As in all things, the Savior set the example in how we should love and teach our children. When He appeared to the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere, the scriptures tell us that as He spoke to the people, “he wept, . . . and he took their lit-

tle children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.”<sup>9</sup>

Referring to this occasion, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “There is no more tender and beautiful picture in all of sacred writing than this simple language describing the love of the Savior for little children.”<sup>10</sup>

### Invite the Spirit for teaching to be effective

The key to accomplishing effective gospel teaching in the home is to invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. Some of the best counsel my husband and I received during some turbulent times of raising our children was to do all that is possible to invite and keep the Spirit in our home. Children cannot learn spiritual things and have spiritual feelings without the guidance of the Spirit.

As parents, we can share our testimony of Jesus Christ with our children often. The bearing of testimony, whether during family home evening or in a teaching moment, will invite the Spirit. President Boyd K. Packer also instructs us to “teach our young people to bear testimony—to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is true.”<sup>11</sup>

President Hinckley reassures us: “Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsi-

bilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges.”<sup>12</sup>

I know—with an exclamation mark—that children can receive a witness by the Spirit that brings conviction and commitment to their hearts! I bear witness that this is our charge, this is our opportunity: to diligently teach and testify to our children of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they might also hear the “voice of gladness.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19, 23; see also verses 20–22.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
5. Enos 1:1.
6. Enos 1:3.
7. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
9. 3 Nephi 17:21.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.
11. *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (1991), 154.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### True disciples maintain faith

In the churn of crises and the sinister swirl of global events, true disciples will maintain faith in a revealing, loving God and in His plan for redeeming His children, which plan is the *why* of *all* that God does! (see Moses 1:39). Furthermore, God’s character, as revealed to us, tells us that He has the cosmic capacity to ensure

that He really is “able” to do His immense work (see 2 Nephi 27:20–21; Joseph Smith Translation, Isaiah 29:22–23).

True disciples will also maintain faith in His atoning Son, Jesus Christ, and, by being “converted unto the Lord” (3 Nephi 1:22), will be steadily undergoing a happy and “mighty change” (Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14).

Actually, brothers and sisters, Jesus is already victorious in the greatest battle anyway: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33; italics added). The Atonement was accomplished, bringing a universal resurrection to billions and billions, lifting all from the grave—regardless of how and when we got there! Therefore, on a clear night, though we see stars of incomprehensible longevity, they are not immortal. But, thankfully, we are!

Likewise, “true believers” (4 Nephi 1:36) will maintain faith in the latter-day Restoration with its empowering visitations, its prophets and apostles, and its “plain and precious” scriptures (1 Nephi 13:29). The gospel’s first principles surely fit the last days.

Ironically, as the restored Church comes “out of obscurity,” what seem to be stern challenges will actually disclose further the distinctiveness of the Church (D&C 1:30). Nevertheless, matching our behavior more closely with our beliefs will bring relentless reminders about the ongoing duties of discipleship.

### The gospel edifies and lifts us

The restored gospel is buoyant, wide, and deep—beyond our comprehension. It edifies, whether concerning divine design in the universe or stressing the importance of personal chastity and fidelity. Only meek disciples can safely handle such a bold theology.

With scriptures to anchor and reassure us, we too can “look unto God . . . and he will *console [us]* in [our] afflictions” (Jacob 3:1; italics added).

We too can be “*supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, . . . he will still deliver [us]*” (Alma 36:27; italics added; see also verse 3).

For the Lord has said, “I will be in your midst” (D&C 49:27). “I will lead you along” (D&C 78:18).

Furthermore, God will give us priceless, personal assurances through the Holy Ghost (see John 14:26; D&C 36:2). Whether in tranquil or turbulent times, our best source of comfort is the Comforter.

Enoch wept over the wickedness in his time, and at first he “[refused] to be comforted” (Moses 7:44; see also verse 41). But then came revelations, successively showing Jesus redeeming the world, the latter-day Restoration, and the Second Coming. Enoch was told to “lift up [his] heart, and be glad” (Moses 7:44). The doctrines and revelations can likewise lift us—even amid “wars and rumours of wars” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7; see also 1 Nephi 12:2; Mormon 8:30; D&C 45:26). Thus we need not grow weary in our minds (see Hebrews 12:3; D&C 84:80).

### Trials can increase our capacity

Our discipleship need not be dried out by discouragement or the heat of the day, nor should dismaying societal symptoms “weigh [us] down” (Moroni 9:25), including “in-your-face” carnal confrontiveness (see Alma 32:38).

We may shrink from some things in the current human scene, but Jesus did not shrink in Gethsemane nor on Calvary. Instead, He “finished [His] preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19).

Regarding trials, including of our faith and patience, there are no exemptions—only variations (see Mosiah 23:21). These calisthenics are designed to increase our capacity for happiness and service. Yet the faithful will not be totally immune from the events on this planet. Thus the courageous attitudes of imperiled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are worthy of emulation. They knew that God could rescue them. “But if not,” they vowed, they would still serve God anyway (see Daniel 3:16–18). Similarly, keeping the unfashionable but imperative first and seventh

commandments can reflect the courage which three young women displayed anciently; they said no with their lives (see Abraham 1:11).

Therefore, we can be troubled on every side, but nothing can really separate us from the love of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 4:8; Romans 8:35–39); worldly anxieties are not part of being “anxiously engaged” (D&C 58:27). Even so, as Peter urged, we can and should cast our cares upon the Lord because He surely cares for us! (see 1 Peter 5:7). Oh, brothers and sisters, the awaiting emancipation of such trusting surrender!

### Repent to remedy mistakes

As to remedying our personal mistakes, we face no hindering traffic jams on the road of repentance. It is a toll road, not a freeway, and applying Christ's Atonement will speed us along.

There may need to be plain-speaking Jethros in our lives to stretch us (see Exodus 18:14–24) or moments of stark realization, as with the original Twelve, who rightly concluded: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Besides, unless we are filled with resolve, what will we say to the heroes and heroines of Martin's Cove and the Sweetwater? That “we admire you, but we are reluctant to wade through our own rivers of chilling adversity”?

### God oversees vast work, knows each of us

Brothers and sisters, by divine appointment, “these are [our] days” (Helaman 7:9), since “all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:32). Moreover, though we live in a failing world, we have not been sent here to fail.

Recall the new star that announced the birth at Bethlehem? It was in its precise orbit long before it so shone. We are likewise placed in human orbits to illumi-

nate. Divine correlation functions not only in the cosmos but on this planet too. After all, the Book of Mormon plates were not buried in Belgium, only to have Joseph Smith born centuries later in distant Bombay.

The raising up of that constellation of “wise” Founding Fathers to produce America's remarkable Constitution, whose rights and protection belong to “every man,” was not a random thing either (see D&C 101:77–78, 80). One historian called our Founding Fathers “the most remarkable generation of public men in the history of the United States or perhaps of any other nation” (Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Birth of the Nation* [1968], 245). Another historian added, “It would be invaluable if we could know what produced this burst of talent from a base of only two and a half million inhabitants” (Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* [1984], 18).

Yet some still settle for an inconsistent or incapable god. Laman and Lemuel, for instance, were aware of ancient Israel's miraculous rescue from Pharaoh's mighty armies, but they murmured and were intimidated by a mere local Laban. We can be so provincial and so self-concerned. God, who oversees the interlacings of galaxies, stars, and worlds, asks us to confess His hand in our personal lives too (see D&C 59:21). Have we not been reassured about the fall of one sparrow and that the very hairs of our heads are numbered? (see Matthew 10:29–30; D&C 84:80). God is in the details! Just as the Lord knows all of His vast creations, He also knows and loves each in any crowd—indeed, He knows and loves each and all of mankind! (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

Consider His tender salutations to Moses—“I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight” (Exodus 33:12)—and to Joseph: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

### Be fully persuaded of God's capacity

No wonder King Benjamin pleads with us to believe that we do not comprehend all that God comprehends (see Mosiah 4:9). Ignoring the revelations about God's astounding capacity is like playing aimlessly and contentedly with wooden blocks featuring the letters of the alphabet, without realizing that Shakespearean sonnets were created using that same alphabet.

Father Abraham "staggered not" at the divine promise of posterity, because he was "fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20–21). May we be "fully persuaded."

These words of Anselm are thus such good counsel: "Believe in order to understand," rather than "understand [in order to] believe" (*St. Anselm*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane [1903], 7).

### Despite troubles, we can have peace

Brothers and sisters, though living in a time of commotion, we can stand in holy places and not be moved (see D&C 45:32; 87:8). Though living in a time of violence, we can have that inner peace that passeth understanding (see Philippians 4:7). Perplexing things will still happen, but, like Nephi, we can still know that God loves us, a felicitous and fundamental fact which can and will sustain us through so much! (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

How can we know that God is aware of us and loves us? He tells us by the scriptures—likewise, by our honestly counting the blessings and bestowals of His grace in our lives. Most of all, He tells us by the still, small voice of the Spirit! (see Alma 34:38; D&C 78:17–19).

### Soaring revelations and the mighty change

The "mighty change" required by discipleship may seem roller-coaster-like, as soaring revelations bring the gravity of humbling perspective. It was so with

Moses, who "fell unto the earth" and exclaimed, "Man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed" (Moses 1:9–10). Then came, however, the divine, reassuring disclosure:

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

"Mighty" changing, however, is mighty hard work, a labor made more difficult by heeding the unflattering urges of the natural man. Too often our possibilities have been muted by the mundane. We are scarcely ready for the vaulting revelations. Imagine—a spirit portion of each of us is actually eternal, and we were with God in the beginning! (see D&C 93:29, 33).

### Encircled in the arms of His love

Of course we cannot fully comprehend all this *right now*! Of course we cannot know the meaning of all things *right now*. But we can know, *right now*, that God knows us and loves us individually!

But, brothers and sisters, what keeps us from knowing and loving Him more? Our reluctance to give away all our sins, thinking instead that a down payment will do. Likewise, our reluctance to let our wills be swallowed up in His will, thinking instead that merely acknowledging His will is sufficient! (see Mosiah 15:7).

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that God, "before [the earth] rolled into existence, . . . contemplated the whole of the events connected with the earth. . . . [God] knew . . . the depth of iniquity that would be connected with the human family, their weakness and strength, . . . the situation of all nations and . . . their destiny, . . . and [He] has made ample provision [for mankind's] redemption" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 220).

Part of God's "ample provision" consists of imperfect people like you and me, committed to shining and serving in our appointed orbits, knowing all the while

that we are encircled "in the arms of [His] love" (D&C 6:20).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today."

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### President Monson

Brothers and sisters, there surely is sunshine in our souls today. As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to this wonderful Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this morning.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Faust's remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ" and the benediction will be offered by Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President James E. Faust

### What's in it for me?

I humbly pray that the same spirit which has attended the other speakers this morning will continue as I address you.

Many years ago I was in a professional association with two older, more experienced men. We had been friends for many years and found it mutually beneficial to help one another. One day, one associate sought our help on a complex matter. As soon as the issue had been explained, the first thing the other associate said was, "What's in it for me?" When his old friend responded so selfishly, I saw the look of pain and disappointment on the face of the one who had invited our help. The relationship between the two was never quite the same after that. Our self-serving friend did not prosper, as his selfishness soon eclipsed his considerable gifts, talents, and qualities. Unfortunately, one of the curses of the world today is encapsulated in this selfish response: "What's in it for me?"

During my professional career I helped the heirs of a noble couple settle their estate. The estate was not large, but it was the fruit of many years of hard work and sacrifice. Their children were all decent, God-fearing people who had been

taught to live the saving principles of the Savior. But when it came to dividing up the property, a dispute developed about who should get what. Even though there was nothing of great value to fight about, feelings of selfishness and greed caused a rift among some of the family members that never healed and continued into the next generation. How tragic that the legacy offered by these wonderful parents turned out to be so destructive of family unity and love among their children. I learned from this that selfishness and greed bring bitterness and contention; on the other hand, sacrifice and giving bring peace and contentment.

### Satan is the father of selfishness

In the Grand Council in Heaven, when the great plan of salvation for God's children was presented, Jesus responded, "Here am I, send me,"<sup>1</sup> and "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."<sup>2</sup> And thus He became our Savior. In contrast, Satan, who had been highly regarded as "a son of the morning,"<sup>3</sup> countered that he would come and "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost."<sup>4</sup> Satan had two conditions: the first was the denial of agency, and the second, that he

would have the honor. In other words, something had to be in it for him. And thus he became the father of lies and selfishness.

### Learn to overcome selfishness

Taking up one's cross and following the Savior means overcoming selfishness; it is a commitment to serve others. Selfishness is one of the baser human traits, which must be subdued and overcome. We torture our souls when we focus on getting rather than giving. Often the first word that many little children learn to say is *mine*. They have to be taught the joy of sharing. Surely one of the great schoolmasters for overcoming selfishness is parenthood. Mothers go into the valley of the shadow of death to bring forth children. Parents work hard and give up so much to shelter, feed, clothe, protect, and educate their children.

I have learned that selfishness has more to do with how we feel about our possessions than how much we have. The poet Wordsworth said, "The world is too much with us; late and soon, / Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."<sup>5</sup> A poor man can be selfish<sup>6</sup> and a rich man generous, but a person obsessed only with getting will have a hard time finding peace in this life.

Elder William R. Bradford once said: "Of all influences that cause men to choose wrong, selfishness is undoubtedly the strongest. Where there is selfishness, the Spirit of the Lord is absent. Talents go unshared, the needs of the poor unfilled, the weak unstrengthened, the ignorant untaught, and the lost unrecovered."<sup>7</sup>

### We are custodians of the Lord's gifts

I recently spoke with one of the most generous people I have ever known. I asked him to describe the feelings of fulfillment that have come because of his generosity. He spoke about the feeling of

joy and happiness in one's heart from sharing with others less fortunate. He stated that nothing is really his—that it all comes from the Lord and we are only the custodians of what He has given us. As the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "All these things are mine, and ye are my stewards."<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes it is easy for us to forget that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."<sup>9</sup> The Savior warned us, as recorded in the book of Luke:

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."<sup>10</sup>

### "Vell, den, I vill not go"

Some years ago, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen told about one of his distant Scandinavian relatives who joined the Church. He was quite well-to-do and sold his lands and stock in Denmark to come to Utah with his family. For a while he did well as far as the Church and its activities were concerned, and he prospered financially. However, he became so caught up in his possessions that he forgot about his purpose in coming to America. The bishop

visited him and implored him to become active as he used to be. The years passed, and some of his brethren visited him and said, "Now, Lars, the Lord was good to you when you were in Denmark. He has been good to you since you have come here. . . . We think now, since you are growing a little older, that it would be well for you to spend some of your time in the interests of the Church. After all, you can't take these things with you when you go."

Jolted by this remark, the man replied, "Vell, den, I vill not go."<sup>10</sup> But he did! And so will all of us!

### Abraham's example

It is so easy for some to become obsessed with what they possess and to lose eternal perspective. When Abraham went out of Egypt, his nephew Lot went with him to Bethel. Both Abraham and Lot had flocks and herds and tents, "and the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together."<sup>12</sup> After some friction between the herdmen of Abraham and Lot, Abraham made a proposal to Lot:

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

" . . . If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."<sup>13</sup>

Lot saw "what was in it for him" as he looked over the fruitful plain of Jordan and chose to take the land which was close to the worldly place of Sodom.<sup>14</sup> Abraham was content to take his flocks to live in the more barren land of Canaan, yet he accumulated even more wealth there.

Abraham, however, is remembered more as the grand patriarch of the Lord's covenant people. One of the first references we have of the payment of tithing is when Abraham paid a tithe of all he owned to Melchizedek.<sup>15</sup> Abraham had

the confidence of the Lord, who showed him the intelligences of the premortal world, the choosing of a Redeemer, and the Creation.<sup>16</sup> Abraham is also known for his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. This tremendous act of faith is symbolic of the ultimate selfless act in all of history, when the Savior gave His life for all of us to atone for our sins.

### The Good Samaritan inspires a young boy

Some years ago a young "Korean boy took his weekly allowance and bought newspapers with it. Then he and some friends sold these on the streets of Seoul, Korea, to raise money to help a fellow student who did not have sufficient funds to stay in school. This young man also gave part of his lunch to this boy each day so that he would not go hungry. Why did he do these things? Because he had been studying the story of the Good Samaritan<sup>17</sup> and didn't just want to learn about the Good Samaritan but wanted to know what it felt like to be one by doing what a Good Samaritan would do. . . . Only after careful questioning by his father about his activities"<sup>18</sup> did he admit, "But, Dad, every time I help my friend, I feel I'm becoming more like the Good Samaritan. Besides that, I want to help my classmates who aren't as fortunate as I. It's not that big of a thing I am doing. I read about it in my seminary manual and felt it was the thing I ought to do."<sup>19</sup> The boy did not ask, "What's in it for me?" before performing this kindness. In fact, he did it without any thought of recompense or recognition.

### An unselfish man saves thousands

On September 11, 2001, the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were hit by terrorist-controlled airliners that caused both towers to collapse. Thousands of people were killed. Out of this tragedy have come hundreds of stories of courageous, unselfish acts. One



very poignant and heroic account is the *Washington Post's* story of retired army colonel Cyril "Rick" Rescorla, who was working as vice president for corporate security of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

Rick was a very experienced ex-military combat leader. He was in his office when "the first plane struck the north tower at 8:48 a.m. . . . He took a call from the 71st floor reporting the fireball in One World Trade Center, and he immediately ordered an evacuation of all 2,700 employees in Building Two," as well as 1,000 more in Building Five. Using his bullhorn, he moved up the floors, working through a bottleneck on the 44th and going as high as the 72nd, helping to evacuate the people from each floor. One friend who saw Rick reassuring people in the 10th-floor stairwell told him, "Rick, you've got to get out, too."

"As soon as I make sure everyone else is out," he replied.

"He was not rattled at all. He was putting the lives of his colleagues ahead of his own." He called headquarters to say he was going back up to search for stragglers.

His wife had watched the United Airlines jet go through his tower. "After a while, her phone rang. It was Rick.

"I don't want you to cry," he said. "I have to evacuate my people now."

"She kept sobbing.

"If something happens to me, I want you to know that you made my life."

"The phone went dead." Rick did not make it out.

"Morgan Stanley lost only six of its 2,700 employees in the south tower on Sept. 11, an isolated miracle amid the carnage. And company officials say Rescorla deserves most of the credit. He drew up the evacuation plan. He hustled his colleagues to safety. And then he apparently went back into the inferno to search for stragglers. He was the last man out of the south tower after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, and no one seems to

doubt that he would've been again last month if the skyscraper hadn't collapsed on him first."

Amid the great evil and carnage of September 11, 2001, Rick was not looking for what might be in it for him; instead he was unselfishly thinking about others and the danger they were in. Rick Rescorla was the "right man in the right place at the right time." Rick, "a 62-year-old mountain of a man coolly [sacrificed] his life for others."<sup>20</sup> As the Savior Himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>21</sup>

### **He that loseth his life shall find it**

Most of us don't demonstrate our unselfishness in such a dramatic way, but for each of us unselfishness can mean being the right person at the right time in the right place to render service. Almost every day brings opportunities to perform unselfish acts for others. Such acts are unlimited and can be as simple as a kind word, a helping hand, or a gracious smile.

The Savior reminds us, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."<sup>22</sup> One of life's paradoxes is that a person who approaches everything with a what's-in-it-for-me attitude may acquire money, property, and land but in the end will lose the fulfillment and the happiness that a person enjoys who shares his talents and gifts generously with others.

I wish to testify that the greatest fulfilling service to be rendered by any of us is in the service of the Master. In the various pursuits of my life, none has been as rewarding or beneficial as responding to the calls for service in this Church. Each has been different. Each one has brought a separate blessing. The greatest fulfillment in life comes by rendering service to others and not being obsessed with "what's in it for me." Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Abraham 3:27.
2. Moses 4:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 76:26.
4. Moses 4:1.
5. William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon," lines 1–2.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 56:17.
7. "Selfishness vs. Selflessness," *Ensign*, Apr. 1983, 51.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 104:86.
9. Psalm 24:1.
10. Luke 12:15–21.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 35; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 35.
12. Genesis 13:6.
13. Genesis 13:8–9.

14. See Genesis 13:10–11.
15. See Alma 13:15.
16. See Abraham 3–4.
17. See Luke 10:25–37.
18. Victor L. Brown, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 51–52; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 40.
19. "Profiting for Others," *New Era*, June 1979, 50.
20. Michael Grunwald, "A Tower of Courage," *Washington Post*, 28 Oct. 2001.
21. John 15:13.
22. Matthew 10:39.

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The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."  
Elder Richard D. Allred offered the  
benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area. The choir was directed by Jared L. Dunn, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

**President James E. Faust**

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the

Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area, under the direction of Jared L. Dunn, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Glorious Things Are Sung of Zion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Glorious Things Are Sung of Zion."

Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

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**President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Come Along, Come Along," following which President Thomas S. Monson will present the Gen-

eral Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "Come Along, Come Along."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Ben B. Banks as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate him as an emeritus

General Authority. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it. Thank you.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorím, L. Edward Brown, Earl M. Monson, and Jerald L. Taylor and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Paulo C. Amorím, Carl W. Bacon, Bruce B. Bingham, O. Brent Black, Antonio Cappi, Victor D. Cave, Craig C. Christensen, James M. Dunn, David W. Ferrel, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Mario E. Guzmán, Spencer V. Jones, Hitoshi Kashikura, Chong-Youl Kim, Richard K. Klein, John Maxwell, Wolfgang H. Paul, Keith L. Smith, Juan Uceda, Claudio D. Zivic. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand. They have served well.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder Richard J. Maynes as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. It is proposed that we sustain Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Craig C. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, and Spencer V. Jones as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Val R. Christensen as second counselor in

the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of sincere appreciation Sisters Margaret D. Nadauld, Carol B. Thomas, and Sharon G. Larsen as the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of the Young Women general board. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Susan Winder Tanner as the new general president of the Young Women, with Sister Julie Bangerter Beck as first counselor and Sister Elaine Schwartz Dalton as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

President Hinckley, it appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers. Thanks to all those who have been released for their unstinting service and commitment to their Heavenly Father, and welcome to those who have been newly called. We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to take their places on the stand. Thank you.

### **President Faust**

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Robert D. Hales, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy will address us.

They will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" At the conclusion of the singing, we will hear from Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder David B. Haight**

### **An honor to stand and bear witness**

When President Thomas S. Monson asked those new members of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to come up and take their places on the stand, I remembered vividly April 1970, when I was called to be an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve—which was a surprise to me. I'd only known about it for just a few hours. As I was invited to sit in one of the red chairs in the old Tabernacle, the choir started to sing "O Divine Redeemer." As I listened to that pleading song with that wonderful melody, I silently asked the Savior to accept me as I am and remember not my failures, my shortcomings, and my sins (see Psalm

25:7). What a wonderful day that was! That flashed through my mind as President Monson made that invitation today.

I'm honored to be here this afternoon to spend a few moments with all of you and bear to you my witness and my testimony and my feelings regarding this wonderful work.

I told Elder Neal A. Maxwell I would come up here without my cane. He had it ready for me, but I said, "No, I can get by without it. I'll show you I have the faith that it will happen." As I get older and as the years roll on, I'm honored to have this opportunity and to have the ability and the desire to stand and witness to you of the blessings of the gospel that have come into my life during these past many years.

I don't know if I'm the oldest one in this great hall today, but I am now in my 97th year. When it was announced this morning that this is the 172nd semiannual conference of the Church, I thought some people in their younger years could look upon 172 as a long, long time. I would remind you of the 100th anniversary of the Church. At that time, Ruby and I were married. It was 1930. This is the 172nd anniversary of the Church, and we have been married 72 years. I'm only mentioning that to you so you mathematicians can remember 172; it comes pretty easily.

### **Gratitude for blessings**

I wish at this time to pay tribute and express gratitude to my Heavenly Father for the blessings I've received all the years of my life—for having been born of goodly parents and raised in a goodly home. And as we have moved around the country in all of the activities we have been involved in, I'm grateful to have been associated with good people. Good people influence your life and help in molding your own personality and character and help you to mingle out in society and live the way that you should live. They help you carry on worthwhile enterprises, and they lift you onto a higher plane. And so I'm grateful to my Heavenly Father for the blessings I have had. I bear witness of Him—that I know that He is our Father and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Creator, and the Savior of all of mankind. I am grateful for the majestic role He has played in the Creation and in establishing the gospel on the earth and for the opportunity that brings to mankind, if they will listen, to hear and to understand and to have the blessings of heaven if they merit them and to live in such a way that the gospel becomes a great part of their life.

I have gratitude for my ancestors who joined the Church back in the early days of the Church, who moved from upstate

New York to join with the Saints in Nauvoo and became involved with the Nauvoo Temple and then with the exodus into the West. For all of these blessings, I'm grateful on this day, as I pronounce them to you.

### **Inspired leadership of President Hinckley**

I must mention President Gordon B. Hinckley. He gave an outstanding talk this morning—giving us an overview of the recent years but particularly an overview of the events of Nauvoo and of the rebuilding of that majestic temple. All that has taken place there has been a blessing to the world and to mankind.

I want President Hinckley to know that I have watched carefully since he was called to be an additional counselor to President Spencer W. Kimball and as he has assumed his role in the First Presidency. How he has grown and matured and been inspired and directed in carrying out the activities that we have been a witness to! Many of us have played some small role in the vision that he had of the growth that has happened in the Church recently, including the building of the temples, where we now have 114 operating. All of these things have been the result of the inspired direction of President Hinckley. Bless his heart for what he has done in helping the Church to expand and our image to grow and improve throughout the world. We're so grateful for what he has done, for the stature that we have today in the Church, and for his leadership.

### **Gratitude of a healed leper**

As recorded in Luke, one day the Savior entered a village where there were ten lepers. Those of us who have grown up in the last few years know very little about lepers. Leprosy was a terrible, dreaded disease anciently. These ten lepers came to the Savior and said, "Master, have mercy

upon us; have mercy upon us who have that terrible ailment of leprosy." And the Savior said to the ten lepers, "Go visit your priest, and he will take care of you," which they did. They went to see their priests, and they were cleansed, all ten of them. A short time later one of them returned to the Savior and fell on his face and his hands and his knees, thanking the Savior for blessing him and making him well from that terrible disease. And the Savior said to that one man: "Weren't there ten? What has happened to the other nine? Where are they?" (See Luke 17:11-19.)

As I've read that story again and again, it's made a great impression upon me. How would you like to be part of the "nine society"? Wouldn't that be something—to be numbered among those who failed to return and acknowledge the Savior for the blessings He had given them? Only one returned.

### **Don't take blessings for granted**

It's so easy for us to receive blessings in life, many of them almost uncounted, and have things happen in our lives that can help change our lives, improve our lives, and bring the Spirit into our lives. But we sometimes take them for granted. How grateful we should be for the blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings into our hearts and souls. I would remind all of you that if we're ever going to show gratitude properly to our Heavenly Father, we should do it with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength—because it was He who gave us life and breath. He gave us the opportunity to live as we are, to have the gospel in our lives, to have the example of good people like President Hinckley leading the Church throughout the world today and the opportunity for the young people to look to him with pride

and gratitude for a leader who looks and acts the part and demonstrates what the Spirit of Christ can bring into our heart and soul. As that gratitude is magnified and developed and expanded, it can bless our hearts and our minds and our souls to where we'd like to continue to carry on and do those things that we are asked to do.

### **Family raises hands to sustain leaders**

We have a lot of our family scattered in at least 20 locations in the United States and England. I have suggested to them that when they have opportunities to sustain the General Authorities—particularly President Hinckley and his counselors—if they have to stand at the radio or wherever it might be, that with enthusiasm they raise their hands and say to themselves, "I'm part of sustaining the leadership of the Church." I had in my mind's eye today as we were raising our hands some little youngsters—children whom we love and adore—raising their hands in various parts of the world. We hope that we will implant in them along with the Spirit of the Lord a desire to learn, to know, to live and be part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We hope they fully enjoy their opportunities to develop their characters and to be able to reach out and help change and lift the hearts of other people.

God lives. He is our Father. I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Prophet Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. President Hinckley is our inspired leader over this Church throughout the world today. Bless his heart for all that he does and for the inspiration and revelation and vision that is his as he leads the work forward. I leave this witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Tithing helps qualify us for the temple

Tithing is a test of faith with eternal blessings.<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament, Abraham proved his faith by paying tithes to the great high priest Melchizedek.<sup>2</sup> Abraham's grandson Jacob vowed to the Lord, "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."<sup>3</sup>

Tithing has been established in these latter days as an essential law for members of the Lord's restored Church. It is one of the basic ways we witness our faith in Him and our obedience to His laws and commandments. Tithing is one of the commandments that qualifies us, by our faith, to enter the temple—the house of the Lord.

Just over three months after the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the Saints were building the Nauvoo Temple, Brigham Young wrote on behalf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"Enter steadily and regularly upon a strict observance of the law of tithing, . . . then come up to the House of the Lord, and be taught in his ways, and walk in his paths."<sup>4</sup>

The strict observance of the law of tithing not only qualifies us to receive the higher, saving ordinances of the temple, it allows us to receive them on behalf of our ancestors. When asked whether members of the Church could be baptized for the dead if they had not paid their tithing, President John Taylor, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, answered:

"A man who has not paid his tithing is unfit to be baptized for his dead. . . . If a man has not faith enough to attend to these little things, he has not faith enough to save himself and his friends."<sup>5</sup>

### Tithing fortifies our faith

Tithing develops and tests our faith. By sacrificing to the Lord what we may

think we need or want for ourselves, we learn to rely on Him. Our faith in Him makes it possible to keep our temple covenants and receive eternal temple blessings. Pioneer Sarah Rich, wife of Charles C. Rich, wrote in her journal after leaving Nauvoo:

"Many were the blessings we had received in the House of the Lord, which [have] caused joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows, and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us."<sup>6</sup>

As was true for the pioneers, the obedient payment of tithing fortifies our faith, and that faith sustains us through the trials, tribulations, and sorrows in our life's journey.

Tithing also teaches us to control our desires and passions for the things of this world. Payment of tithing encourages us to be honest in our dealings with our fellowmen. We learn to trust that what we have been given, through the blessings of the Lord and our own diligent efforts, is sufficient for our needs.

### A preparatory law

Tithing has a special purpose as a preparatory law. Early in this dispensation, the Lord commanded certain members of the Church to live the higher law of consecration—a law received by covenant. When this covenant was not kept, great tribulations came upon the Saints.<sup>7</sup> The law of consecration was then withdrawn. In its place the Lord revealed the law of tithing for the whole Church.<sup>8</sup> On July 8, 1838, He declared:

"And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.

" . . . Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever."<sup>9</sup>

The law of tithing prepares us to live the higher law of consecration—to dedicate and give all our time, talents, and resources to the work of the Lord. Until the day when we are required to live this higher law, we are commanded to live the law of the tithe, which is to freely<sup>10</sup> give one-tenth of our income annually.

### **Tithing yields spiritual, temporal blessings**

To those who faithfully and honestly live the law of tithing, the Lord promises an abundance of blessings. Some of these blessings are temporal, just as tithes are temporal. But like the outward physical ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, the commandment to pay tithing requires temporal sacrifice, which ultimately yields great spiritual blessings.

I know of a couple who lived thousands of miles from the nearest temple. Although they earned little, they faithfully paid their tithing and saved all that they could to journey to the house of the Lord. After a year, the husband's brother—not a member of the Church—unexpectedly came forward and offered them two airplane tickets. This temporal blessing made possible the spiritual blessings of their temple endowments and sealing. An additional spiritual blessing came later as the brother, touched by the couple's humble faithfulness, joined the Church.

The temporal and spiritual blessings of tithing are specifically tailored to us and our families, according to the Lord's will. But to receive them, we must obey the law upon which they are predicated.<sup>11</sup> In the case of tithing, the Lord has said:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."<sup>12</sup>

Would any of us intentionally reject an outpouring of blessings from the Lord?

Sadly, this is what we do when we fail to pay tithing. We say no to the very blessings we are seeking and praying to receive. If you are one who has doubted the blessings of tithing, I encourage you to accept the Lord's invitation to "prove [Him] now herewith." Pay your tithing. Unlock the windows of heaven. You will be abundantly blessed for your obedience and faithfulness to the Lord's laws and commandments.

### **A truly equitable law**

Be assured that these blessings are poured out equally on rich and poor alike. As the hymn says, it is "sacrifice [that] brings forth the blessings of heaven," not the sum of our contributions.<sup>13</sup> Members who freely give a full 10 percent of their annual income receive all of the promised blessings of tithing, whether the amount is a widow's mite or a king's ransom.

Some years ago I visited a meetinghouse of another denomination. Etched in the beautiful stained-glass windows which had been brought from Europe was the name of their donor; carved into the majestic pulpit made from the cedars of Lebanon were the initials of a wealthy benefactor; the most desirable pews were named after prominent families who had donated the most to the chapel building fund.

By contrast, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all who pay a full tithe are equally acknowledged and blessed by the Lord, without special public honors and rewards. He is "no respecter of persons."<sup>14</sup> His law of revenue is truly an equitable one.

### **The Lord oversees the use of tithing funds**

Significant in our day is the way in which tithing is distributed. As we see examples of greed and avarice among some irresponsible corporate executives, we can be grateful that the Lord has provided a



way for tithing to be administered under His direction.

According to revelation, bishops are ordained to "keep the Lord's storehouse; to receive the funds of the church."<sup>15</sup> Both bishops and clerks are expected to be full-tithe payers who have learned to live prudently within their means. Within hours of receiving tithing funds from members of their wards and branches, these local leaders transmit the funds directly to the headquarters of the Church.

Then, as revealed by the Lord, the use of tithing is determined by a council comprised of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. The Lord specifically states that the council's work be directed "by mine own voice unto them."<sup>16</sup> This council is called the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes.

It is remarkable to witness this council heed the Lord's voice. Each member is aware of and participates in all the council's decisions. No decision is made until the council is unanimous. All tithing funds are spent for the purposes of the Church, including welfare (care for the poor and needy), temples, building and upkeep of meetinghouses, education, curriculum—in short, the work of the Lord.

When a friend of President George Albert Smith asked him what he thought of his friend's personal plan to take what would have been tithing and donate his tenth in charitable donations of his own choice, President Smith's counsel was:

"I think you are a very generous man with someone else's property. . . . You have told me what you have done with the Lord's money but you have not told me that you have given anyone a penny of your own. He is the best partner you have in the world. He gives you everything you have, even the air you breathe. He has said you should take one-tenth of what comes to you and give it to the Church as directed by the Lord. You haven't done that;

you have taken your best partner's money, and have given it away."<sup>17</sup>

The tithing of the members of the Church belongs to the Lord. He decides, through a council of His servants, how it should be used.

To Church members and to others throughout the world, I bear my testimony of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. I have sat on this council for 17 years, as the Presiding Bishop of the Church and now as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Without exception, the tithing funds of this Church have been used for His purposes.

### **Teach children the law of tithing**

The Lord desires that all His children have the blessings of tithing. Too often we as parents do not teach and encourage our children to live this law because their contribution only amounts to a few cents. But without a testimony of tithing, they are vulnerable. In their teenage years they become attracted to clothes, entertainment, and expensive possessions and risk losing the special protection that tithing provides.

As the years go on, is it possible that a young man can be ordained an elder, serve a mission, and effectively teach a law to others that he has not lived himself? When he returns home and faces the pressures of schooling, starting a family, and a career, will the law of tithing become easier to live? Likewise, will a young woman be worthy to serve the Lord and make celestial marriage covenants without having gained a testimony of tithing for herself? Will she be prepared to teach her children a law she has not learned by her own experience? Oh, what faithfulness is required of fathers and mothers who would unitedly call down the protective blessings of tithing upon their family and the blessings that are rightfully theirs! Said President Lorenzo Snow:

"Teach the children to pay tithing, so that it may be perpetually observed. If we observe this law, no matter what our enemies may do, the Lord will preserve us."<sup>18</sup>

### **Tithing settlement is a sacred opportunity**

In a few weeks each of us will have the sacred opportunity to sit once again with our bishop and settle our tithing with the Lord. Your bishop will be gentle and kind. He will understand the challenges you face. If you cannot pay back what you missed paying in the past, go forward. Begin today. Share with your bishop your commitment to pay a full tithe in the future, and work out a plan to return to the temple as soon as possible. As soon as you have demonstrated your faith in paying tithing over a period of time and kept the other necessary commandments, you will be able to enjoy the eternal blessings of the temple. I plead with you, do not let this opportunity pass by. Do not procrastinate.

Fathers and mothers, as you prepare for tithing settlement I encourage you to gather your little ones around you and help them count their pennies. Help your young men and young women consult their records and take inventory of their annual increase. What a marvelous opportunity this is to plant the seed of faith in the hearts of your children. You will start them on a path that leads to the temple. The generations of your ancestors before you, and your posterity after you, will rise up and call you blessed, for you will have prepared your children to perform saving ordinances on their behalf. It is no coincidence, my brothers and sisters, that under the direction of God's living prophet on the earth today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, temples are spreading over the earth. Keeping the commandments, which includes paying our tithing, will qualify us to enter those temples, be sealed to our families, and receive eternal blessings.

### **A poor family needs the law of tithing**

I plead that we will not procrastinate and that we will heed our Lord's commandment to live the law of the tithe. I know of two missionaries who visited a very poor family. The family's home was made of pressboard and sticks, with a dirt floor and no electricity or beds. Each evening the father, a farm laborer, spent his entire day's wages on groceries for dinner. Departing from the family's humble home, the senior companion thought to himself, "The law of tithing will surely be a stumbling block to this family. Perhaps we shouldn't bring it up for a while." A few moments later the junior companion, who had grown up in similar circumstances in his own country, voiced his own thoughts aloud: "I know the principle of tithing isn't taught for four more discussions, but can we please teach it the next time we visit? They need to know about tithing now because they need the help and the blessing of the Lord so much."

This missionary understood that "there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."<sup>19</sup> The Lord wants to bless this family and anxiously awaits their obedience so He can.

### **Tithing is a test of our faith**

My beloved brothers and sisters, the eternal blessings of tithing are real. I have experienced them in my life and in the life of my family. The test of our faith is whether we will live the law of tithing by our obedience and sacrifice. For, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."<sup>20</sup>

I testify that the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed His life to bring this salvation to each of us. As His special witness, I testify that He lives. And on His behalf, I express gratitude to you, the children, the widows, the youth, the families—the faithful—for your sacred tithes. “These deeds shall thy memorial be; Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”<sup>21</sup> In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 225–26.
2. See Genesis 14:20.
3. Genesis 28:22.
4. *History of the Church*, 7:282.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:292–93.
6. Journal of Sarah De Armon Pea Rich, Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (typescript), 42.
7. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, (Melchizedek Priesthood course of study, first series, 1946), 196.
8. See the historical introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 119.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
10. See *Church History and Modern Revelation* (third series, 1946), 120.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
12. Malachi 3:10.
13. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 1:35; 38:16.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 72:10.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 120:1.
17. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 46; see also 44–47.
18. Quoted in *Church History and Modern Revelation* (third series), 122.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
20. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69.
21. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.

## Elder Lance B. Wickman

### To those who grievingly ask, “Why?”

Some of my richest memories are associated with weekend assignments to stake conferences as I have accompanied a stake president in visits to members of his stake wrestling with life’s challenges in courage and faith, especially those who have lost a child or who are struggling valiantly in nursing a sick or crippled or handicapped child. I know from poignant personal experience that there is no night quite so dark as the loss of a child. Neither is there any day quite so long and exhausting as the relentlessness of caring for a child crippled in form or faculty. All such parents can empathize exquisitely with the father of the child afflicted with a “dumb spirit,” who, when admonished by the Savior to believe, responded in anguish of soul, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (see Mark 9:17, 23–24).

And so today I wish to speak to all who are struggling in this laboratory of applied faith that is called mortality—and in particular to those bereaved, burdened, and grieving parents who beseechingly ask, “Why?”

### Grief is a by-product of love

First, please know that grief is the natural by-product of love. One cannot selflessly love another person and not grieve at his suffering or eventual death. The only way to avoid the grief would be to not experience the love; and it is love that gives life its richness and meaning. Hence, what a grieving parent can expect to receive from the Lord in response to earnest supplication may not necessarily be an elimination of grief so much as a sweet reassurance that, whatever his or

her circumstances, one's child is in the tender care of a loving Heavenly Father.

### Trust God rather than press to know why

Next, do not ever doubt the goodness of God, even if you do not know "why." The overarching question asked by the bereaved and the burdened is simply this: *Why? Why* did our daughter die, when we prayed so hard that she would live and when she received priesthood blessings? *Why* are we struggling with this misfortune, when others relate miraculous healing experiences for their loved ones? These are natural questions, understandable questions. But they are also questions that usually go begging in mortality. The Lord has said simply, "My ways [are] higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). As the Son's will was "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7), so must ours be.

Still, we mortals quite naturally want to know the why. Yet, in pressing too earnestly for the answer, we may forget that mortality was designed, in a manner of speaking, as the season of unanswered questions. Mortality has a different, more narrowly defined purpose: It is a proving ground, a probationary state, a time to walk by faith, a time to prepare to meet God (see, for example, Abraham 3:24–25; 2 Nephi 31:15–16, 20; Alma 12:24; 42:4–13). It is in nurturing humility (see Alma 32:6–21) and submissiveness (see Mosiah 3:19) that we may comprehend a fullness of the intended mortal experience and put ourselves in a frame of mind and heart to receive the promptings of the Spirit. Reduced to their essence, humility and submissiveness are an expression of complete willingness to let the "why" questions go unanswered for now, or perhaps even to ask, "Why not?" It is in enduring well to the end that we achieve this life's purposes (see 2 Nephi 31:15–16; Alma 32:15; D&C 121:8). I believe that mortality's supreme

test is to face the "why" and then let it go, trusting humbly in the Lord's promise that "all things must come to pass in their time" (D&C 64:32).

### The Lord comforts us

But the Lord has not left us comfortless or without any answers. As to the healing of the sick, He has clearly said, "And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, *and is not appointed unto death*, shall be healed" (D&C 42:48; italics added). All too often we overlook the qualifying phrase "and is not appointed unto death" ("or," we might add, "unto sickness or handicap"). Please do not despair when fervent prayers have been offered and priesthood blessings performed and your loved one makes no improvement or even passes from mortality. Take comfort in the knowledge that you did everything you could. Such faith, fasting, and blessing could not be in vain! That your child did not recover in spite of all that was done in his behalf can and should be the basis for peace and reassurance to all who love him! *The Lord, who inspires the blessings and who hears every earnest prayer, called him home nonetheless.* All the experiences of prayer, fasting, and faith may well have been more for *our* benefit than for his.

### "But if not"

How, then, should we approach the throne of grace as we plead earnestly for a loved one and place hands upon her head to give a blessing by priesthood authority? How do we properly exercise our faith? The Prophet Joseph Smith defined that first principle of the gospel as "Faith *in the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Articles of Faith 1:4; italics added). It is that defining phrase—"in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that we sometimes forget. Too often we offer our prayer or perform our administration and then wait nervously to see whether our request

will be granted, as though approval would provide needed evidence of His existence. That is not faith! Faith is, quite simply, a *confidence* in the Lord. In Mormon's words, it is "a *firm mind* in every form of godliness" (Moroni 7:30; italics added). The three Hebrew magistrates expressed trust that the Lord would deliver them from the fiery furnace, "*but if not,*" they said to the king, "*we [still] will not serve thy gods*" (Daniel 3:18; italics added). Significantly, not three but four men were seen in the midst of the flames, and "the form of the fourth [was] like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25).

So with us. It is common in our secular world to say that "seeing is believing." Whatever value this little maxim may have in the mundane affairs of life, it is an alien presence when we turn to the Lord in the dark hour of our extremity. The way of the Lord is best defined by a different maxim: "Believing is seeing." Faith in the Lord is the premise, not the conclusion. We *know* He lives; *therefore*, we trust Him to bless us according to His divine will and wisdom. This childlike confidence in the Lord is known in scripture simply as the "sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (D&C 59:8).

### The loss of a young son

I offer this as profound conviction born in the fiery crucible of life's experience. Our second son, Adam, entered our lives when I was far away in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam. I still have the joyful telegram announcing his birth. Adam was a blue-eyed, blond-haired little fellow with an impish personality. As he turned five years old, Adam eagerly looked forward to starting school. Then a common childhood illness blanketed our southern California community, and Adam contracted the disease. Aside from concern for his comfort, we were not worried. He even seemed to have a light case. Suddenly one morning he did not arise

from his bed; he was in a deep coma. We rushed him to the hospital, where he was placed in intensive care. A constant cadre of devoted doctors and nurses attended him. His mother and I maintained a ceaseless vigil in the waiting room nearby.

I telephoned our dear stake president—a childhood friend and now a beloved colleague in the Seventy, Elder Douglas L. Callister—and asked him if he would come to the hospital and join me in giving Adam a priesthood blessing. Within minutes he was there. As we entered the small, cramped space where Adam's lifeless little body lay, his bed surrounded by a bewildering maze of monitoring devices and other medical paraphernalia, the kind doctors and nurses reverently stepped back and folded their arms. As the familiar and comforting words of a priesthood blessing were spoken in faith and earnest pleading, I was overcome by a profound sense that Someone else was present. I was overwhelmed by the thought that if I should open my eyes, I would see the Savior standing there! I was not the only one in that room who felt that Spirit. We learned quite by chance some months later that one of the nurses who was present that day was so touched that she sought out the missionaries and was baptized.

But notwithstanding, Adam made no improvement. He lingered between this life and the next for several more days as we pleaded with the Lord to return him to us. Finally, one morning after a fitful night, I walked alone down a deserted hospital corridor. I spoke to the Lord and told Him that we wanted our little boy to return so very much, but nevertheless what we wanted most was for His will to be done and that we—Pat and I—would accept that. Adam crossed the threshold into the eternities a short time later.

### God's grace is sufficient in our trials

Frankly, we still grieve for our little boy, although the tender ministering of

the Spirit and the passage of the years have softened our sadness. His small picture graces the mantel of our living room beside a more current family portrait of children and grandchildren. But Pat and I know that his path through mortality was intended by a kind Heavenly Father to be shorter and easier than ours and that he has now hurried on ahead to be a welcoming presence when we likewise eventually cross that same fateful threshold.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, . . .  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design . . .

Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine. . . .

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose

I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, . . .

I'll never, no never, no never forsake!  
["How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

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## Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

### Our covenant to sacrifice

The words "sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven," from the hymn "Praise to the Man,"<sup>1</sup> always stir my soul. Sacrifice is defined as "the act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else more important or worthy."<sup>2</sup> Sacrifice comes in many forms and may not always be convenient. Latter-day Saints make a covenant with the Lord to sacrifice. By doing so, we surrender our will to His, dedicating our lives to building up His kingdom and serving His children.

### Sacrifice of paying an honest tithe

For those who faithfully sacrifice through an honest tithe, the Lord has promised that He will open the windows of heaven.<sup>3</sup> Not only does such sacrifice bless the individual and the family, but those voluntary contributions to the Church

provide the energizing resources that help the kingdom of the Lord to perform miracles every day. King Benjamin said: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual."<sup>4</sup> The faithful contribution of tithes is an outward expression of an inner commitment to sacrifice.

### Sacrifice of obeying the law of the fast

Obeying the law of the fast is another form of sacrifice. The Lord asks us to set aside one Sunday a month to fast for two meals. We are invited to contribute the money saved on the cost of those two meals to the Church so it can assist those in need. Fasting and contributing a generous offering have a refining effect upon the soul. President Spencer W. Kimball

stated, "Upon practicing the law of the fast, one finds a personal well-spring of power to overcome self-indulgence and selfishness."<sup>5</sup>

### Sacrifices in temple, family history work

Temple and family history work is a sacrifice of love. Faithful Saints contribute millions of hours compiling family history. They research microfilms and records, and with pens and computers they record dates and events. In the temple they perform sacred ordinances for their precious ancestry. Like the Savior, this is an expression of sacrifice—doing something for others which they cannot do for themselves.

A few years ago, while on a Church assignment in St. Petersburg, Russia, my wife, Mary-Jayne, and I had the unique opportunity to feel the blessings of family history work. We visited the vital statistics archive to view the Church's efforts to microfilm some of the records of western Russia. As I watched the archivist photographing pages of moldy old books from the city of Pskov, the names became real people. They seemed to leap right off the page and say, "You have found me. I am no longer lost. I know that someday, somewhere, someone in my family will take my name to the temple, and I will be baptized and endowed, and my wife and children will be sealed to me. Thank you!"

### Joseph Smith's example of sacrifice

Joseph Smith's life was an example of unselfish sacrifice for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though the Prophet Joseph suffered greatly, he remained optimistic and overcame many persecutions. Parley P. Pratt tells of a heartrending experience of being imprisoned with the Prophet in Missouri in the winter of 1838–39. Those six months of suffering and confinement tutored this foreordained, preeminent Prophet.

While the Prophet and his brethren were being held in a cold, unfinished court-

house in Richmond, Missouri, they had listened to the boasting and the despicable abuses the guards had committed among the "Mormons." Finally the Prophet could abide their sordid cursing no longer. Suddenly he stood and in "a voice of thunder" said:

"*'SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still. . . .'*"

"... He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel." The quaking guards shrank into a corner, dropped their weapons, "begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Brother Pratt writes further: "I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes . . . ; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session . . . ; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns . . . ; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri."<sup>6</sup>

Some weeks after that event, in another dark hour, Joseph implored the Lord for guidance. The Lord answered, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment."<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord said these intriguing words to the Prophet: "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name."<sup>8</sup>

Five years later, looking back on the incomplete construction of the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph knew his journey's end was near and that he was going "like a lamb to the slaughter," yet he was "calm as a summer's morning."<sup>9</sup> With assurances for his protection, he submitted to one more arrest. However, his trust was dishonored. On June 27, 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were savagely murdered in Carthage Jail.

The ends of the earth have inquired after the name of Joseph Smith, and today the sun never sets on the worldwide membership of the restored Church of Jesus

Christ. These words about the martyred Abraham Lincoln also describe the majesty of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

Here was a man to hold against the world,  
A man to match the mountains and the sea. . . .  
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down  
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,  
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.<sup>10</sup>

### The Savior's atoning sacrifice

There can be no sacrifice greater than the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ. His Atonement, though incomprehensible and without equal, was this world's crowning event. Gratefully, because of His supreme offer of charity, there is no sting of death, and the grave has no victory.

Our challenge is to unselfishly sacrifice all that we have been given, including our will. Elder Neal A. Maxwell rightly said: "The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give' . . . are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us."<sup>11</sup>

Sacrifice is ultimately a matter of the heart—the heart. "Behold, the Lord requir-eth the heart and a willing mind."<sup>12</sup> If we are caring, if we are charitable, if we are obedient to God and follow His prophets, our sacrifices will bring forth the blessings of heaven. "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."<sup>13</sup>

In an unusual way, I experienced a glimpse of our Savior's sacrifice of love for me. While in Jerusalem on Christmas Eve, my wife and I visited several of the sites where the Savior walked and taught. The agony suffered by the Savior brought deep

sorrow to us as we stood in the dungeon below the palace of Caiaphas. It was there that our Lord was flogged and scourged. We saw the chain holes in the wall. With tears we sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."<sup>14</sup> He was so alone amongst vile perpetrators. With heavy hearts we prayed for courage to be His worthy servants.

Shortly thereafter, we visited the empty Garden Tomb. The words from the scriptures "He is not here: for he is risen"<sup>15</sup> resounded through our hearts. Eliza R. Snow penned:

Although in agony he hung,  
No murmur'ing word escaped his tongue.  
His high commission to fulfill, . . .  
He magnified his Father's will.

He dies a sacrifice for sin, . . .  
That man may live and glory win.<sup>16</sup>

The Savior's Atonement was the greatest act of charity known to mankind.

We sing these words from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

He lives, my one sure rock of faith,  
The one bright hope of men on earth,  
The beacon to a better way,  
The light beyond the veil of death.<sup>17</sup>

I sorrow that a single drop of His blood was shed for me. I pray that someday I will meet the Savior. I will kneel and kiss the wounded hands and feet, and He will wipe away my tears. I pray that He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."<sup>18</sup> Because of His mercy, we have hope, brothers and sisters. He is the "Fount of every blessing."<sup>19</sup> Of this I testify in the name of the greatest example of sacrifice, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 27.
2. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (1991), "sacrifice," 1272–73.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Mosiah 2:41.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.



6. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 180.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
10. Edwin Markham, "Lincoln, the Man of the People," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, comp. Louis Untermeyer (1955), 994-95.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
13. 3 Nephi 9:20.
14. *Hymns*, no. 29.
15. Matthew 28:6.
16. "Behold the Great Redeemer Die," *Hymns*, no. 191.
17. "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135.
18. Matthew 25:21.
19. "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Service of the Twelve abroad

Buenas tardes, hermanos y hermanas. I bring you greetings from the wonderful members and missionaries in Latin America. As many of you know, Elder and Sister Dallin Oaks and Elder and Sister Holland have been called to serve in the Philippines and Chile Areas of the Church, respectively. If the buzz of conversation is any indication, this has proven to be of more interest to the Church than one might have supposed. Whatever your speculation, I think I am authorized to assure you that we are not going to these distant outposts as two of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. For those looking for a "sign" in all this, please take it as a sign of a wonderful, growing, international Church, with members and missionaries spreading steadily across languages and continents. It is a joy to meet and serve with Latter-day Saints anywhere, near or far, at home or abroad, and we thank you for your prayers and your interest in the work.

Such service by the Twelve is, of course, not new, and I must say our generation has less challenge in going out than did our predecessors. Best of all, I have Sister Holland at my side, rather than leaving her at home to fend for herself and our children. Furthermore, I did

not have to do manual labor along the way in order to earn the fare to Santiago. We flew to our destination for a few hours in a modern jet airliner rather than sailing for weeks, even months, in the steerage of a ship. I did not leave suffering with chills and fever, cholera, or consumption, although I did have a cold and one leg of our flight was delayed an hour. I have hoped these hardships would qualify me to one day face Peter and Paul, Brigham and Wilford.

### Sacrifices of early Church members

As did many of you, I grew up on the stories of the early brethren going to Canada, England, Scandinavia, continental Europe, the Pacific Islands, Mexico, Asia, and so on. More recently I have read of Parley P. Pratt's brief mission to Chile, where the Pratts lost and buried their infant son at Valparaíso. I have read of Elder Melvin J. Ballard, who was called to dedicate South America when that marvelous continent was still one new and rather overwhelming mission field. The service which builds a young, growing Church is not casually requested or whimsically given. On occasion the obstacles have been great and the price sometimes very dear.

And we speak not only of those early brethren who went out to serve, but the women who supported them—and in addition supported themselves and their children, staying at home to raise and protect families, that other portion of the Lord's vineyard about which He is so emphatic.

On the day of her husband's second departure to England, Vilate Kimball was so weak, trembling so severely with ague, that she could do nothing more than weakly shake hands with her husband when he came in tears to say good-bye. Their little David was less than four weeks old then, and only one child, four-year-old Heber Parley, was well enough to carry water for the ailing family. In the hours after her husband's leaving, Vilate lost all strength and had to be assisted back to the confinement of her bed.

Mary Ann Young and her children were equally ill when Brigham left on the same mission, and their financial situation was equally precarious. One heartrending description describes her crossing the Mississippi River in the bitter of winter, thinly clad and shivering with cold, clutching her infant daughter as she went, going to the tithing office in Nauvoo to ask for a few potatoes. Then, still suffering with fever, she made her way with the baby back across the forbidding river, never to write a word to her husband about such difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

### **True faith is always linked to sacrifice**

We seldom face anything like those circumstances today, though many missionaries and members still sacrifice greatly to do the work of the Lord. As blessings come and the Church matures, we all hope that service will never be so difficult as these early members found it, but as missionaries are singing this day from Oslo to Osorno and from Seattle to Cebu, we are "called to serve."<sup>2</sup> To raise our families and serve faithfully in the Church, all without running faster than we have strength,<sup>3</sup>

require wisdom, judgment, divine help—and inevitably some sacrifice. From Adam to the present hour, true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has always been linked to the offering of sacrifice, our small gift to be a symbolic echo of His majestic offering.<sup>4</sup> With his eye firmly on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that a religion that does not include covenants of sacrifice cannot have the power to bring the promise of eternal life.<sup>5</sup>

### **The sacrifice of a bishop and his wife**

May I share just one contemporary example of both the challenge and the blessings that our "calls to serve" can bring. A wonderful sister recently said to a dear friend:

"I want to tell you about the moment I ceased resenting my husband's time and sacrifice as a bishop. It had seemed uncanny how an 'emergency' would arise with a ward member just when he and I were about to go out to do something special together.

### *A ruined date*

"One day I poured out my frustration, and my husband agreed we should guarantee, in addition to Monday nights, one additional night a week just for us. Well, the first 'date night' came, and we were about to get into the car for an evening together when the telephone rang.

" 'This is a test,' I smiled at him. The telephone kept ringing. 'Remember our agreement. Remember our date. Remember me. Let the phone ring.' In the end I wasn't smiling.

"My poor husband looked trapped between me and a ringing telephone. I really did know that his highest loyalty was to me, and I knew he wanted that evening as much as I did. But he seemed paralyzed by the sound of that telephone.

" 'I'd better at least check,' he said with sad eyes. 'It is probably nothing at all.'

"If you do, our date is ruined," I cried. 'I just know it.'

"He squeezed my hand and said, 'Be right back,' and he dashed in to pick up the telephone.

"Well, when my husband didn't return to the car immediately, I knew what was happening. I got out of the car, went into the house, and went to bed. The next morning he spoke a quiet apology, I spoke an even quieter acceptance, and that was the end of it.

*A call answered, a tragedy averted*

"Or so I thought. I found the event still bothering me several weeks later. I wasn't blaming my husband, but I was disappointed nevertheless. The memory was still fresh when I came upon a woman in the ward I scarcely knew. Very hesitantly, she asked for the opportunity to talk. She then told of becoming infatuated with another man, who seemed to bring excitement into her life of drudgery, she with a husband who worked full-time and carried a full load of classes at the university. Their apartment was confining. She had small children who were often demanding, noisy, and exhausting. She said: 'I was sorely tempted to leave what I saw as my wretched state and just go with this man. My situation was such that I felt I deserved better than what I had. My rationalization persuaded me to think I could walk away from my husband, my children, my temple covenants, and my Church and find happiness with a stranger.'

"She said, 'The plan was set; the time for my escape was agreed upon. Yet, as if in a last gasp of sanity, my conscience told me to call your husband, my bishop. I say "conscience," but I know that was a spiritual prompting directly from heaven. Almost against my will, I called. The telephone rang and rang and rang. Such was the state of my mind that I thought, "If the bishop doesn't answer, that will be a sign I should go through with my plan."

The phone kept ringing, and I was about to hang up and walk straight into destruction when suddenly I heard your husband's voice. It penetrated my soul like lightning. Suddenly I heard myself sobbing, saying, "Bishop, is that you? I am in trouble. I need help." Your husband came with help, and I am safe today because he answered that telephone.

*Gratitude for sacrifices of the bishop's wife*

"I look back and realize I was tired and foolish and vulnerable. I love my husband and my children with all my heart. I can't imagine the tragedy my life would be without them. These are still demanding times for our family. I know everyone has them. But we have addressed some of these issues, and things are looking brighter. They always do eventually.' Then she said, 'I don't know you well, but I wish to thank you for supporting your husband in his calling. I don't know what the cost for such service has been to you or to your children, but if on a difficult day there is a particularly personal cost, please know how eternally grateful I will be for the sacrifice people like you make to help rescue people like me.'"

*Gratitude for bishop's response to the call*

Brothers and sisters, please understand that I am one who preaches emphatically a more manageable, realistic expectation of what our bishops and other leaders can do. I especially feel that a wide range of civic, professional, and other demands which take parents, including and especially mothers, out of homes where children are being raised is among the most serious problems in contemporary society. And because I am adamant about spouses and children deserving sacred, committed time with a husband and father, nine times out of ten I would have been right alongside that wife telling her husband not to answer that telephone. But I

am as grateful in my own way as that young woman was in hers that in this instance this good man followed the prompting of the Spirit and responded to his "call"—in this case, literally—his "call to serve."

### **Tribute to those who sacrifice to serve**

I testify of home and family and marriage, the most precious human possessions of our lives. I testify of the need to protect and preserve them while we find time and ways to serve faithfully in the Church. In what I hope are rare moments when these seem to be in conflict, when we find an hour or a day or a night of crisis when duty and spiritual prompting require our response, in those situations I pay tribute to every wife who has ever sat alone while dinner got cold, every husband who has made his own dinner, which with him as cook was bound to be cold anyway, and every child who has ever been disappointed in a postponed camping trip or a ball game a parent unexpectedly had to miss (and that better not be very often!). I pay tribute to every mission president and his wife, their children, and every senior couple called to serve with them, and all others who for a season miss births and baptisms, weddings and funerals, family and fun experiences in response to a "call to serve." I thank all who, in challenging circumstances across the Church, do the best they can to build the kingdom of God on earth.

I testify of the sacrifice and service of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave everything for us and in that spirit of giving said, "Follow thou me."<sup>6</sup> "If any man serve me, let him follow me," He said, "and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."<sup>7</sup> Such service inevitably brings challenging decisions about how to balance priorities and how best to be the disciples He wishes us to be. I thank Him for His divine guidance in helping us make those decisions and for assisting us to find the

right way for all concerned. I thank Him that "he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"<sup>8</sup> and that He has called us to do some of the same for each other. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. For the definitive work documenting these experiences, see James B. Allen and others, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841* (1992). The suffering of Vilate Kimball and Mary Ann Young is noted on pages 267–76.
2. See *Hymns*, no. 249.
3. See Mosiah 4:27.
4. This is a major doctrine too expansive for documentation here. See Moses 5:4–8; 3 Nephi 9:17–21; D&C 59:8–12; 97:8–9.
5. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 68–69.
6. John 21:22.
7. John 12:26.
8. Mosiah 14:4; see also Isaiah 53:4.

### **President James E. Faust**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately thereafter.

As you leave the conference, please obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the family choir from the Salt Lake Hunter Area for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Oh, What Songs of the Heart." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Athos M. Amorim of the Seventy. Elder Nelson.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Blessed are the peacemakers

Among the most memorable of all our family activities have been trips to the Holy Land. For us, visits to that part of the world have been life changing. But now the Holy Land is a cauldron of turmoil and off-limits to those who would like to go there for spiritual enrichment. Virtually all parts of the world are plagued by acts of terror previously unknown. Confusion comes to many who pray for peace but fearfully face this foe of terror.

### Peace versus contention

The perilous times in which we live have been prophesied in the scriptures. Our day has been foreseen as one with "fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; . . . wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places . . . great pollutions upon the face of the earth; . . . and all manner of abominations."<sup>1</sup>

That prophecy echoes an earlier scriptural account of the second generation of human life<sup>2</sup> upon the earth: "In those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in . . . seeking for power."<sup>3</sup> From the days of Cain and Abel,<sup>4</sup> Esau and Jacob,<sup>5</sup> and Joseph who was sold into Egypt,<sup>6</sup> the flames of hostility have been fueled by family feuding.

Hatred among brothers and neighbors has now reduced sacred cities to sites of sorrow. When I think of the plight of such places, I am reminded of an ancient proverb: "Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath."<sup>7</sup>

### Doctrinal direction for bringing peace

Scripture sheds light on both the cause of and the cure for the sickness of human

hatred: "The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

Peace can prevail only when that natural inclination to fight is superseded by self-determination to live on a loftier level. Coming unto Jesus Christ as the "Prince of Peace"<sup>9</sup> is the pathway to peace on earth and goodwill among men.<sup>10</sup> He made a promise to us: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus taught people how to live with one another. He declared the two great commandments: first, to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"<sup>12</sup> and the second, to "love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>13</sup>

Then He added, "Love your enemies, [and] bless them that curse you."<sup>14</sup>

He taught the Golden Rule, saying, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."<sup>15</sup> This principle is found in nearly every major religion. Others such as Confucius and Aristotle have also taught it.<sup>16</sup> After all, the gospel did not begin with the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem. It is everlasting. It was proclaimed in the beginning to Adam and Eve. Portions of the gospel have been preserved in many cultures. Even heathen mythologies have been enriched by fragments of truth from earlier dispensations.

Wherever it is found and however it is expressed, the Golden Rule encompasses the moral code of the kingdom of God. It forbids interference by one with the rights of another. It is equally binding upon nations, associations, and individuals. With compassion and forbearance, it replaces the retaliatory reactions of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."<sup>17</sup> If we were

to stay on that old and unproductive path, we would be but blind and toothless.<sup>18</sup>

This concept of treating others as one would like to be treated is easy to understand. And it acknowledges the precious nature of each of God's sons and daughters.<sup>19</sup> Scripture asks parents to teach their children not to "fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin." Instead, we "teach them to love one another, and to serve one another."<sup>20</sup>

Jesus taught the importance of reconciliation and resolution of dispute on a personal basis. He said:

"Whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment. . . .

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."<sup>21</sup>

The Master Teacher taught us to "forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."<sup>22</sup>

Jesus declared that a day of judgment would come. All individuals will give an account of their mortal lives and of how they have treated other people.<sup>23</sup>

### Civic obligations

The commandments to love God and neighbor are interrelated. We cannot fully love God without loving our neighbor. We cannot fully love our neighbor without loving God. Men really are brothers because God really is our Father. Nevertheless, scriptures are studded with stories of contention and combat. They strongly condemn wars of aggression but sustain obligations of citizens to defend their families and their freedoms.<sup>24</sup> Because "we be-

lieve in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law,"<sup>25</sup> members of this Church will be called into military service of many nations. "We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society."<sup>26</sup>

During the Second World War, when members of the Church were forced to fight on opposing sides, the First Presidency affirmed that "the state is responsible for the civil control of its citizens or subjects, for their political welfare, and for the carrying forward of political policies, domestic and foreign. . . . But the Church itself, as such, has no responsibility for these policies, [other] than urging its members fully to render . . . loyalty to their country."<sup>27</sup>

### Peace is possible

Because of the long history of hostility upon the earth, many feel that peace is beyond hope. I disagree. Peace is possible. We can learn to love our fellow human beings throughout the world. Whether they be Jewish, Islamic, or fellow Christians, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other, we can live together with mutual admiration and respect, without forsaking our religious convictions. Things we have in common are greater than are our differences. Peace is a prime priority that pleads for our pursuit. Old Testament prophets held out hope, and so should we. The Psalmist said, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."<sup>28</sup> "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth."<sup>29</sup>

### Abraham's example of peace

Father Abraham was uniquely called a "Friend of God."<sup>30</sup> Peace was one of Abraham's highest priorities. He sought

to be a "prince of peace."<sup>31</sup> His influence could loom large in our present pursuit of peace. His sons Ishmael and Isaac, though born of different mothers, overcame their differences when engaged in a common cause. After their father died, they worked together to bury the mortal remains of their exalted father.<sup>32</sup> Their descendants could well follow that pattern.

Abraham's posterity has a divinely decreed potential. The Lord declared that Ishmael would become a great nation<sup>33</sup> and that the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would bless all the nations of the earth.<sup>34</sup>

So the descendants of Abraham, entrusted with great promises of infinite influence, are in a pivotal position to emerge as peacemakers. Chosen by the Almighty, they can direct their powerful potential toward peace.

Resolution of present political problems will require much patience and negotiation. The process would be enhanced greatly if pursued prayerfully.

### *Fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies of hope*

Isaiah prophesied of hope for our day. Speaking of the gathering of Israel and the Restoration of the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, Isaiah wrote:

"It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people. . . .

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."<sup>35</sup>

These prophecies of hope could materialize if leaders and citizens of nations would apply the teachings of Jesus Christ. Ours could then be an age of unparalleled peace and progress. The barbarism of the past would be buried. War with its horrors would be relegated to the realm of maudlin memory. Aims of nations would be mu-

tually supportive. Peacemakers could lead in the art of arbitration, give relief to the needy, and bring hope to those who fear. Of such patriots, future generations would shout praises, and our Eternal God would pass judgments of glory.

### *Follow the pathway of the Prince of Peace*

The hope of the world is the Prince of Peace—our Creator, Savior, Jehovah, and Judge. He offers us the good life, the abundant life, and eternal life. Peaceful—even prosperous—living can come to those who abide His precepts<sup>36</sup> and follow His pathway to peace. This I declare to all the world.

### **Church members should proclaim peace**

Now, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what does the Lord expect of us? As a Church, we must "renounce war and proclaim peace."<sup>37</sup> As individuals, we should "follow after the things which make for peace."<sup>38</sup> We should be personal peacemakers. We should live peacefully—as couples, families, and neighbors. We should live by the Golden Rule. We have writings of the descendants of Judah as now merged with writings of the descendants of Ephraim.<sup>39</sup> We should employ them and expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family. We should bring divine love and revealed doctrines of restored religion to our neighbors and friends. We should serve them according to our abilities and opportunities. We should keep our principles on a high level and stand for the right. We should continue to gather scattered Israel from the four corners of the earth and offer the ordinances and covenants that seal families together forever. These blessings we are to bring to people of all nations.

As we so live, our Master will bless us. He provided this promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea,

I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”<sup>40</sup>

Ours is His supernal cause. Ours is the cause of eternal glory for all human-kind. And as peacemakers, we shall be called the children of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Mormon 8:29–31; see also 2 Timothy 3:1–7, 12–13; Doctrine and Covenants 45:26–27.
2. Dating back to the time of Seth, son of Adam and Eve.
3. Moses 6:15.
4. See Genesis 4:8–10.
5. See Genesis 27:41.
6. See Genesis 37:28.
7. Proverbs 29:8.
8. Mosiah 3:19.
9. Isaiah 9:6.
10. See Luke 2:14.
11. Matthew 5:9; see also 3 Nephi 12:9; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:11.
12. Matthew 22:37.
13. Matthew 22:39; see also Luke 10:27; Doctrine and Covenants 59:5–6.
14. Matthew 5:44.
15. Matthew 7:12; see also Luke 6:31; 3 Nephi 14:12.
16. See B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1909–11), 3:492–93.
17. Matthew 5:38; see also Exodus 21:24–27; Leviticus 24:20.
18. See Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), 142.
19. See Matthew 25:40; Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
20. Mosiah 4:14–15.
21. Matthew 5:22–24; see also 3 Nephi 12:22–24; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:24–26.
22. Mark 11:25–26; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 11:27–28.
23. See Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10–12; 1 John 4:16–21; Alma 41:3; 3 Nephi 27:16–22.
24. See Alma 43:45–47; 46:11–12, 19–20; 48:11–16.
25. Articles of Faith 1:12.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 134:1.
27. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:155–56.
28. Psalm 46:1.
29. Psalm 46:9.
30. James 2:23; see also 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8. Long ago our Creator made a covenant with Abraham which was to apply to “a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9; see also 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 105:8). It is to be fulfilled in the latter days (see 1 Nephi 15:13, 18; D&C 124:58; 132:30).
31. Abraham 1:2.
32. See Genesis 25:9. Abraham’s original name, Abram, means “exalted father” (see Bible Dictionary, “Abraham,” 601).
33. See Genesis 21:13, 18.
34. See Genesis 17:19, 21; 21:12; 22:18; 28:13–14; 35:9–12; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 9:5; Abraham 2:11; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:25.
35. Isaiah 11:11–12; see also Romans 15:12.
36. See 2 Chronicles 20:20; Matthew 6:24–33; John 10:10; 1 Nephi 2:20; 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:9, 20; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31; Alma 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:25; 50:20; Helaman 3:20; Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 98:16.
38. Romans 14:19.
39. See Ezekiel 37:16–19; 2 Nephi 3:12.
40. Isaiah 41:10.

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The choir sang “Oh, What Songs of the Heart.”

Elder Athos M. Amorím offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah. Andrew Crane directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 172nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries around the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah, under the direction of Andrew Crane, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Come, All Ye Sons of God." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation." President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will then address us. He will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang "Come, All Ye Sons of God."

Elder Lynn G. Robbins offered the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation."

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### Patriarchal blessing a shield, protection

Fifty-eight years ago I knocked on the door of J. Roland Sandstrom, patriarch of the Santa Ana California Stake, with a recommend from my bishop to receive a patriarchal blessing. We had never met and would not meet again for 14 years. We met again 15 years later. This time, as one of the Twelve, I blessed him the day before he died.

The blessing was delivered by mail to my barracks at an air force base where I was stationed. I did not know then, as I know now, that a patriarch has prophetic insight, that his blessing would be more

than a guide to me. It has been a shield and a protection.

### Three kinds of patriarchs

The revelation states that "it is the duty of the Twelve, in all large branches of the church, to ordain evangelical ministers, as they shall be designated unto them by revelation."<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "An Evangelist is a Patriarch. . . . Wherever the Church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a Patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints, as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons."<sup>2</sup>

The scriptures speak of three kinds of patriarchs: fathers of families,<sup>3</sup> the prophet leaders of ancient times, and the stake patriarch, an ordained office in the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>4</sup>

The father is a patriarch to his family and can and should give father's blessings to his children.

### The calling of patriarchs

Until a few years ago, every stake patriarch was called and ordained by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. When the number of stakes increased, this responsibility was delegated to the stake president.

Like the other offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood—elders, high priests, Seventies, and Apostles—the stake patriarch is ordained rather than set apart.

The stake president submits a name to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Each name is carefully and prayerfully considered. Once approved, the patriarch is sustained in stake conference, then ordained. He then, with prophetic insights, will pronounce blessings upon the heads of those who come recommended by the bishop of their ward.

### Guidelines for patriarchs and blessings

There is a publication, *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*. It instructs the stake president and the patriarch about this sacred office. This publication was discussed for years by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. Each time it was reviewed, it was reduced in size. One senior brother said, "Brethren, we must not get between the Lord and His patriarchs."

We now ask each stake president and each patriarch to reread this brief document. Read it more than once.

Patriarchs do not advertise for blessings. Members should seek blessings as they feel inspired to do so. There is no fixed age at which one may receive a patri-

archal blessing. The bishop ensures that the member is of sufficient age and maturity to understand the meaning and significance of the blessing.

A patriarchal blessing is recorded and transcribed by one who is assigned by the stake president. That blessing becomes a very personal treasure.

Except for members of the immediate family, we should not permit others to read our blessing, nor should we ask others to interpret it. Neither the patriarch nor the bishop can or should interpret it.

### An inspired calling

When the Twelve called and ordained patriarchs, we shared experiences. We learned the Lord has a special interest in the patriarch, who holds a unique position in the Church.

I recall a conference where the patriarch was very old. While his ordination would remain in force, it was time that he be excused from giving blessings.

The stake president recommended a man with much leadership experience. However, I did not get the feeling that he should be the patriarch.

I knew that the First Presidency had said to stake presidents: "Because a man has filled with credit a presiding office and has attained a good age is no reason why he should or should not make a good patriarch. . . . [He should be one who has] developed within [him] the spirit of the patriarchs; in fact, this should be [his] leading characteristic, and [he] should be [a man] of wisdom, possessed of the gift and spirit of blessing as well."<sup>5</sup>

As the evening meeting was about to begin, an older man came partway down the aisle and, unable to find a seat, went to the back of the chapel. He was not quite as well dressed as most of the others and obviously had spent much time out-of-doors.

I whispered to the stake president, "Who is that man?"

Sensing what was on my mind, he said, "Oh, I don't think he could be our patriarch. He lives at the far edge of an outlying ward and has never held any leadership in a bishopric or high council."

He was invited to give the opening prayer, and he had said but a few words when that confirmation came, as it does by revelation, "This is the patriarch."

As I recall, he had six sons and one daughter. The youngest was then serving a mission, as had his older brothers, who were married and scattered around the country, all serving faithfully in the Church.

"What about your daughter?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "you have met her. She is the wife of a counselor in the stake presidency."

I thought, "A patriarch—this man is a patriarch indeed!"

Before the general session, I met the aging patriarch in the foyer and said, "We are going to give you some help today."

He said, "Oh, thank you! I would appreciate that very, very much."

I said, "Let me give you the name of the new patriarch; then you and I and the stake president will be the only ones who know."

When I named the man, he was startled and said, "Isn't *that* interesting! I saw him among the people, coming into the building, and said to myself, 'Wouldn't he make a wonderful patriarch?'" It was an inspiring confirmation from the old patriarch.

There is nothing like this office in all of the Church or in all of the world.

### **Stake presidents' watch care of patriarchs**

Stake presidents must provide very careful, special watch care over the patriarch. You should have him sit on the stand and be recognized.

On regular occasions, perhaps twice a year, you should interview the patriarch and read some of his blessings. Remind him that each blessing should be individual

and special to the member. The periodic reading of blessings must not be neglected by the stake president.

I once ordained a patriarch who was overcome with the responsibility. For months he could not get himself to give a blessing. Finally he asked his stake president if he might write a paragraph as a model introduction to any patriarchal blessing. The stake president approved.

Later he told me this: "When the first young man came for a blessing, because I had memorized this prepared introduction, I felt comfortable. I laid my hands on his head, and I did not use one word of it. That day I learned whose blessings they are. They are not my blessings but are dictated by the Spirit."

### **Elements of a patriarchal blessing**

It has been said that a patriarchal blessing is a "[paragraph] from the book of your possibilities." If we read our patriarchal blessings, we will see what the spirit of prophecy has held up to us as to what each of us can become.<sup>6</sup>

An essential part of a patriarchal blessing is the declaration of lineage. By careful study of the scriptures, a patriarch becomes familiar with the patriarchal order. He learns the destiny of the tribes of Israel.

The Brethren have taught:

"In giving a blessing the patriarch may declare our lineage—that is, that we are of Israel, therefore of the family of Abraham, and of a specific tribe of Jacob. In the great majority of cases, Latter-day Saints are of the tribe of Ephraim, the tribe to which has been committed the leadership of the Latter-day work. Whether this lineage is of blood or adoption does not matter (Pearl of Great Price, Abraham, 2:10). This is very important, for it is through the lineage of Abraham alone that the mighty blessings of the Lord for His children on earth are to be consummated (Genesis 12:2, 3; Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 2:11).

"Then, the patriarch, looking into the future, enumerates the blessings and promises, some special, others general, to which the person of the proper lineage . . . is entitled; and through his authority seals them upon him, so that they may be his forever through faithfulness."<sup>7</sup>

Since there are many bloodlines running in each of us, two members of one family might be declared as being of different tribes in Israel.

### **Whom a patriarch may bless**

A patriarch may give patriarchal blessings to his own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who come recommended by their bishop.

When we receive requests for exceptions, for one to receive a blessing from an uncle or some favorite family friend, we invite them to follow the order and receive their blessing from the patriarch in their own stake.

In mission districts or in stakes where there is no patriarch, members may receive a recommend from their bishop or branch president to a patriarch in an adjoining stake.

### **Promises will be fulfilled**

Occasionally a member may feel that their blessing is somewhat less than expected. But as time goes on, they will recognize the power of revelation in it.

Sometimes someone will worry because a promise made in a patriarchal blessing is not yet fulfilled. For instance, a blessing may indicate that a member will be married, and they do not find a companion. That does not mean that the blessing will go unfulfilled. It is good to know that things happen in the Lord's due time, not always in ours. Things of an eternal nature have no boundaries. From the pre-mortal existence to our existence beyond the veils of death, our life is an eternal life.

Circumstances such as advancing age and infirmity, moving out of the stake, or a call to serve a mission may require that the stake president recommend to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that the patriarch be honorably excused from active service.

### **Light of revelation empowers patriarchs**

President Harold B. Lee told of calling a patriarch. He and the stake president had gone to the man's home. He had been out with his sons on the welfare farm all day and was tired and weary and covered with grime.

President Lee said, "I made him more weary when I told him what it was I had come for—that he was to be called as the patriarch to that stake."

After the morning session of conference, where the man had borne a remarkable testimony, they went to a basement office.

The stake president's wife was present and wrote to President Lee:

"As you walked over to put your hands on [his] head, I thought to myself, He is a man with whom we socialize. We have gone on trips with him, to dances. . . . Now part of his responsibility is to declare the lineage from which each one has come in these blessings. He hasn't been a student of ancient languages—how is he going to know?"

" . . . You walked over and put your hands on his head, and a light came from behind you and went right through you and into him. And I thought to myself, Isn't that a strange coincidence that the sunlight has come in just at that moment. And then I realized that there was [no window,] no sunlight. I was witnessing the answer to my question. . . . That light came from somewhere beyond Brother Lee and went through Brother Lee into this patriarch. Then I knew where he was going to get that information—by the revelations of Almighty God."<sup>8</sup>

And so it must be. Whenever a patriarch is ordained or pronounces a blessing, that same light, though it may be unseen, is present. It empowers a patriarch to declare lineage and to give a prophetic blessing, notwithstanding that he himself may be a man of very ordinary capacity.

### A holy, sacred office

Do not let the office of stake patriarch be neglected or ignored. It is essential to the spiritual power of a stake.

Now, to stake presidents, watch over the work of your stake patriarch. Keep him close to you. Interview him and read selections from his blessings.

And speaking to the patriarchs, you have been chosen as few other men are chosen. You must live in such a way that through spiritual inspiration you can give prophetic and inspired blessings. Be an exemplary patriarch in your own family. Live to be worthy of the Spirit. And experience the joy of your calling.

The patriarch, who had never seen me before, made a promise that applies to every one of us. He told me to "face toward the sunlight of truth so that the shadow of error, disbelief, doubt and discouragement shall be cast behind you."<sup>9</sup> Many times I have gained strength from reading that patriarchal blessing, given by an inspired servant of the Lord.

I bear witness that this is a holy office, a sacred office, a blessing to this Church, that it is an example of the blessings that the Lord has established in His Church for the blessing of all of us. And I bear testimony of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:39.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 151.
3. Adam counseled and blessed his posterity (see D&C 107:42–56); Jacob blessed his sons and their descendants (see Genesis 49:1–28); Lehi blessed his posterity (see 2 Nephi 4:3–11).
4. The Savior ordained apostles, prophets, and evangelists (see Ephesians 4:11); the duty of the Twelve is to ordain evangelists (see D&C 107:39); Hyrum Smith was to take the office of patriarch (see D&C 124:91–92, 124; 135:1).
5. First Presidency letter, 29 June 1903; see also James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:57–58.
6. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1975), 117.
7. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 vols. (1943–51), 1:73–74.
8. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 488–89.
9. Patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, 15 Jan. 1944, 2.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Helaman's extraordinary young men

In one of the most powerful and instructive stories in the Book of Mormon, the people of Ammon had covenanted never again to take up weapons for the shedding of blood. But "when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions . . . which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were

desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country" (Alma 53:13). Helaman and his brethren persuaded them to honor their covenant with the Lord.

The scriptural account doesn't tell us who first pointed out that their sons had not made the same covenant their parents had made. I like to think that it was one of the young men who suggested the possi-

bility that he and his peers be allowed to “take up arms, and [call] themselves Nephites. And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives” (Alma 53:16–17).

This was an extraordinary task for a group of 2,000 young men, but they were extraordinary young men. According to the scriptural record:

“They were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

The rest of the story tells how these young men fought valiantly against the much older and much more experienced Lamanite army. According to their leader, Helaman, “they . . . fought as if with the strength of God; . . . and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites, that they did frighten them; and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war” (Alma 56:56).

Imagine that! These inexperienced young men were so spiritually and physically prepared, and so powerful, that they frightened their foes into surrendering! Although all 2,000 of the young men were wounded in battle at one time or another, not one was killed (see Alma 57:25). Again quoting Helaman, “And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power” (Alma 57:26).

### **A modern battle for souls**

Brethren, today we are fighting a battle that in many ways is more perilous,

more fraught with danger than the battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Our enemy is cunning and resourceful. We fight against Lucifer, the father of all lies, the enemy of all that is good and right and holy. Truly we live in a time of which Paul prophesied, when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:2–5).

Does this sound familiar, brethren? To me it sounds like a night of prime-time television.

These are “perilous times.” We battle literally for the souls of men. The enemy is unforgiving and relentless. He is taking eternal prisoners at an alarming rate. And he shows no sign of letting up.

While we are profoundly grateful for the many members of the Church who are doing great things in the battle for truth and right, I must honestly tell you it still is not enough. We need much more help. And so, as the people of Ammon looked to their sons for reinforcement in the war against the Lamanites, we look to you, my young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. We need you. Like Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors, you also are the spirit sons of God, and you too can be endowed with power to build up and defend His kingdom. We need you to make sacred covenants, just as they did. We need you to be meticulously obedient and faithful, just as they were.

### **Need for spiritually strong missionaries**

What we need now is the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church. We need worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries who, like Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors, are

“exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity” and who are “true at all times in whatsoever thing they [are] entrusted” (Alma 53:20).

Listen to those words, my young brethren: *valiant, courage, strength, active, true*. We don’t need spiritually weak and semi-committed young men. We don’t need you to just fill a position; we need your whole heart and soul. We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. This isn’t a time for spiritual weaklings. We cannot send you on a mission to be reactivated, reformed, or to receive a testimony. We just don’t have time for that. We need you to be filled with “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5).

### **Rise up, measure up, prepare to serve**

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I call upon you to begin right now—tonight—to be fully and completely worthy. Resolve and commit to yourselves and to God that from this moment forward you will strive diligently to keep your hearts, hands, and minds pure and unsullied from any kind of moral transgression. Resolve to avoid pornography as you would avoid the most insidious disease, for that is precisely what it is. Resolve to completely abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs. Resolve to be honest. Resolve to be good citizens and to abide by the laws of the land in which you live. Resolve that from this night forward you will never defile your body or use language that is vulgar and unbecoming to a bearer of the priesthood.

And that is not all we expect of you, my young brethren. We expect you to have an understanding and a solid testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We expect you to work hard. We expect you to be covenant makers and covenant keepers. We expect you to be missionaries to match our glorious message.

Now, these are high standards. We understand that, but we do not apologize for them. They reflect the Lord’s standards for you to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to enter the temple, to serve as missionaries, and to be righteous husbands and fathers. There’s nothing new in them, nothing you haven’t heard before. But tonight we call upon you, our young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, to rise up, to measure up, and to be fully prepared to serve the Lord.

Many of you are already on this track, and we commend you for your worthiness and determination. For those of you who are not, let tonight be the beginning of your preparation process. If you find yourself wanting in worthiness, resolve to make the appropriate changes—beginning right now. If you think you need to talk to your father and your bishop about any sins you may have committed, don’t wait; do it now. They will help you to repent and change so you can take your place as a member of the greatest generation of missionaries.

### **How to meet the rising standard**

Please understand this: the bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the “repent and go” missionary is over. You know what I’m talking about, don’t you, my young brothers? Some young men have the mistaken idea that they can be involved in sinful behavior and then repent when they’re 18½ so they can go on their mission at 19. While it is true that you can repent of sins, you may or you may not qualify to serve. It is far better to keep yourselves clean and pure and valiant by doing such simple things as:

- Developing a meaningful prayer relationship with your Heavenly Father.
- Keeping the Sabbath day holy.
- Working and putting part of your earnings in a savings account.
- Paying a full and honest tithing.

- Limiting the amount of time spent playing computer games. How many kills you can make in a minute with a computer game will have zero effect on your capacity to be a good missionary.

- Giving the Lord more of your time by studying the scriptures and gaining an understanding of the marvelous message of the Restoration we have for the world.

- Serving others and sharing your testimony with them.

### **Role of fathers in preparing missionaries**

Now, fathers, you have a vital role in this preparation process. We know that the most profound influence on helping young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, marriage, and fatherhood is the family. If your sons understand the basic doctrines required to become a faithful father, they will surely be ready to serve as a full-time missionary. Unfortunately, far too many fathers abdicate this eternal responsibility. You may assume that the bishop and the seminary, Sunday School, and Young Men teachers and leaders are in a better position to motivate and inspire your sons than you are. That simply is not the case. While ecclesiastical leaders are important to your son's priesthood and missionary preparation, the Church exists as a resource to you. It is not a substitute for your inspired teaching, guidance, and correction.

Consequently, if we are "raising the bar" for your sons to serve as missionaries, that means we are also "raising the bar" for you. If we expect more of them, that means we expect more of you and your wife as well. Remember, Helaman's 2,000 stripping warriors were faithful because "they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him" (Alma 53:21)—and that instruction came in their homes.

Some fathers don't think they have the right to ask worthiness questions of their children. They think that is the pur-

view of the bishop alone. Fathers, not only do you have the right to know the worthiness of your children, you have the responsibility. It is your duty to know how your children are doing with regard to their spiritual well-being and progression. You need to monitor carefully the issues and concerns they share with you. Ask specific questions of your children regarding their worthiness, and refuse to settle for anything less than specific answers.

Too often our bishops have to instruct youth to talk to their parents about problems they are having. That procedure should actually flow the other direction. Parents should be so intimately aware of what is going on in their children's lives that they know about the problems before the bishop does. They should be counseling with their children and going with them to their bishops if that becomes necessary for complete repentance. As divinely appointed judges in Israel, the bishop and the stake president determine worthiness and resolve concerns on behalf of the Church; but, fathers, you have an eternal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of your children. Please assume your rightful place as counselor, adviser, and priesthood leader in preparing your sons to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood and to serve as missionaries.

### **Bishops must judge wisely**

Now a word to you bishops. I realize there are many young men who don't have a faithful father in their home. In these cases, use the resources of the Church to see that these Aaronic Priesthood holders are taught by Melchizedek Priesthood brethren who can help them to prepare for their future priesthood service. Upon you bishops and you stake presidents rests the responsibility to recommend only those young men and women whom you judge to be spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to face today's realities of missionary work. Brethren, judge



wisely and remember: not every young man needs to be called to serve away from his home; some may best serve under your direction as ward missionaries.

### **To current and returned missionaries**

To those of you who are currently serving as full-time missionaries, we thank you for your service. Tonight is a good time for each of you to take a close look at your performance; and if you are not measuring up, your mission president will help you make the necessary changes to be an effective, dedicated servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to those of you who have already served, please remember that you were released from your missions but not from the Church. You spent two years as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. We expect you to always look and act like one of His disciples. Look the part. Act the part. Don't follow worldly trends and fashions. You are better than that. If you have slipped, then do what is necessary to regain your spiritual balance. The rules for happiness and success after your mission are pretty much the same as they were during your mission: pray hard, work hard, and be obedient. Get busy now and

find your eternal companion to enjoy life with. Serve the Lord together, and raise up the next great generation.

My brethren, I have spoken plainly tonight. I hope you can feel the love and the concern that emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other Church leaders as we ask you to prepare now to join us in taking the blessings of the restored gospel to all the people on the earth. Each one of you is precious, and we want you to be successful and secure in the battle for the souls of our Heavenly Father's children. May God bless you with the courage to be "true at all times" (Alma 53:20) and with the vision to realize who you are and what the Lord has for you to do, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, brethren. We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." At the conclusion of the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

## **President James E. Faust**

### **Accountability for using the priesthood**

My dear brethren of the holy priesthood, I pray for your understanding as I speak to this vast audience tonight. As President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley has accomplished an insurmountable group of tasks. Yet he was once a young Aaronic Priesthood holder like many of you. You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood are going to be the future leaders of the Church. This evening I wish to address my remarks mainly to

you. You need to understand that success—both for yourself and the Church—will depend on your determination to accomplish the work of the Lord. Each of you will need to have faith and confidence to move forward.

Each man and boy listening this evening has been entrusted with the greatest power on earth—the holy priesthood of God. It is the power to act righteously in the name of the Lord to build up the kingdom of God on earth. I remind you "that the rights of the priesthood are insepara-

bly connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> Priesthood is divine agency, and the Lord will hold us accountable for our use of this great authority.

### **“I think I can”**

I first heard the wonderful story of *The Little Engine That Could* when I was about 10 years old. As a child, I was interested in the story because the train cars were filled with toy animals, toy clowns, jackknives, puzzles, and books, as well as delicious things to eat. However, the engine that was pulling the train over the mountain broke down. The story relates that a big passenger engine came by and was asked to pull the cars over the mountain, but he wouldn’t condescend to pull the little train. Another engine came by, but he wouldn’t stoop to help the little train over the mountain because he was a freight engine. An old engine came by, but he would not help because, he said, “I am so tired. . . . I can not. I can not. I can not.”

Then a little blue engine came down the track, and she was asked to pull the cars over the mountain to the children on the other side. The little engine responded, “I’m not very big. . . . They use me only for switching in the yard. I have never been over the mountain.” But she was concerned about disappointing the children on the other side of the mountain if they didn’t get all of the goodies in the cars. So she said, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.” And she hooked herself to the little train. “Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine. ‘I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can.’” With this attitude, the little engine reached the top of the mountain and went down the other side, saying, “I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.

I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Parable of the talents**

At times all of us are called upon to stretch ourselves and do more than we think we can. I’m reminded of President Theodore Roosevelt’s quip, “I am only an average man but, by George, I work harder at it than the average man.”<sup>3</sup> We develop our talents first by thinking we can. We are all familiar with the parable of the talents. The Master gave one five talents, another two, and another one, “every man according to his several ability. . . .

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

“And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

“But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”

After a long time the Master asked for an accounting. The one who had received five talents reported that he had gained an additional five talents and received the commendation, “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” He that received two talents gained two other talents and also received the promise of a greater dominion. But the one who had received the one talent returned with his single talent, saying, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

In accounting for his stewardship, this slothful servant imputed to his master his own character flaws.<sup>5</sup> He could have at least put the money in circulation and received interest on it instead of burying it in the ground. His talent was taken from him and given to the man who had 10 talents. Then the Lord tells us, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he

shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."<sup>6</sup>

We may wonder whether it was fair to take the talent from the one who had the least and give it to the one who had the most. From the outset, however, the Lord explains that each man had ability.<sup>7</sup>

### **Some are too content, passive with talents**

Some of us are too content with what we may already be doing. We stand back in the "eat, drink, and be merry" mode when opportunities for growth and development abound. We miss opportunities to build up the kingdom of God because we have the passive notion that someone else will take care of it. The Lord tells us that He will give more to those who are willing. They will be magnified in their efforts, like the little blue engine as it pulled the train up the mountain. But to those who say, "We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."<sup>8</sup>

The Lord entrusts all of His servants, including every priesthood holder, with spiritual talents. The Lord, who endows us with these talents, tells us, "I believe you can. I believe you can." While we are not all equal in experience, aptitude, and strength, we have different opportunities to employ these spiritual gifts, and we will all be accountable for the use of the gifts and opportunities given to us.

### **Samuel Brannan's loss of his talents**

Church history includes incidents of priesthood holders of great capacity. A few were brilliant but also erratic and unreliable and so lost the spiritual gifts and talents with which the Lord had so richly endowed them. I would like to tell you about one such.

Samuel Brannan led some Saints around Cape Horn on the ship *Brooklyn*. They made a brief stop in Hawaii before docking at San Francisco Bay. He became

convinced that the main body of the Saints should not settle in the Rocky Mountains but should go on to California. So he traveled east and encountered the first party of emigrants under the leadership of Brigham Young in Green River, Wyoming. He used all of his persuasive powers trying to convince Brigham Young to take advantage of the opportunities which he felt California offered. Brigham Young responded, "Let us go to California, and we cannot stay there over five years; but let us stay in the mountains, and we can raise our own potatoes, and eat them; and I calculate to stay here."<sup>9</sup> Brannan stayed with the main body of the Saints for a few days, but then, because he was headstrong and self-centered, in August of 1847 he headed back to California.

Like the big engine that wouldn't condescend to pull the cars over the mountain, Sam Brannan was not focused on building up the kingdom of God. Instead he was directed toward business and making money. He became the first millionaire in California, with numerous business ventures and extensive land holdings. Because he had been the leader of that group of Saints, President Young asked him to account for the tithing that he had collected from the members of the Church in California, including those involved in the gold rush, but he did not do so. Nor did he use those funds to establish the Church or to help the members there.

For a time and a season, Brannan was very successful in establishing enterprises and acquiring land for his own benefit, but eventually he fell on hard times. His family did not stay together. When he died, he was alone, broken physically, spiritually, and financially. For 16 months no one claimed his body. Eventually it was placed in San Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery. Sam Brannan accomplished much in his life, but in the end he paid a terrible price for not honoring his priesthood stewardship and for failing to follow the prophet of God.<sup>10</sup>

## Follow the prophet to develop talents

Those of us who now hold the priesthood responsibility of this Church must follow and sustain our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Like the “little engine that could,” we need to be on the right track and develop our talents. We must remember that the priesthood can only be used for righteous purposes. When used “in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”<sup>11</sup>

To stay on the right track, we must honor and sustain those who hold the presiding priesthood keys. We are reminded that many are “called, but few are chosen.”<sup>12</sup> When are we chosen? We are chosen by the Lord only when we have done our best to move this holy work forward through our consecrated efforts and talents. Our efforts must always be guided by the righteous principles set forth by the Lord in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”<sup>13</sup>

## Priesthood power is activated by service

The priesthood is given to bless the lives of others. President David O. McKay said: “The very essence of Priesthood is eternal. As it finds expression in life it manifests power. We can conceive of the power of Priesthood as being potentially existent as an impounded reservoir of water. Such power becomes dynamic and productive of good only when the liberated force becomes active in valleys, fields,

gardens and happy homes; so the principle of power is manifested only as it becomes active in the lives of men, turning their hearts and desires toward God, and prompting service to their fellow men.”<sup>14</sup> If we aren’t serving others, then the priesthood really doesn’t benefit us because it is not a passive power. Brethren, be generous with the power of blessing which comes through the priesthood, especially to members of your own family. Remember that the Lord has said, “Whomsoever you bless I will bless.”<sup>15</sup>

In preparing for the time when we will account to the Lord for our own personal priesthood stewardship, where will we be? Remember that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there.”<sup>16</sup>

## Be like the little engine that could

I hope we will not be like the big passenger engine, too proud to accept the assignments we are given. I pray that we will not be like the person in the well-known poem who said:

Father, where shall I work today?  
And my love flowed warm and free.  
Then He pointed out a tiny spot  
And said, “Tend that for me.”  
I answered quickly, “Oh no; not that!  
Why, no one would ever see,  
No matter how well my work was done;  
Not that little place for me.”  
And the word He spoke, it was not stern;  
He answered me tenderly:  
“Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.  
Art thou working for them or for me?  
Nazareth was a little place,  
And so was Galilee.”<sup>17</sup>

I also hope that we will not be like the freight engine, unwilling to go the “extra mile” in service. The Master taught us that “whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”<sup>18</sup> Some of the most

rewarding times of our lives are those “extra mile” hours given in service when the body says it wants to relax, but our better self emerges and says, “Here am I; send me.”<sup>19</sup>

Or, like the old engine, do we say we are too tired—or too old? I remind you that President Hinckley is 92 and still going strong!

I hope we can all be like the “little engine that could.” It wasn’t very big, had been used only for switching cars, and had never been over a mountain, but it was willing. That little engine hooked on to the stranded train, chugged up to the top of the mountain, and puffed down the mountain, saying, “I thought I could.” Each of us must climb mountains that we have never climbed before.

Brethren, great is our work, and heavy are our priesthood responsibilities. I hope and pray that we can go forward with this holy work humbly, prayerfully, and unitedly under the guiding Spirit of the Lord and the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
2. *The Little Engine That Could*, retold by Watty Piper, from Mabel C. Bragg, *The Pony Engine* (1930).

3. In Evan Esar, ed., *Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1964), 151.
4. Matthew 25:15–25.
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 582.
6. Matthew 25:29.
7. See Matthew 25:15.
8. 2 Nephi 28:30.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 475.
10. See John K. Carmack, “California: What Went Right and What Went Wrong,” *Nauvoo Journal*, spring 1998, 5–6, 8–9; Paul Bailey, “Sam Brannan and the Sad Years,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1951, 232–34, 282–87.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
14. *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 230.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
16. 2 Nephi 9:41.
17. Meade McGuire, quoted in Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 39.
18. 3 Nephi 12:41.
19. 2 Nephi 16:8.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Master, the tempest is raging

The singing of the men’s choir this evening has lighted memory’s fire and brought to my mind the songs I sang when I was a boy. With fervor we would render:

Put your shoulder to the wheel;  
push along.  
Do your duty with a heart full of song.  
We all have work; let no one shirk.  
Put your shoulder to the wheel.<sup>1</sup>

We had a chorister who taught us boys how to sing. We had to sing. Sister Stella Waters would wave the baton within inches of our noses and beat time with a heavy foot that made the floor creak.

If we responded properly, Sister Waters let us choose a favorite hymn to sing. Inevitably the selection was:

Master, the tempest is raging!  
The billows are tossing high!

The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness.

No shelter or help is nigh.

Carest thou not that we perish?

How canst thou lie asleep

When each moment so madly is threat'ning

A grave in the angry deep?

And then the assuring chorus:

The winds and the waves shall obey thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea

Or demons or men or whatever it be,  
No waters can swallow the ship where lies

The Master of ocean and earth and skies.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, peace, be still.<sup>2</sup>

### **Demons that stalk our lives**

As a boy, I could fathom somewhat the danger of a storm-tossed sea. However, I had but little understanding of other demons that can stalk our lives, destroy our dreams, smother our joys, and detour our journey toward the celestial kingdom of God.

A list of destructive demons is lengthy; and each man, young or old, knows the ones with which he must contend. I'll name but a few: the Demon of *Greed*, the Demon of *Dishonesty*, the Demon of *Debt*, the Demon of *Doubt*, the Demon of *Drugs*, and those twin Demons of *Immodesty* and *Immorality*. Each of these demons can wreak havoc with our lives. A combination of them can spell utter destruction.

### *Greed*

Concerning *greed*, the counsel from Ecclesiastes speaks caution: "He that loveth

silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus counseled, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."<sup>4</sup>

We must learn to separate need from greed.

### *Dishonesty*

When we speak of the demon of *dishonesty*, we can find it in a variety of locations. One such place is in school. Let us avoid cheating, falsifying, taking advantage of others, or anything like unto it. Let integrity be our standard.

In decision making, ask not, "What will others think?" but rather, "What will I think of myself?"

### *Debt*

Enticements to embrace the demon of *debt* are thrust upon us many times each day. I quote the counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

"I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. . . .

"We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing invitation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest. . . .

"I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years."<sup>5</sup>

I would add: We must not allow our yearnings to exceed our earnings.

### *Drugs*

In discussing the demon of *drugs*, I include, of course, alcohol. Drugs impair our ability to think, to reason, and to make

prudent and wise choices. Often they result in violence and in child and wife abuse, and they can provoke conduct that brings pain and suffering to those who are innocent. "Just say no to drugs" is an effective statement of one's determination. And this can be buttressed by the scripture:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."<sup>6</sup>

### *Immodesty, immorality, and pornography*

When I consider the demons who are twins—even *immodesty* and *immorality*—I should make them triplets and include *pornography*. They all three go together.

In the interpretation of Lehi's dream, we find a rather apt description of the destructiveness of pornography:

"And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost."<sup>7</sup>

A modern-day Apostle, Elder Hugh B. Brown, has declared, "Any immodesty inducing impure thoughts is a desecration of the body—that temple in which the Holy Spirit may dwell."<sup>8</sup>

I commend to you tonight a jewel from the *Improvement Era*. It was published in 1917 but is equally applicable here and now:

"The current and common custom of indecency in dress, the flood of immoral fiction in printed literature, in the drama, and notably in [motion] picture[s] . . . , the toleration of immodesty in every-day conversation and demeanor, are doing deadly work in the fostering of soul-destroying vice."<sup>9</sup>

Alexander Pope, in his inspired *Essay on Man*, declared:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps a fitting summation pertaining to this demon can be found in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."<sup>11</sup>

For each of us it is infinitely better to hear and heed the call of conscience, for conscience always warns us as a friend before punishing us as a judge.

The Lord Himself gives us the final word: "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."<sup>12</sup>

### **A lesson in patience and calmness**

Brethren, there is one responsibility that no man can evade. That is the effect of personal influence.

Our influence is surely felt in our respective families. Sometimes we fathers forget that once we too were boys, and boys at times can be vexing to parents.

I recall how much, as a youngster, I liked dogs. One day I took my wagon and placed a wooden orange crate in it and went looking for dogs. At that time, dogs were everywhere to be found: at school, walking along the sidewalks, or exploring vacant lots, of which there were many. As I would find a dog and capture it, I placed it in the crate, took it home, locked it in the coal shed, and turned the latch on the door. That day I think I brought home six dogs of varying sizes and made them my prisoners after this fashion. I had no idea what I would do with all those dogs, so I didn't reveal my deed to anyone.

Dad came home from work and, as was his custom, took the coal bucket and

went to the coal shed to fill it. Can you imagine his shock and utter consternation as he opened the door and immediately faced six dogs, all attempting to escape at once? As I recall, Dad flushed a little bit, and then he calmed down and quietly told me, "Tommy, coal sheds are for coal. Other people's dogs rightfully belong to them." By observing him, I learned a lesson in patience and calmness.

### **Patience with a son and his water snake**

It is a good thing I did, for a similar event occurred in my life with our youngest son, Clark.

Clark has always liked animals, birds, reptiles—anything that is alive. Sometimes that resulted in a little chaos in our home. One day in his boyhood he came home from Provo Canyon with a water snake, which he named Herman.

Right off the bat Herman got lost. Sister Monson found him in the silverware drawer. Water snakes have a way of being where you least expect them. Well, Clark moved Herman to the bathtub, put a plug in the drain, put a little water in, and had a sign taped to the back of the tub which read, "Don't use this tub. It belongs to Herman." So we had to use the other bathroom while Herman occupied that sequestered place.

But then one day, to our amazement, Herman disappeared. His name should have been *Houdini*. He was gone! So the next day Sister Monson cleaned up the tub and prepared it for normal use. Several days went by.

One evening I decided it was time to take a leisurely bath, so I filled the tub with a lot of warm water, and then I peacefully lay down in the tub for a few moments of relaxation. I was lying there just pondering, when the soapy water reached the level of the overflow drain and began to flow through it. Can you imagine my surprise when, with my eyes focused on that drain, Herman came swimming out,

right for my face? I yelled out to my wife, "Frances! Here comes Herman!"

Well, Herman was captured again, put in a foolproof box, and we made a little excursion to Vivian Park in Provo Canyon and there released Herman into the beautiful waters of the South Fork Creek. Herman was never again to be seen by us.

### **Let every man learn his duty**

There appears in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 99, a brief but direct admonition to each priesthood bearer: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." I have always taken this charge seriously and have attempted to live up to its direction.

In the recesses of my mind, I hear over and over again the guiding direction which President John Taylor gave to the brethren of the priesthood: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty."<sup>13</sup>

### **Heed promptings in doing your duty**

In the performance of our responsibilities, I have learned that when we heed a silent prompting and act upon it without delay, our Heavenly Father will guide our footsteps and bless our lives and the lives of others. I know of no experience more sweet or feeling more precious than to heed a prompting only to discover that the Lord has answered another person's prayer through you.

Perhaps just one example will suffice. One day just over a year ago, after taking care of matters at the office, I felt a strong impression to visit an aged widow who was a patient at St. Joseph Villa here in Salt Lake City. I drove there directly.

When I went to her room, I found it empty. I asked an attendant concerning



her whereabouts and was directed to a lounge area. There I found this sweet widow visiting with her sister and another friend. We had a pleasant conversation together.

As we were talking, a man came to the door of the room to obtain a can of soda water from the vending machine. He glanced at me and said, "Why, you are Tom Monson."

"Yes," I replied. "And you look like a Hemingway." He acknowledged that he was Stephen Hemingway, the son of Alfred Eugene Hemingway, who had served as my counselor when I was a bishop many years ago and whom I called Gene. Stephen told me that his father was there in the same facility and was near death. He had been calling my name, and the family had wanted to contact me but had been unable to find a telephone number for me.

I excused myself immediately and went with Stephen up to the room of my former counselor, where others of his children were gathered, his wife having passed away some years previous. The family members regarded my meeting Stephen in the lounge area as a response by our Heavenly Father to their great desire that I would see their father before he died and answer his call. I too felt that this was the case, for if Stephen had not entered the room in which I was visiting at precisely the time he did, I would not have known that Gene was even in that facility.

We gave a blessing to him. A spirit of peace prevailed. We had a lovely visit, after which I left.

The following morning a phone call revealed that Gene Hemingway had passed away—just 20 minutes after he had received the blessing from his son and me.

I expressed a silent prayer of thanks to Heavenly Father for His guiding influence which prompted my visit to St. Joseph Villa and led me to my dear friend Alfred Eugene Hemingway.

## Peace, be still

I like to think that Gene Hemingway's thoughts that evening, as we basked in the Spirit's glow, participated in humble prayer, and pronounced a priesthood blessing, echoed the words mentioned in the hymn "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," which I cited at the beginning of my message:

Linger, O blessed Redeemer!  
Leave me alone no more,  
And with joy I shall make the blest  
harbor  
And rest on the blissful shore.

I still love that hymn and testify to you tonight as to the comfort it offers:

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed  
sea  
Or demons or men or whatever it be,  
No waters can swallow the ship where  
lies  
The Master of ocean and earth and  
skies.  
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:  
Peace, be still.<sup>14</sup>

His words in holy writ are sufficient: "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>15</sup> I testify to this truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252.
2. "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," *Hymns*, no. 105.
3. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
4. Luke 12:15.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.
7. 1 Nephi 12:17.
8. *The Abundant Life* (1965), 65.
9. Joseph F. Smith, "Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age," *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 742.
10. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 409.

11. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
13. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
14. *Hymns*, no. 105.
15. Psalm 46:10.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, brethren. We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

### **Heavy load on local leaders**

Now, my beloved brethren, I speak with a desire to be helpful. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide me.

I need not tell you that we have become a very large and complex Church. Our program is so vast and our reach is so extensive that it is difficult to comprehend. We are a Church of lay leadership. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. It must ever remain so. It must never move in the direction of an extensive paid ministry. But we know that the administrative load is very heavy on our bishops and stake presidents, as well as some others. An awareness of that fact has led the Presidency and the Twelve to hold a number of meetings, some of them long and interesting, in which, in effect, we have taken the Church apart and then put it together again. Our objective has been to see whether there might be some programs we could do away with. But as we have analyzed these, we have not seen much that could be dropped. To drop one is like giving away one of your children. You haven't the heart to do it. But I wish to assure you that we are aware of the burdens you carry and the time you spend. In this priesthood meeting I wish to men-

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to this Aaronic Priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "We'll Bring the World His Truth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

tion a few of the items we have discussed. I think you will note that we have made some progress, although it may be small.

I shall speak to you about a number of miscellaneous items.

### **Temple recommends valid for two years**

We have determined, first, that effective November 1, temple recommends will remain valid for two years instead of one. This should cut the time that bishops and stake presidents and their counselors have to spend in interviews for temple recommends. Of course, if at any time the recommend holder becomes unworthy of going to the temple, then it will become the responsibility of the bishop or stake president to pick up the individual's recommend.

But experience has shown that there are very few such incidents. And so this will become the program, brethren. Beginning the first of November, regardless of the date written on the recommend, the term will be extended for one year. Recommends will then be renewed every two years rather than the present one year. We hope this will be beneficial. We are confident that it will.

## Missionary farewells and open houses

Another item.

Elder Ballard has spoken to you concerning missionaries. I wish to endorse what he said. I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge he has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we have an interesting custom in the Church. Departing missionaries are accorded a farewell. In some wards this has become a problem. Between outgoing missionaries and returning missionaries, most sacrament meetings are devoted to farewells and homecomings.

No one else in the Church has a farewell when entering a particular service. We never have a special farewell meeting for a newly called bishop, for a stake president, for a Relief Society president, for a General Authority, or anyone else of whom I can think. Why should we have missionary farewells?

The First Presidency and the Twelve, after most prayerful and careful consideration, have reached the decision that the present program of missionary farewells should be modified.

The departing missionary will be given the opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting for 15 or 20 minutes. But parents and siblings will not be invited to do so. There might be two or more departing missionaries who speak in the same service. The meeting will be entirely in the hands of the bishop and will not be arranged by the family. There will not be special music or anything of that kind.

We know this will be a great disappointment to many families. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and friends have participated in the past. We ask that you accept this decision. Where a farewell has already been arranged, it may go forward. But none in the traditional sense

should be planned for the future. We are convinced that when all aspects of the situation are considered, this is a wise decision. Please accept it, my dear brethren. I extend this plea also to the sisters, particularly the mothers.

We hope also that holding elaborate open houses after the sacrament meeting at which the missionary speaks will not prevail. Members of the family may wish to get together. We have no objection to this. However, we ask that there be no public reception to which large numbers are invited.

Missionary service is such a wonderful experience that it brings with it its own generous reward. And when a missionary returns to his family and his ward, he may again be given opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting.

## Report on the Perpetual Education Fund

The next item.

Let me give you a brief report on the Perpetual Education Fund, which was established a year and a half ago at the April conference. The program is now going forward on a sound footing. We have a substantial financial corpus contributed by faithful Latter-day Saints. We hope more will be forthcoming to make it possible to assist a larger number of those worthy of help.

Today some 5,000 men and women, most of them young, are being educated who otherwise might not have had the opportunity. Think of the consequences of this. These faithful Latter-day Saints are offered a ladder by which they may climb out of the condition of poverty in which they and their forebears have lived. Their earning capacity is being greatly increased. Their power of leadership is being enhanced. They will become men and women of substance, members of the Church who will carry forward its program in a manner previously unimagined.

I give you one example. The first young woman to receive a loan has now completed a year of training and has applied for funds for her last year of training. She is studying to become a dental assistant.

Previous to this she worked in a restaurant earning \$130.00 a month. It is anticipated that when she completes her training, in a short time she will receive \$650.00 a month to begin with—an immediate 500 percent increase. That will grow through the years.

What a marvelous difference a few dollars make when they are properly applied. Now, you multiply her experience by 5,000. It is a most remarkable thing to contemplate. Students are receiving training to become mechanics, systems analysts, administrative consultants, nursing technicians, information systems technicians, nurses, hospital workers, computer programmers, computer engineers, fashion designers, accountants, electricians, English teachers, bakers, hotel administrators, and graphic designers, to name a few.

The possibilities are endless, and what is happening is indeed a wonderful and miraculous thing.

### **Be committed to family home evening**

The next item I wish to mention is family home evening. We are fearful that this very important program is fading in too many areas. Brethren, there is nothing more important than your families. You know that. This program was begun back in 1915, 87 years ago, when President Joseph F. Smith urged the Latter-day Saints to set aside one evening a week devoted specifically to the family. It was to be a time of teaching, of reading the scriptures, of cultivating talents, of discussing family matters. It was not to be a time to attend athletic events or anything of the kind. Of course, if there is family activity

of such a kind occasionally, that may be all right. But in the increasingly frantic rush of our lives it is so important that fathers and mothers sit down with their children, pray together, instruct them in the ways of the Lord, consider their family problems, and let the children express their talents. I am satisfied that this program came under the revelations of the Lord in response to a need among the families of the Church.

If there was a need 87 years ago, that need is certainly much greater today.

The decision was made that Monday evening would be devoted to this family activity. In those areas where there are large numbers of Church members, school officials and others honored the program and did not schedule events on that evening.

Now there appears to be a growing tendency to schedule other events on Monday night. We respectfully request that our public school officials and others let us have this one evening a week to carry forward this important and traditional program. We ask that they not schedule events that will require the time of children on Monday evenings. We are confident that they will realize that it is most important that families have the opportunity, at least once a week, to be together without conflicting loyalties. We shall be grateful indeed if they will cooperate in this matter. And we urge, in the strongest terms possible, that fathers and mothers regard most seriously this opportunity and challenge to make of Monday evening a time sacred to the family.

I have received not a few invitations to participate in community Monday gatherings of one kind or another. I have uniformly turned down these invitations with appreciation, but with the explanation that I have reserved Monday as family home evening time. I earnestly hope that each of you will do the same.

## **Become self-reliant in family welfare**

The next item.

Brethren, I wish to urge again the importance of self-reliance on the part of every individual Church member and family.

None of us knows when a catastrophe might strike. Sickness, injury, unemployment may affect any of us.

We have a great welfare program, with facilities for such things as grain storage in various areas. It is important that we do this. But the best place to have some food set aside is within our homes, together with a little money in savings. The best welfare program is our own welfare program. Five or six cans of wheat in the home are better than a bushel in the welfare granary.

I do not predict any impending disaster. I hope that there will not be one. But prudence should govern our lives. Everyone who owns a home recognizes the need for fire insurance. We hope and pray that there will never be a fire. Nevertheless, we pay for insurance to cover such a catastrophe, should it occur.

We ought to do the same with reference to family welfare.

We can begin ever so modestly. We can begin with one week's food supply and gradually build it to a month and then to three months. I am speaking now of food to cover basic needs. As all of you recognize, this counsel is not new. But I fear that so many feel that a long-term food supply is so far beyond their reach that they make no effort at all.

Begin in a small way, my brethren, and gradually build toward a reasonable objective. Save a little money regularly, and you will be surprised how it accumulates.

Get out of debt and rid yourself of the terrible bondage that debt brings.

We hear much about second mortgages. Now I am told there are third mortgages.

Discipline yourselves in matters of spending, in matters of borrowing, in practices that lead to bankruptcy and the agony that comes therewith.

## **Exercise moral discipline**

Now, finally, my brethren, I wish to return briefly to a matter I have spoken on before and which has been dealt with by Elder Ballard and President Monson in this meeting. I hope that they will not object to my trying to emphasize again what they have said. I refer to the moral discipline of members of the Church.

Too many are being caught in the web of immorality and all of the bitter fruit that flows from it. To the boys who are here tonight—the young men—I wish to say in the strongest language of which I am capable, stay away from moral iniquity. You know what is right and wrong. You cannot use ignorance as an excuse for unacceptable behavior.

How can you possibly think that you can become involved in immoral practices and then go into the mission field as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you suppose that you can be worthy to go to the house of the Lord, there to be married for time and eternity, if you have indulged in such practices?

I beg of you, my dear young friends, to avoid such behavior. It will not be easy. It will require self-discipline. The forces you confront are powerful and inviting. They are the forces of a clever adversary. You need the strength that comes of prayer.

Stay away from the erotic stuff of the Internet. It can only pull you down. It can lead to your destruction.

Never lose sight of the fact that you hold the priesthood of God. When John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, he stated that this priesthood "holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of bap-

tism by immersion for the remission of sins" (D&C 13).

Do you wish for the ministering of angels?

That ministering will bring with it incomparable rewards. Take the high road in your lives, and God will bless you and nurture you and "lead [you] by the hand, and give [you] answer to [your] prayers" (D&C 112:10).

To you mature men I extend the same plea and the same warning. Small beginnings lead to great tragedies. We deal with them constantly. There is so much of heartache, resentment, disillusionment, and divorce among us.

### No tolerance for child abuse

May I again mention a matter with which I have dealt at length in the past. I speak of the evil and despicable sin of child abuse.

We cannot tolerate it. We will not tolerate it. Anyone who abuses a child may expect Church discipline as well as possible legal action.

Child abuse is an affront toward God. Jesus spoke of the beauty and innocence of children. To anyone who has an inclination that could lead to the abuse of children, I say in the strongest language of

which I am capable, discipline yourself. Seek help before you do injury to a child and bring ruin upon yourself.

### Priesthood is a great force for good

You men who hold this precious priesthood, bind it to your very souls. Be worthy of it at all times and in all circumstances.

If you do so, you will enjoy that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

May God bless you, my dear brethren of the priesthood, young and old. Fathers, set an example for your children. Boys, look to your fathers for wisdom and guidance and understanding.

How great are the promises of the Lord to those who walk in faith. I leave with you my blessing, my love, and my testimony. What a great and marvelous force for good is in this priesthood if we are united and move forward as one. May the Lord bless us to do so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We'll Bring the World His Truth."

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 2002. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Redeemer of Israel" and will now favor us with "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling." At the conclusion of the sing-

ing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Earl M. Monson of the Seventy. The choir will then sing "Beautiful Zion, Built Above," and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling."

Elder Earl M. Monson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Beautiful Zion, Built Above."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### John the Baptist's example of humility

Many years ago I marveled at the cover of one of our Church publications, which featured a magnificent reproduction of a Carl Bloch painting. The scene which the artist captured in his mind and then—with a touch of the Master's hand—transferred to canvas depicted Elisabeth, wife of Zacharias, welcoming Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both were to bear sons—miracle births.

The son born of Elisabeth became known as John the Baptist. As with Jesus, son of Mary, so with John—precious little is recorded of their years of youth. A single sentence tells us all that we know of John's life from his birth to his public ministry: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."<sup>1</sup>

John's message was brief. He preached faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. "I am not the Christ," he told his

faithful disciples, "but . . . I am sent before him."<sup>2</sup> "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."<sup>3</sup>

Then occurred the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist. Later Jesus testified, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."<sup>4</sup>

All of us living in the world today need points of reference, even models to follow. John the Baptist provides for us a flawless example of unfeigned humility, as he deferred always to the One who was to follow—the Savior of mankind.

As we learn of others who trusted God and followed His teachings, the Spirit whispers to our souls, "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>5</sup> As they resolutely kept His commandments and trusted in Him, they were blessed. When we follow their examples, we too will be similarly blessed in our day and in our time. Each one becomes a model to follow.

### Abraham's example of obedience

All of us love the beautiful account from the Holy Bible of Abraham and Isaac. How exceedingly difficult it must have been for Abraham, in obedience to God's command, to take his beloved Isaac into the land of Moriah, there to present him as a burnt offering. Can you imagine the heaviness of his heart as he gathered the wood for the fire and journeyed to the appointed place? Surely pain must have racked his body and tortured his mind as he "bound Isaac . . . and laid him on the altar upon the wood [and] stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." How glorious was the pronouncement, and with what wondered welcome did it come: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."<sup>6</sup>

Abraham qualifies as a model of unquestioning obedience.

### Job's example of patience

If any of us feels his challenges are beyond his capacity to meet them, let him or her read of Job. By so doing, there comes the feeling, "If Job could endure and overcome, so will I."

Job was a "perfect and upright" man who "feared God, and eschewed evil."<sup>7</sup> Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which could have destroyed anyone. Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, shattered by the loss of his family, he was urged to "curse God, and die."<sup>8</sup> He resisted this temptation and declared from the depths of his noble soul, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."<sup>9</sup> "I know that my redeemer liveth."<sup>10</sup>

Job became a model of unlimited patience. To this day we refer to those who are long-suffering as having the patience

of Job. He provides an example for us to follow.

### Noah's example of obedience

"A just man and perfect in his generations," one who "walked with God,"<sup>11</sup> was the prophet Noah. Ordained to the priesthood at an early age, "he became a preacher of righteousness and declared the gospel of Jesus Christ, . . . teaching faith, repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost."<sup>12</sup> He warned that failure to heed his message would bring floods upon those who heard his voice, and yet they hearkened not to his words.

Noah heeded God's command to build an ark, that he and his family might be spared destruction. He followed God's instructions to gather into the ark two of every living creature, that they also might be saved from the floodwaters.

Said President Spencer W. Kimball: "As yet there was no evidence of rain and flood. . . . [Noah's] warnings were considered irrational. . . . How foolish to build an ark on dry ground with the sun shining and life moving forward as usual! But time ran out. . . . The floods came. The disobedient . . . were drowned. The miracle of the ark followed the faith manifested in its building."<sup>13</sup>

Noah had the unwavering faith to follow God's commandments. May we ever do likewise. May we remember that the wisdom of God oftentimes appears as foolishness to men, but the greatest lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and we obey, we will always be right.

### Ruth's example of loyalty

A model of ideal womanhood is Ruth. Sensing the grief-stricken heart of her mother-in-law Naomi—who suffered the loss of each of her two fine sons—feeling perhaps the pangs of despair and loneliness that plagued the very soul of Naomi,



Ruth uttered what has become that classic statement of loyalty: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."<sup>14</sup> Ruth's actions demonstrated the sincerity of her words.

Through Ruth's undeviating loyalty to Naomi, she was to marry Boaz, by which she—the foreigner and Moabite convert—became a great-grandmother of David and, therefore, an ancestor of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Nephi's example of determination**

I now turn to a mighty Book of Mormon prophet—even Nephi, son of Lehi and Sariah. He was faithful and obedient to God, courageous and bold. When given the difficult assignment to obtain the plates of brass from Laban, he did not murmur but declared, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps this act of courage prompted a verse of counsel for us found in the hymn "The Iron Rod":

To Nephi, seer of olden time,  
A vision came from God. . . .  
Hold to the rod, the iron rod;  
'Tis strong, and bright, and true.  
The iron rod is the word of God;  
'Twill safely guide us through.<sup>16</sup>

Nephi personified unflagging determination.

### **Joseph Smith's example of courage**

No description of models to follow would be complete without including Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation. When but 14 years of age, this courageous young man entered a grove

of trees, which later would be called sacred, and received an answer to his sincere prayer.

There followed for Joseph unrelenting persecution as he related to others the account of the glorious vision he received in that grove. Yet, although he was ridiculed and scorned, he stood firm. Said he, "I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it."<sup>17</sup>

Step by step, facing opposition at nearly every turn and yet always guided by the hand of the Lord, Joseph organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He proved courageous in all that he did.

Toward the end of his life, as he was led away with his brother Hyrum to Carthage Jail, he bravely faced what he undoubtedly knew lay ahead for him, and he sealed his testimony with his blood.

As we face life's tests, may we ever emulate that undaunted courage epitomized by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

### **President Hinckley's example**

There stands before us today another prophet of God—even our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley. He has presided over the largest expansion of the Church—both numerically and geographically—in our history. He has traversed frontiers not heretofore crossed and has visited with government leaders and with members the world over. His love for the people transcends the barriers of language and culture.

With prophetic vision he instituted the Perpetual Education Fund, which breaks the cycle of poverty for our members in many areas of the world and provides skills and training which qualify young men and young women for gainful employment. This inspired plan has kindled the light of hope in the eyes of those who felt doomed to mediocrity but who now have an opportunity for a brighter future.

President Hinckley has labored unceasingly to bring sacred blessings to members of the Church worldwide by providing temples that are within the reach of all. He has the capacity to lift to a higher plane those from all walks of life, regardless of the faith to which they ascribe. He is a model of unfailing optimism, and we revere him as prophet, seer, and revelator.

### **An example of faithfulness through trials**

The unique qualities possessed by these men and women whom I have mentioned can be of invaluable assistance to us as we face the problems and the trials which lie ahead. May I illustrate by mentioning the experience of the Jerome Kenneth Pollard family of Oakland, California.

This past May, as Elder Taavili Joseph Samuel Pollard was traveling to the mission office on the last day of his mission in Zimbabwe, the mission car he was driving somehow spun out of control and hit a tree. A passerby was able to rescue Elder Pollard's companion, but Elder Pollard, who was unconscious, was trapped in the car, which burst into flames. Elder Pollard perished. His mother had passed away eight years earlier; hence, his father was rearing the family alone. A brother was serving in the West Indies Mission.

When the news of Elder Pollard's death reached his father, this humble man—who had already lost his wife—called the son serving in the West Indies Mission to let him know of his brother's death. Over that long-distance telephone line, Brother Pollard and his son, no doubt grief stricken and heartsick, sang together "I Am a Child of God."<sup>18</sup> Before concluding the call, the father offered a prayer to Heavenly Father, thanking Him for His blessings and seeking His divine comfort.

Brother Pollard later commented that he knew his family would be all right, for they have strong testimonies of the gospel and of the plan of salvation.

### **Remember the examples of these models**

My brothers and sisters, in this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, as we journey through mortality and face the trials and challenges of the future, may we remember the examples of these models to follow which I have referred to this morning. May we have the unfeigned humility of John the Baptist, the unquestioning obedience of Abraham, the unlimited patience of Job, the unwavering faith of Noah, the undeviating loyalty of Ruth, the unflagging determination of Nephi, the undaunted courage of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the unfailing optimism of President Hinckley. Such will be as a fortress of strength to us throughout our lives.

### **Follow Jesus, our supreme Example**

May we ever be guided by the supreme Exemplar, even the son of Mary, the Savior Jesus Christ—whose very life provided a perfect model for us to follow.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as a mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

What was the reaction to His message of mercy, His words of wisdom, His lessons of life? There were a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.

Then there were those who denied Him. When asked by Pilate, "What shall I do . . . with Jesus which is called Christ?"<sup>19</sup> they cried, "Crucify him."<sup>20</sup> They mocked Him. They gave Him vinegar to drink. They reviled Him. They smote Him with a reed. They did spit upon Him. They crucified Him.

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter and Andrew by the shores of the beautiful Sea of Galilee, He said, "Follow me."<sup>21</sup> To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me."<sup>22</sup> To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."<sup>23</sup> And to you and to me, if we but listen, will come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."

My prayer today is that we shall do so. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Luke 1:80.
2. John 3:28.
3. Luke 3:16.
4. Matthew 11:11.
5. Psalm 46:10.
6. Genesis 22:9–10, 12.
7. Job 1:1.
8. Job 2:9.
9. Job 16:19.
10. Job 19:25.
11. Genesis 6:9.
12. Bible Dictionary, "Noah," 738–39.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 48.

14. Ruth 1:16.
15. 1 Nephi 3:7.
16. *Hymns*, no. 274.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.
18. *Hymns*, no. 301.
19. Matthew 27:22.
20. Mark 15:13.
21. Matthew 4:19.
22. John 1:43.
23. Luke 5:27.

#### President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. Our next speaker will be Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, released yesterday as the Young Women general president, will speak to us. She will followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the choir will then sing "How Firm a Foundation."

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### I'll go where you want me to go

My text comes from a hymn that has inspired faithful servants of the Lord for many generations:

It may not be on the mountain height  
Or over the stormy sea,  
It may not be at the battle's front  
My Lord will have need of me.  
But if, by a still, small voice he calls  
To paths that I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand  
in thine:

I'll go where you want me to go.  
["I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go,"  
*Hymns*, no. 270]

Penned by a poetess who was not a Latter-day Saint, these words express the commitment of the faithful children of God in all ages.

Abraham, who led Isaac on that heart-breaking journey to Mount Moriah, was faithfully going where the Lord wanted him to go (see Genesis 22). So was David when he stepped out before the hosts of Israel to answer the challenge of the giant Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17). Esther, inspired to save her people, walked a life-threatening path to challenge the king in his inner court (see Esther 4–5). "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord" was the motivation for Lehi to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2) and for his son Nephi to return for

the precious records (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Hundreds of other scriptural examples can be cited.

All of these faithful souls showed their obedience to the Lord's direction and their faith in His power and goodness. As Nephi explained, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

### **Example of President J. Reuben Clark**

All about us, and in our memories of earlier times, we have inspiring examples of the submissive, faithful service of Latter-day Saints. One of the best known was that of President J. Reuben Clark. After he had served over 16 years as an extraordinarily influential first counselor, the First Presidency was reorganized and he was called as second counselor. Offering an example of humility and willingness to serve that has influenced generations, he said to the Church:

"In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

### **Service of faithful senior missionaries**

Just as significant, though less visible, are the millions of members now laboring with similar faith and devotion in the remote corners of the Lord's vineyard. Our faithful senior missionaries provide the best examples I know.

I recently reviewed the missionary papers of over 50 senior couples. All had already served at least three missions when they submitted their papers for another call. Their homes were everywhere from Australia to Arizona, California to Missouri. Their ages ranged from the 60s and

early 70s to the—well, never mind. One couple, who were offering themselves for a seventh mission, had already served on Temple Square, in Alaska, in New Zealand, in Kenya, and in Ghana. They were sent to the Philippines. Scores of similar examples could be cited.

The priesthood leaders' comments on the papers of these couples are testimonies of service and sacrifice. I quote several:

"Willing to go anyplace, do anything for whatever length of time required."

"[These] are great examples of Church members who dedicate their lives to the Lord."

"Will go where the Lord wants [us] to go," another couple noted. "We pray we will be sent where we are needed."

Priesthood leader comments on the qualifications of these couples provide a good summary of the work our senior missionaries do so effectively.

"He is great in getting programs running and [in] leadership."

"Their joy is fullest when they are asked to 'build' and develop; therefore an assignment in a developing area of the Church may be appropriate. Willing to serve in whatever capacity called."

"They will likely be of more value working with [less-actives] and converts rather than in offices."

"They love the youth and have a gift with them."

"They feel most effective in and have a fondness for leadership support and fellowshiping work."

"They have slowed down some physically, but not in spiritual matters or missionary zeal."

"He is a true missionary. His first name is Nephi, and he follows his namesake. She is a tremendous lady, has always been a great example. Will do great wherever called. This is their fifth mission." (They had previously served in Guam, Nigeria, Vietnam, Pakistan, Singapore, and Malaysia. Giving them some respite from those arduous paths, the Lord's servants

called that couple to serve in the Nauvoo Temple.)

Another couple spoke for all these heroes and heroines when they wrote: "Will go anywhere and do what is asked. It is not a sacrifice; it is a privilege."

These senior missionaries offer a special measure of sacrifice and commitment. So do our mission presidents and temple presidents and their loyal companions. All leave their homes and families to serve full-time for a season. The same is true of the army of young missionaries, who put their lives at home on hold and bid good-bye to family and friends and set forth (usually at their own expense) to serve wherever they are assigned by the Lord, speaking through His servants.

I'll go where you want me to go,  
dear Lord,  
Over mountain or plain or sea;  
I'll say what you want me to say,  
dear Lord;  
I'll be what you want me to be.  
[Hymns, no. 270]

### A tradition of unselfish service

Millions of others serve from their homes on a Church-service basis. So it is with the 26,000 bishoprics and branch presidencies and the faithful presidencies of the quorums and Relief Society, Primary, and Young Women who serve with them and under their direction. So it is with millions of others—faithful teachers in wards, branches, stakes, and districts. And think of the hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers who fulfill the Lord's command to "watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them" (D&C 20:53). All of these can join in this inspired verse:

Perhaps today there are loving words  
Which Jesus would have me speak;  
There may be now in the paths of sin  
Some wand'rer whom I should seek.

O Savior, if thou wilt be my guide,  
Thou dark and rugged the way,  
My voice shall echo the message sweet:  
I'll say what you want me to say.  
[Hymns, no. 270]

As the prophet-king Benjamin taught, "When [we] are in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God" (Mosiah 2:17). He also cautioned us to "see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become converted. It teaches us what we should do, and it provides us opportunities to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. The full measure of this conversion to men and women of God happens best through our labors in His vineyard.

We have a great tradition of unselfish service in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Church is the fact that we have no paid or professional clergy in our thousands of local congregations and in the regional stakes, districts, and missions that oversee them. As an essential part of God's plan for His children, the leadership and work of His Church is provided by His children who give their time freely for the service of God and their fellowmen. They obey the Lord's command to love Him and to serve Him (see John 14:15; D&C 20:19; 42:29; 59:5). This is the way men and women prepare for the ultimate blessing of eternal life.

### Room for improvement in our service

Still, there is room for improvement in the commitment of some. When I ask stake presidents for suggestions on subjects I should treat at stake conferences, I often hear about members who refuse Church callings or accept callings and fail to fulfill their responsibilities. Some are not com-

mitted and faithful. It has always been so. But this is not without consequence.

The Savior spoke of the contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful in three great parables recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew. Half of the invited guests were excluded from the wedding feast because they were unprepared when the bridegroom came (see Matthew 25:1–13). The unprofitable servants who failed to employ the talents they were given by the Master were not allowed to enter into the joy of the Lord (see Matthew 25:14–30). And when the Lord came in His glory, He separated the sheep, who had served Him and their fellowmen, from the goats, who had not. Only those who had “done it unto one of the least of these my brethren” (Matthew 25:40) were set on His right hand to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (see Matthew 25:31–46).

My brothers and sisters, if you are delinquent in commitment, please consider who it is you are refusing or neglecting to serve when you decline a calling or when you accept, promise, and fail to fulfill. I pray that each of us will follow this inspired declaration:

There’s surely somewhere a lowly place  
In earth’s harvest fields so wide  
Where I may labor through life’s  
short day  
For Jesus, the Crucified.  
[Hymns, no. 270]

### Jesus’ example

Jesus showed the way. Even though He shrank from the bitter path that led through Gethsemane and Calvary (see D&C 19:18), He submissively said to the Father, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Earlier He taught:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24–26).

### The purpose of our service

We need to remember the purpose of our service to one another. If it were only to accomplish some part of His work, God could dispatch “legions of angels,” as Jesus taught on another occasion (see Matthew 26:53). But that would not achieve the purpose of the service He has prescribed. We serve God and our fellowmen in order to become the kind of children who can return to live with our heavenly parents.

So trusting my all to thy tender care,  
And knowing thou lovest me,  
I’ll do thy will with a heart sincere:  
I’ll be what you want me to be.  
[Hymns, no. 270]

### Service brings a change of heart

Almost a decade ago I read a letter from a returned missionary who described this process in his life. He had written to thank those who direct missionary work “for daring to send me where the Lord required rather than where I had deemed appropriate.” He had come, he said, “from a background of proud, competitive intellectualism.” Before his mission he was a student at a prestigious university in the eastern United States. Quote:

“I guess out of a sense of obligation and inertia, I filled out my [missionary] papers and sent them in, extremely careful to mark the column indicating greatest desire to serve abroad and in a foreign language. I was careful to make it apparent that I was an accomplished student of Russian and fully capable of spending two

years among the Russian people. Confident that no committee could resist such qualifications, I rested confident that I would enjoy a wonderfully mind-expanding cultural adventure."

He was shocked to receive a call to serve in a mission in the United States. He didn't know anything about the state where he would serve, except that it was in his own country speaking English rather than abroad speaking the language he had learned, and, as he said, "The people I would work with would likely be academic incompetents." He continued, "I almost refused to accept the call, feeling that I would be more fulfilled by enlisting in the Peace Corps or something else."

Fortunately this proud young man found the courage and faith to accept the call and to follow the direction and counsel of his fine mission president. Then the miracle of spiritual growth began. He described it thus:

"As I began to serve among the uneducated people of [this state], I struggled mightily for several months, but gradually the sweet workings of the Spirit began to tear down the walls of pride and disbelief that had wrapped themselves so tightly around my soul. The miracle of a conversion to Christ began. The sense of the reality of God and the eternal brotherhood

of all men came more and more powerfully to my troubled mind."

It was not easy, he admitted, but with the influence of his great mission president and with his growing love for the people he served, it was possible, and it occurred.

"My desire to love and serve these people who in the ultimate scale were at least my peers, almost definitely my superiors, waxed stronger and stronger. I learned humility for the first time in my life; I learned what it means to make our valuations of others [without relying on the] irrelevant details of life. I began to feel swelling within my heart a love of the spirits that came here to earth with me" (letter to General Authorities, Feb. 1994).

Such is the miracle of service. As the poetess wrote:

But if, by a still, small voice he calls  
To paths that I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand  
in thine:  
I'll go where you want me to go.  
[*Hymns*, no. 270]

I testify of Jesus Christ, who beckons us to His path and His service, and pray that we will have the faith and commitment to follow and the power to be what He wants us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### That they may be one in us

As His mortal ministry drew to a close, knowing "that his hour was come" (John 13:1), Jesus gathered His Apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem. Following their supper and after He had washed their feet and taught them, Jesus offered a sublime Intercessory Prayer on behalf of these Apostles and all who would be-

lieve in Him. He supplicated the Father in these words:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:20–23).

### **Become one within ourselves**

How glorious it is to contemplate that we have been invited into that perfect unity that exists with the Father and the Son. How can this happen?

Pondering this question, it becomes clear that we must begin by becoming one within ourselves. We are dual beings of flesh and spirit, and we sometimes feel out of harmony or in conflict. Our spirit is enlightened by conscience, the Light of Christ (see Moroni 7:16; D&C 93:2), and naturally responds to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and desires to follow truth. But the appetites and temptations to which the flesh is subject can, if permitted, overwhelm and dominate the spirit. Paul said:

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21–23).

Nephi expressed similar feelings:

"Notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

"I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me" (2 Nephi 4:17–18).

But then, remembering the Savior, Nephi stated this hopeful conclusion: "Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted" (2 Nephi 4:19). What did he mean?

### **Look to Jesus to restore unity of soul**

Jesus was also a being of flesh and spirit, but He yielded not to temptation (see Mosiah 15:5). We can turn to Him as we seek unity and peace within because He understands. He understands the struggle, and He also understands how to win the struggle. As Paul said, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Most important, we may look to Jesus to help restore the inner unity of our soul when we have succumbed to sin and destroyed our peace. Soon after His intercessory plea that we might become "perfect in one" (John 17:23), Jesus suffered and gave His life to atone for sin. The power of His Atonement can erase the effects of sin in us. When we repent, His atoning grace justifies and cleanses us (see 3 Nephi 27:16–20). It is as if we had not succumbed, as if we had not yielded to temptation.

As we endeavor day by day and week by week to follow the path of Christ, our spirit asserts its preeminence, the battle within subsides, and temptations cease to trouble. There is greater and greater harmony between the spiritual and physical until our physical bodies are transformed, in Paul's words, from "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" to "instruments of righteousness unto God" (see Romans 6:13).

### **Submit, like Jesus, to the Father's will**

Becoming at one within ourselves prepares us for the greater blessing of becoming one with God and Christ.

Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both flesh and spirit, to the will of the Father. The Savior's ministry was always clearly focused because there was no debilitating or distracting double-mindedness in Him. Referring to His Father, Jesus said, "I do



always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

Because it was the Father's will, Jesus submitted even to death, "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7).

This was certainly no small thing. That suffering, He said, "caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:18–19).

These statements reveal that the Savior's overarching ambition is to glorify the Father. The Father is "in" the Son in the sense that the Father's glory and the Father's will are the all-consuming occupation of the Son.

During that Last Supper with His Apostles, the Savior said:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1–2).

What form that purging may take, what sacrifices it may entail, we probably cannot know in advance. But if with the rich young ruler we were to ask, "What lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20), the Savior's answer would be the same: "Come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21); be my disciple as I am the disciple of the Father; become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [you], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

### **Make God's will our greatest desire**

President Brigham Young spoke understandingly of our challenge when he said:

"After all that has been said and done, after he has led this people so long, do you not perceive that there is a lack of confidence in our God? Can you perceive it in yourselves? You may ask, '[Brother] Brigham, do you perceive it in yourself?' I do, I can see that I yet lack confidence, to some extent, in him whom I trust.—Why? Because I have not the power, in consequence of that which the fall has brought upon me. . . .

" . . . Something rises up within me, at times[,] that . . . draws a dividing line between my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven; something that makes my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven not precisely one.

" . . . We should feel and understand, as far as possible, as far as fallen nature will let us, as far as we can get faith and knowledge to understand ourselves, that the interest of that God whom we serve is our interest, and that we have no other, neither in time nor in eternity" (*Deseret News*, 10 Sept. 1856, 212).

Surely we will not be one with God and Christ until we make Their will and interest our greatest desire. Such submissiveness is not reached in a day, but through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will tutor us if we are willing until, in process of time, it may accurately be said that He is in us as the Father is in Him. At times I tremble to consider what may be required, but I know that it is only in this perfect union that a fulness of joy can be found. I am grateful beyond expression that I am invited to be one with those holy beings I revere and worship as my Heavenly Father and Redeemer.

May God hear the Savior's prayer and lead us all to be one with Them in my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 "Now Let Us Rejoice."

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## Sister Margaret D. Nadauld

### A powerful influence for good

I love the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church, which has been restored to the earth in our day. I treasure the teachings of His holy life from newborn infant to resurrected man, Son of God.

As I have read from the pages of the Bible, in my mind's eye I have watched Him as He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>1</sup> In my reading, I was there when He raised the dead. He healed the sick, fed the 5,000, brought comfort and hope and a process for peace into the world that He had created. He forgave those who mocked and tortured and crucified Him—for they knew not what they did. I saw the divine love and concern He had for His mother, though He suffered in supreme agony Himself. He overcame death so that we can too. He has prepared a place for us in heaven with our Eternal Father. He has taught us the plan for happiness and given us the vision of it and the hope to follow it. His was the ultimate life of sacrifice and a life of service to fulfill the plan of God His Father.

A Latter-day Saint woman who follows Christ's example in her daily living begins to fulfill the plan of our Heavenly Father for her. By so doing she can be a powerful influence for good in today's world and meet the challenges of mortality. I have known such women, and they have been a guiding light to me. The Latter-day Saint woman who follows Christ is a true Christian in the very best sense of the word. She is a woman of faith who trusts God and is confident and fearless.

### Women of faith

*A woman of faith trusts God* and faces adversity with hope. She knows of His interest in her life. She knows that He knows her. She loves His words and drinks deeply of that living water. She is grateful for the

prophet He has sent for these latter days, and she trusts his counsel and follows it, for she knows that by so doing she will find safety and peace. In prayer she seeks the kind, unfaltering guidance and help of a listening Heavenly Father. As she prays, she listens—allowing the communication to be two-way. She trusts that in His still and quiet way, He will lead her by the hand and give her answer to her prayers.<sup>2</sup>

*A woman of faith is confident* because she understands the divine plan of our Heavenly Father and her role to bless lives. She is confident that any sacrifice she makes is worth something in an eternal sense. She knows about sacrifice from knowing of the life of the Savior. She knows that her sacrifices may be small by comparison, but she knows that Heavenly Father understands and values what she does to strengthen her home and her family and the world in which she lives. Her confidence grows because she is virtuous and lovely and gracious, which is even better than beautiful. She has pure motives. She is loving and gentle and kind. The hearts of her husband and her children safely trust in her.<sup>3</sup> And so do the children or youth or women that she has been called to teach, lead, serve, and love—they are drawn to her because of that special spirit that she radiates. It is the image of God that she has in her countenance that is appealing and important.<sup>4</sup> She is confident that she is fashioning a character and a record of performance that will be invited to stand in the presence of her Heavenly Father. She will be able to do so with the sense that she fully belongs there, that she is known by Him and loved and valued and treasured forever and always.

*A woman of faith is fearless.* She fears no evil, for God is with her.<sup>5</sup> There is no ambiguity, no uncertain trump in her life. She can live a principled life because she studies the doctrine and teachings of a

perfect teacher, the Master. She is a noble example to all who know her. She is less than perfect, of course, not because she doesn't have perfect principles or the perfect example in Christ, but because she is human. She stays away from the evil influence and the unclean thing, and if it encroaches on her territory, she is as a lioness protecting her cubs. A fearless woman of faith has the courage to talk with her children about practices which would destroy them. They not only hear her discuss her commitment, but they see her commitment in her daily living—in the way she dresses, what she reads and watches, how she spends her leisure time, what she loves and laughs at, who she attracts, and how she acts at all times, in all things, and in all places. She has a certain style of her own that is attractive and joyful and bright and good. Our little girls and our young women can safely trust in her example. We pray that they too will be fearless as they seek out and promote that which is uplifting and happy and decent, for they are our future.

### Gratitude for women of faith

Thank heaven for women of faith in our lives. A woman of faith loves the Lord. She wants Him to know it by the life she lives, by the words she speaks, by the service she renders to His children, by her every action. She knows that He loves her even though she is imperfect and still trying to be better. She knows that when she does her very best, it is enough, as President Hinckley has told us.<sup>6</sup>

A woman of faith is blessed by faithful men in her life who hold the priesthood of God and honor this privilege: her father, bishop, husband, brothers, sons. They value her and the divine gifts given by God to His daughter. They sustain and encourage, and they understand the great mission of her life as a woman. They love her; they bless her. They are in turn blessed by this woman of faith as they walk the path of life together. They know, as scripture teaches, that "two are better than one. . . . For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow."<sup>7</sup>

I express my gratitude for wonderful women of faith, for great, noble men, and for my beloved family, who have lifted me up and inspired me throughout my life. They have been an especially great blessing as I have tried to fulfill the sacred errand from the Lord as the Young Women general president.

Dear brothers and sisters, please know of my love for you and my great gratitude to our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I will honor and serve Them with all my heart forever and be thankful for the privilege. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Luke 2:52.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
3. See Proverbs 31:11.
4. See Alma 5:14.
5. See Psalm 23:4.
6. See Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69.
7. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Counsel to those who are called to serve

Not long ago a young man I did not know approached me in a crowded place.

He said quietly but with great intensity, "Elder Eyring, I have just been called as the president of my elders quorum. What advice do you have for me?" I was sure

that what he needed to know and to feel I couldn't give him there, with the people rushing past us. And so I said, "I will give you my counsel in general conference."

That young man is not alone in wanting help. Thousands of members of the Church across the earth are called every week to serve, many of them recent converts. The variety in their callings is great, and the variety of their previous Church experience is even greater. If you are the one who calls them, or trains them, or simply cares about them, as we all do, there are some things to know about how to help them succeed.

You may think first of being sure that they get a handbook, lesson manuals, or the records they are to keep. You might even give them a list of the times and the places of the meetings they are to attend. Then you might be about to tell them how their work will be evaluated, when you will notice concern in their eyes.

You see, even the newest member of the Church can sense that a call to service should be primarily a matter of the heart. It is by giving our whole hearts to the Master and keeping His commandments that we come to know Him. In time, through the power of the Atonement, our hearts are changed, and we can become like Him. So there is a better way to help those who are called than descriptions of what they are to do.

What they will need, even more than to be trained in their duties, is to see with spiritual eyes what it means to be called to serve in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. This is the kingdom of God on the earth. Because of that, it has a power beyond any other endeavor in which humans can engage. That power depends on the faith of those called to serve in it.

And so, to everyone, man or woman, girl or boy, who has been called or who will yet be, I give you my counsel. There are a few things you must come to know are true. I will try to put them in words. Only

the Lord through the Holy Ghost can put them deep in your heart. Here they are:

### **You are called of God**

First, you are called of God. The Lord knows you. He knows whom He would have serve in every position in His Church. He chose you. He has prepared a way so He could issue your call. He restored the keys of the priesthood to Joseph Smith. Those keys have been passed down in an unbroken line to President Hinckley. Through those keys, other priesthood servants were given keys to preside in stakes and wards, in districts and branches. It was through those keys that the Lord called you. Those keys confer a right to revelation. And revelation comes in answer to prayer. The person who was inspired to recommend you for this call didn't do it because they liked you or because they needed someone to do a particular task. They prayed and felt an answer that you were the one to be called.

The person who called you did not issue the call simply because he learned by interviewing you that you were worthy and willing to serve. He prayed to know the Lord's will for you. It was prayer and revelation to those authorized of the Lord which brought you here. Your call is an example of a source of power unique to the Lord's Church. Men and women are called of God by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by those God has authorized.

### *You represent the Savior*

You are called to represent the Savior. Your voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, your hands to lift the same as His hands. His work is to bless His Father's spirit children with the opportunity to choose eternal life. So, your calling is to bless lives. That will be true even in the most ordinary tasks you are assigned and in moments when you might be doing

something not apparently connected to your call. Just the way you smile or the way you offer to help someone can build their faith. And should you forget who you are, just the way you speak and the way you behave can destroy faith.

#### *Your call has eternal consequences*

Your call has eternal consequences for others and for you. In the world to come, thousands may call your name blessed, even more than the people you serve here. They will be the ancestors and the descendants of those who chose eternal life because of something you said or did, or even what you were. If someone rejects the Savior's invitation because you did not do all you could have done, their sorrow will be yours. You see, there are no small callings to represent the Lord. Your call carries grave responsibility. But you need not fear, because with your call come great promises.

#### **The Lord will guide you by revelation**

One of those promises is the second thing you need to know. It is that the Lord will guide you by revelation just as He called you. You must ask in faith for revelation to know what you are to do. With your call comes the promise that answers will come. But that guidance will come only when the Lord is sure you will obey. To know His will you must be committed to do it. The words "Thy will be done," written in the heart, are the window to revelation.

The answer comes by the Holy Spirit. You will need that guidance often. To have the Holy Ghost as your companion, you must be worthy, cleansed by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. So, your obedience to the commandments, your desire to do His will, and your asking in faith will determine how clearly the Master can guide you by answers to your prayers.

Often the answers will come as you study the scriptures. They contain accounts of what the Lord did in His mortal ministry and the guidance He has given His servants. They have doctrine in them which will apply in every time and every situation. Pondering the scriptures will lead you to ask the right questions in prayer. And just as surely as the heavens were opened to Joseph Smith after he pondered the scriptures in faith, God will answer your prayers and He will lead you by the hand.

#### **The Lord will magnify you**

There is a third thing that you need to know: just as God called you and will guide you, He will magnify you. You will need that magnification. Your calling will surely bring opposition. You are in the Master's service. You are His representative. Eternal lives depend on you. He faced opposition, and He said that facing opposition would be the lot of those He called. The forces arrayed against you will try not only to frustrate your work but to bring you down. The Apostle Paul described it this way:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."<sup>1</sup>

#### *He will magnify your efforts*

There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. Well, you are inadequate to answer a call to represent God with only your own powers. But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone.

The Lord will magnify what you say and what you do in the eyes of the people you serve. He will send the Holy Ghost to manifest to them that what you spoke was true. What you say and do will carry hope

and give direction to people far beyond your natural abilities and your own understanding. That miracle has been a mark of the Lord's Church in every dispensation. It is so much a part of your call that you may begin to take it for granted.

The day of your release will teach you a great lesson. On the day I was released as a bishop, one of the ward members came to my home afterwards and said, "I know you are no longer my bishop, but could we talk just one more time? You have always spoken words I needed and given me such good counsel. The new bishop doesn't know me the way you do. Could we just talk one more time?"

Reluctantly I agreed. The member sat down in a chair opposite mine. It seemed to be just as it had been in the hundreds of times I had interviewed members of the ward as a judge in Israel. The conversation began. There came the moment when counsel was needed. I waited for the ideas, the words, and the feelings to flow into my mind, as they always had.

Nothing came. In my heart and mind there was only silence. After a few moments I said, "I'm sorry. I appreciate your kindness and your trust. But I'm afraid I can't help you."

When you are released from your calling, you will learn what I learned then. God magnifies those He calls, even in what may seem to you a small or inconspicuous service. You will have the gift of seeing your service magnified. Give thanks while that gift is yours. You will appreciate its worth more than you can imagine when it is gone.

#### *He will work with you*

The Lord will not only magnify the power of your efforts. He will work with you Himself. His voice to four missionaries, called through the Prophet Joseph Smith to a difficult task, gives courage to everyone He calls in His kingdom:

"And I myself will go with them and be in their midst; and I am their advocate with the Father, and nothing shall prevail against them."<sup>2</sup>

Because the Savior is a resurrected and glorified being, He is not physically with every one of His servants at every moment. But He is perfectly aware of them and their circumstance and able to intervene with His power. That is why He can promise you:

"Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>3</sup>

#### *He will multiply your energy and power*

There is yet another way the Lord will magnify you in your call to His service. You will feel at some time, perhaps at many times, that you cannot do all that you feel you must. The heavy weight of your responsibilities will seem too great. You will worry that you can't spend more time with your family. You will wonder how you can find the time and the energy to meet your responsibilities beyond your family and your calling. You may feel discouragement and even guilt after you have done all you could to meet all your obligations.

I have had such days and such nights. Let me tell you what I have learned. It is this: if I only think of my own performance, my sadness deepens. But when I remember that the Lord promised that His power would go with me, I begin to look for evidence of what He has done in the lives of the people I am to serve. I pray to see with spiritual eyes the effects of His power.

Then, invariably, the faces of people flood back into my memory. I remember the shine in the eyes of my child whose heart was softened, the tears of happiness on the face of a girl on the back row of a Sunday School class I was teaching, or a

problem that was resolved before I had time to get to it. I know then that I have done enough for the promise made by Joseph Smith to be fulfilled once again:

"Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."<sup>4</sup>

You can have the utmost assurance that your power will be multiplied many times by the Lord. All He asks is that you give your best effort and your whole heart. Do it cheerfully and with the prayer of faith. The Father and His Beloved Son will send the Holy Ghost as your companion to guide you. Your efforts will be magnified in the lives of the people you serve. And when you look back on what may now seem trying times of service and sacrifice, the sacrifice will have become a blessing, and you will know that you have seen the arm of God lifting those you served for Him, and lifting you.

I know that God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers. Those we serve are His spirit children. This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. His is the only name through which our Father's children may be sanctified and gain eternal life.

The keys of the priesthood are exercised by the Lord's living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley.

I testify that the Savior lives and leads His living Church. I know that. I am a witness for Him and of Him. He sees and appreciates your faithful service in the work to which He called you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ephesians 6:12.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 32:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

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The choir sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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#### President Hinckley

We express appreciation to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, I seek the inspiration of the Lord in addressing you. I never get over the tremendous responsibility of speaking to the Latter-day Saints. I am grateful for your kindness and for your forbearance. I constantly pray that I may be worthy of the confidence of the people.

#### A wearisome but wonderful journey

I have recently come from a very long journey. It has been wearisome, but it

has been wonderful to be out among the Saints. If it were possible, I would turn all of the day-to-day administrative matters of the Church over to others, and then I would spend my time out among our people, visiting those in small branches as well as those in large stakes. I would wish to gather with the Saints wherever they may be. I feel that every member of this Church is deserving of a visit. I regret that because of physical limitations I can no longer shake hands with everybody. But I can look them in the eye with gladness in

my heart and express my love and leave a blessing.

### *Rededication of the Freiberg Germany Temple*

The occasion for this most recent journey was the rededication of the Freiberg Germany Temple and the dedication of The Hague Netherlands Temple. It was my opportunity to dedicate the Freiberg Temple 17 years ago. It was a rather modest building constructed in what was then the German Democratic Republic, the east zone of a divided Germany. Its construction was literally a miracle. President Monson, Hans Ringger, and others had won the goodwill of East German government officials who consented to it.

It has served marvelously well through these years. Now the infamous wall is gone. It is easier for our people to travel to Freiberg. The building was worn after these years and had become inadequate.

The temple has been enlarged and made much more beautiful and serviceable. We held just one session of dedication. Saints gathered from a vast area. In the large room where we sat, we could look into the faces of many of those rugged and solid and wonderful Latter-day Saints who through all of these years, in sunshine and in shadow, under government-imposed restraint and now in perfect freedom, have kept the faith, served the Lord, and stood like giants. I am so sorry that I could not throw my arms around these heroic brethren and sisters and tell them how much I love them. If they are now hearing me, I hope that they will know of that love and will pardon my hurried departure from their midst.

### *Dedication of The Hague Netherlands Temple*

From there we flew to France to take care of Church business. We then flew to Rotterdam and drove to The Hague. Work in three nations in one day is a rather heavy schedule for an old man.

The following day we dedicated The Hague Netherlands Temple. Four sessions were held. What a touching and wonderful experience that was.

The temple is a beautiful structure in a good area. I am so grateful for the house of the Lord which will accommodate the Saints of the Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of France. Missionaries were first sent to that part of Europe way back in 1861. Thousands have joined the Church. Most of them emigrated to the States. But we have there now a wonderful body of precious and faithful Latter-day Saints who are deserving of a house of the Lord in their midst.

### *Visits to Ukraine, Russia, and Iceland*

I determined that while in that part of the world we would go to other areas. We accordingly flew to Kiev in Ukraine. I was there 21 years ago. There is a new sense of freedom in the air. What an inspiration to meet with more than 3,000 Ukrainian Saints. The people gathered from far and near, enduring great discomfort and expense to get there.

One family could not afford to bring all of its members. The parents remained at home and sent their children so that they might have the opportunity to be with us.

From there we went to Moscow, Russia. I was there 21 years ago also, and there is a change. It is like electricity. You cannot see it. But you can feel it. Here again we had a wonderful meeting, with opportunity to converse with important government officials as we had done in Ukraine.

What a priceless and precious privilege to meet with these wonderful Saints who have been gathered "one of a city, and two of a family" into the fold of Zion in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 3:14). Life is not easy for them. Their burdens are heavy. But their faith is secure, and their testimonies are vibrant.



In these faraway places, strange to most of the Church, the gospel flame burns brightly and lights the way for thousands.

We then flew to Iceland. It is a beautiful place with beautiful people. Here we had a long interview with the president of the nation, a very distinguished and able man who has been to Utah and speaks very generously of our people.

Again we met with the Saints. What an inspiration to look into their faces as they crowded our own meetinghouse in the city of Reykjavik.

### **The marvelous foundation of our faith**

In all these places and in all these opportunities to speak to so many, one thing constantly occupied my mind—the wonder of this work, the absolute wonder of it. The words of our great hymn just sung by the choir repeatedly came to mind:

How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!

["How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85]

Do we as Latter-day Saints really understand and appreciate the strength of our position? Among the religions of the world, it is unique and wonderful.

Is this Church an educational institution? Yes. We are constantly and endlessly teaching, teaching, teaching in a great variety of circumstances. Is it a social organization? Indeed. It is a great family of friends who mingle together and enjoy one another. Is it a mutual aid society? Yes. It has a remarkable program for building self-reliance and granting aid to those in distress. It is all of these and more. But beyond these it is the Church and kingdom of God established and directed by our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, to bless all who come within its fold.

### **Significance of the First Vision**

We declare without equivocation that God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared in person to the boy Joseph Smith.

When I was interviewed by Mike Wallace on the *60 Minutes* program, he asked me if I actually believed that. I replied, "Yes, sir. That's the miracle of it."

### *Validity of the Church rests on the First Vision*

That is the way I feel about it. Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens.

Reflect upon it, my brethren and sisters. For centuries the heavens remained sealed. Good men and women, not a few—really great and wonderful people—tried to correct, strengthen, and improve their systems of worship and their body of doctrine. To them I pay honor and respect. How much better the world is because of their bold action. While I believe their work was inspired, it was not favored with the opening of the heavens, with the appearance of Deity.

Then in 1820 came that glorious manifestation in answer to the prayer of a boy who had read in his family Bible the words of James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Upon that unique and wonderful experience stands the validity of this Church.

In all of recorded religious history there is nothing to compare with it. The New Testament recounts the baptism of Jesus, when the voice of God was heard and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw the Lord transfigured before them. They heard the

voice of the Father, but they did not see Him.

### *Vision ushered in the greatest dispensation*

Why did both the Father and the Son come to a boy, a mere lad? For one thing, they came to usher in the greatest gospel dispensation of all time, when all of previous dispensations should be gathered and brought together in one.

Can anyone doubt that the age in which we live is the most wonderful in the history of the world? There has been a marvelous flowering of science, of medicine, of communication, of transportation unequaled in all the chronicles of mankind. Is it reasonable to submit that there should also be a flowering of spiritual knowledge as a part of this incomparable renaissance of light and understanding?

The instrument in this work of God was a boy whose mind was not cluttered by the philosophies of men. That mind was fresh and without schooling in the traditions of the day.

It is easy to see why people do not accept this account. It is almost beyond comprehension. And yet it is so reasonable. Those familiar with the Old Testament recognize the appearance of Jehovah to the prophets who lived in that comparatively simple time. Can they legitimately deny the need for an appearance of the God of heaven and His resurrected Son in this very complex period of the world's history?

That They came, both of Them, that Joseph saw Them in Their resplendent glory, that They spoke to him, and that he heard and recorded Their words—of these remarkable things we testify.

I knew a so-called intellectual who said the Church was trapped by its history. My response was that without that history we have nothing. The truth of that unique, singular, and remarkable event is the pivotal substance of our faith.

### **Coming forth of the Book of Mormon**

But this glorious vision was but the beginning of a series of manifestations that constitute the early history of this work.

As if that vision were not enough to certify to the personality and the reality of the Redeemer of mankind, there followed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Here is something that a man could hold in his hands, could "heft," as it were. He could read it. He could pray about it, for it contained a promise that the Holy Ghost would declare its truth if that witness were sought in prayer.

This remarkable book stands as a testimonial to the living reality of the Son of God. The Bible declares, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). The Bible, the testament of the Old World, is one witness. The Book of Mormon, the testament of the New World, is another witness.

I cannot understand why the Christian world does not accept this book. I would think they would be looking for anything and everything that would establish without question the reality and the divinity of the Savior of the world.

### **Restoration of the priesthood and its keys**

There followed the restoration of the priesthood—first, of the Aaronic under the hands of John the Baptist, who had baptized Jesus in Jordan.

Then came Peter, James, and John, Apostles of the Lord, who conferred in this age that which they had received under the hands of the Master with whom they walked, even "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," with authority to bind in the heavens that which they bound on earth (Matthew 16:19).

Subsequently came the bestowal of further priesthood keys under the hands of Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

Think of it, my brothers and sisters. Think of the wonder of it. This is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. We as a people are Latter-day Saints. We testify that the heavens have been opened, that the curtains have been parted, that God has spoken, and that Jesus Christ has manifested Himself, followed by a bestowal of divine authority.

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this work, and it is built upon a "foundation of . . . apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20).

### **Be tolerant and kind; remember roots**

This wondrous Restoration should make of us a people of tolerance, of neighborliness, of appreciation and kindness toward others. We cannot be boastful. We cannot be proud. We can be thankful, as we must be. We can be humble, as we should be.

We love those of other churches. We work with them in good causes. We respect them. But we must never forget our roots. Those roots lie deep in the soil of the opening of this, the final dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

What an inspiration it has been to look into the faces of men and women across the world who carry in their hearts a solemn conviction of the truth of this foundation.

When it comes to divine authority, this is the sum and substance of the whole matter.

### **Our great and singular message**

God be thanked for His marvelous bestowal of testimony, authority, and doctrine associated with this, the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

This must be our great and singular message to the world. We do not offer it with boasting. We testify in humility but with gravity and absolute sincerity. We invite all, the whole earth, to listen to this account and take measure of its truth. God bless us as those who believe in His divine manifestations and help us to extend the knowledge of these great and marvelous occurrences to all who will listen. To these we say in a spirit of love, bring with you all that you have of good and truth which you have received from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it. This invitation I extend to men and women everywhere with my solemn testimony that this work is true, for I know the truth of it by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 2002. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and

Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings. The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." After the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

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Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Hillam. The choir will now sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." Following the singing, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

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## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Shall he find faith on the earth?**

That was the most beautiful rendition of a magnificent song, "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief," which was the favorite of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. What a beautiful performance from the choir and orchestra.

I pray that I may have the Spirit of the Lord with me that has been with us during our conference, that I may say those things that will be beneficial to members of the Church and those who are not members. I feel very humble in this assignment.

Today I ask a question that the Savior asked nearly 2,000 years ago: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"<sup>1</sup>

### **Faith—the first principle of the gospel**

What is true faith? Faith is defined as "belief and trust in and loyalty to God" and "firm belief in something for which there is no proof."<sup>2</sup> We believe that "faith is to

hope for things which are not seen, but which are true . . . , and must be centered in Jesus Christ." In fact, we believe that "faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel."<sup>3</sup>

### **A widow's faith**

There are those who can teach us regarding faith if we will but open our hearts and minds. One such person is a woman whose husband had died. Left alone to raise her son, she had tried to find ways of supporting herself, but she lived in a time of terrible famine. Food was scarce, and many were perishing because of hunger.

As available food diminished, so did the woman's chance of surviving. Every day she watched helplessly as her meager supply of food decreased.

Hoping for relief but finding none, the woman finally realized the day had come when she had only enough food for one last meal.

It was then that a stranger approached and asked the unthinkable: "Bring me, I pray thee," he said to her, "a morsel of bread."

The woman turned to the man and said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." She told him she was about to prepare it as a last meal for herself and her son, "that we may eat it, and die."

She did not know that the man before her was the prophet Elijah, sent to her by the Lord. What this prophet told her next may seem surprising to those today who do not understand the principle of faith.

"Fear not," he said to her, "but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son."

Can you imagine what she must have thought? what she must have felt? She hardly had time to reply when the man continued, "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

The woman, after hearing this prophetic promise, went in faith and did as Elijah had directed. "And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."<sup>4</sup>

### Modern failure to exercise faith

In the wisdom of our day, the prophet's request may seem unfair and selfish. In the wisdom of our day, the widow's response may appear foolish and unwise. That is largely because we often learn to make decisions based upon what we see. We make decisions based on the evidence before us and what appears to be in our immediate best interest.

"Faith," on the other hand, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of

things not seen."<sup>5</sup> Faith has eyes that penetrate the darkness, seeing into the light beyond. "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."<sup>6</sup>

Too often today we do not rely on faith so much as on our own ability to reason and solve problems. If we become ill, modern medicine can work healing miracles. We can travel great distances in a short time. We have at our fingertips information that 500 years ago would have made the poorest man a prince.

### Three imperatives of true faith

"The just shall live by faith,"<sup>7</sup> we are told in holy writ. I ask again, What is faith?

Faith exists when absolute confidence in that which we cannot see combines with action that is in absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father. Without all three—first, absolute confidence; second, action; and third, absolute conformity—without these three, all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith. Let me discuss each of these three imperatives of faith.

#### *Have confidence in that which we cannot see*

First, we must have confidence in that which we cannot see. When Thomas finally felt the prints of the nails and thrust his hand into the side of the resurrected Savior, he confessed that he, at last, believed.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."<sup>8</sup>

Peter echoed those words when he praised early followers for their faith in Jesus the Christ. He said:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."<sup>9</sup>

*Act on our faith*

Second, for our faith to make a difference, we must act. We must do all that is in our power to change passive belief into active faith, for truly, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead."<sup>10</sup>

In 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley raised a voice of warning to the Saints of this Church as well as to the world at large. He uttered that same warning last night at priesthood meeting. He said:

"I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order. So many . . . people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings. . . . I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people."<sup>11</sup>

Brothers and sisters, when these prophetic words were uttered, some faithful members of the Church mustered their faith and heeded the prophet's counsel. They are profoundly grateful today that they did. Others perhaps believed that what the prophet said was true but lacked faith, even as small as a grain of mustard seed. Consequently, some have suffered financial, personal, and family distress.

*Align faith with the will of God*

Third, one's faith should be consistent with the will of our Heavenly Father, including His laws of nature. The sparrow flying into a hurricane may believe that he can successfully navigate the storm, but the unforgiving natural law will convince him otherwise in the end.

Are we wiser than the sparrow? Often what passes for faith in this world is little more than gullibility. It is distressing to see how eager some people are to embrace fads and theories while rejecting or giving less credence and attention to the everlasting principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is distressing how eagerly some rush into foolish or unethical behavior, believing

that God will somehow deliver them from the inevitable tragic consequences of their actions. They even go so far as to ask for the blessings of heaven, knowing in their hearts that what they do is contrary to the will of our Father in Heaven.

How do we know when our faith conforms to the will of our Heavenly Father and He approves of that which we seek? We must know the word of God. One of the reasons we immerse ourselves in the scriptures is to know of Heavenly Father's dealings with man from the beginning. If the desires of our hearts are contrary to scripture, then we should not pursue them further.

Next, we must heed the counsel of latter-day prophets as they give inspired instruction.

Additionally, we must ponder and pray and seek the guidance of the Spirit. If we do so, the Lord has promised, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart."<sup>12</sup>

Only when our faith is aligned with the will of our Heavenly Father will we be empowered to receive the blessings we seek.

**One of the grand powers of eternity**

Truly understood and properly practiced, faith is one of the grand and glorious powers of eternity. It is a force powerful beyond our comprehension. "Through faith . . . the worlds were framed by the word of God."<sup>13</sup> Through faith, waters are parted, the sick are healed, the wicked are silenced, and salvation is made possible.

Our faith is the foundation on which all our spiritual lives rest. It should be the most important resource of our lives. Faith is not so much something we believe; faith is something we live.

Remember the words of the Savior: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."<sup>14</sup> "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he

do also; and greater works than these shall he do.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Blessings of walking by faith**

Those who walk in faith will feel their lives encompassed with the light and blessings of heaven. They will understand and know things that others cannot. Those who do not walk in faith esteem the things of the Spirit as foolishness, for the things of the Spirit can only be discerned by the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

The manifestations of heaven are sealed from the understanding of those who do not believe. “For if there be no faith among the children of men,” Moroni tells us, “God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.”<sup>17</sup>

Yet throughout history, even in times of darkness there were those who, through eyes of faith, pierced the darkness and beheld things as they truly are. Moroni reveals that “there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong . . . [they] could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Making our homes havens of faith**

Our homes should be havens of faith. Mothers and fathers should teach the principles of faith to their children. Grandparents too can help. When I’m at a family gathering, I try to spend time, when appropriate, to have a one-on-one discussion with some of our grandchildren. I sit with them and ask them a few questions: “How are you doing?” “How is school?”

Then I ask them how they feel about the true Church, which means so much to me. I try to discover the depth of their faith and testimony. If I perceive areas of uncertainty, I’ll ask them, “Would you accept a goal from your granddad?”

Then I’ll suggest they read the scriptures daily and recommend they kneel down every morning and night and pray with their father and mother and have personal prayers. I admonish them to go to their sacrament meetings. I admonish them always to keep themselves pure and clean, always attend their meetings, and finally, among other things, always strive to be sensitive to the whisperings of the Lord.

Now one time after a talk with Joseph, our eight-year-old grandson, he looked into my eyes and asked this pointed question: “May I go now, Granddad?” He ran from my arms and I thought, “Did I do any good?” Apparently I did, because the next day he said, “Thanks for the little talk we had.”

If we approach them with love rather than reproach, we will find that the faith of our grandchildren will increase as a result of the influence and testimony of someone who loves the Savior and His divine Church.

### **Do not abandon faith during darkness**

Sometimes the world appears dark. Sometimes our faith is tried. Sometimes we feel that the heavens are closed against us. Yet we should not despair. We should never abandon our faith. We should not lose hope.

A few years ago I began to notice that things around me were starting to darken. It troubled me because simple things like reading the print in my scriptures were becoming more difficult. I wondered what had happened to the quality of the light-bulbs and wondered why manufacturers today couldn’t make things like they had in years past.

I replaced the bulbs with brighter ones. They too became dim. I blamed the poor design of the lamps and bulbs. I even questioned whether the brightness of the sun was fading before it occurred to me

that the problem might not be with the amount of light in the room—the problem might be with my own eyes.

Shortly thereafter I went to an ophthalmologist who assured me that the world was not going dark at all. A cataract on my eye was the reason the light seemed to be fading. This certainly gives you my age. I placed my faith in the capable hands of this trained specialist, the cataract was removed, and behold, light again flooded my life! The light had never diminished; only my capacity to see the light had been lessened.

This taught me a profound truth. Often when the world seems dark, when the heavens seem distant, we seek to blame everything around us, when the real cause of the darkness may be a lack of faith within ourselves.

### Trust in the Lord

Be of good cheer. Have faith and confidence. The Lord will not forsake you.

The Lord has promised if we “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, . . . all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly.”<sup>19</sup>

I know, as did Alma of old, that “who-soever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>20</sup>

Our Heavenly Father is a powerful, moving, directing being. While we may at times bear burdens of sorrow, pain, and grief; while we may struggle to understand trials of faith we are called to pass through; while life may seem dark and dreary—through faith we have absolute confidence that a loving Heavenly Father is at our side.

As the Apostle Paul promised, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>21</sup>

And one day we will fully see through the darkness into the light. We will understand His eternal plan, His mercy, and His love.

“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

Perhaps as members of the Church trust with all their hearts, transform their hopes and beliefs into action, and seek to align themselves with the will of the Lord, the answer to the question the Savior asked 2,000 years ago will be a resounding “Yes, He will find faith. He will find faith among those who take upon themselves His name. He will find it among those who are living His divine principles.”

I testify that through our prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to all of us today. I testify that the gospel was restored in its fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Faith, an eternal power, is a gift from our Heavenly Father for all mankind. To this eternal truth I bear my personal witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Luke 18:8.
2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1993), “Faith,” 418.
3. Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669–70.
4. Sec 1 Kings 17:11–16.
5. Hebrews 11:1; see also Hebrews 11:2–40; Ether 12:7–22.
6. 1 Corinthians 2:5.
7. Romans 1:17.
8. John 20:29.
9. 1 Peter 1:8–9.
10. James 2:17.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
13. Hebrews 11:3.
14. Mark 9:23.
15. John 14:12.
16. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.
17. Ether 12:12.
18. Ether 12:19.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
20. Alma 36:3.
21. Romans 5:1.



## Elder Richard G. Scott

### The Savior can free us of heavy burdens

Many of you suffer needlessly from carrying heavy burdens because you do not open your hearts to the healing power of the Lord. May this message encourage you to feel the prompting of the Holy Ghost to make those changes that will lead you to be free of oppressive burdens. The Savior has promised, "I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them . . . ; and this will I do . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."<sup>1</sup>

I will first speak to you who suffer because of your own wrong choices; then I will give suggestions for you who anguish for what others have done to you.

### A man burdened by sin

Seated across from me was a despondent man, head buried in hands, sobbing from the inevitable consequences of repeated violations of the commandments of God. He anguished, "I don't know what to do. Everything is pressing in on me. I'm tired of running. There is no peace, no happiness. When I pray, no one is listening. What's the use?"

I have known him for a long time. His parents and others have tried to give him guidance—with little success. Because of his choices, he has become separated from the truths that would help him. He has not cultivated faith in the Master nor in the power of prayer. His decisions are centered on what will quickly satisfy his cravings. He either ignores problems or lies about them. He has manipulated the generosity of parents and friends to attempt a quick fix to challenges. He does not evaluate the consequences of today's decisions on tomorrow's life.

As my heart sorrowed for him, I realized he does not see the world as it really

is—a place of joy and happiness, of true friendships, where faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings invite the Holy Ghost to prompt correct decisions. He lives in an environment dominated by the influence of Satan. He has not followed sound counsel, because in his world he cannot see how it would possibly work for him. This distorted view of life is reality to him. It was forged as he succumbed to the subtle temptations of "Go ahead. Try it. Nobody will ever know. It's your life. Live it the way you want to. They can't force you. You have your moral agency."

These promptings and the allure of the forbidden led him down a path that seemed fascinatingly attractive. He was carried on the crest of the wave of appetite and passion, oblivious to the consequences until the inevitable crushing encounter with the laws of God occurred. That produced pain, remorse, and regret. Then Satan provided other direction: "There is no way back. You might as well keep doing what you've been doing. It's hopeless to try to change." Because of his sins, he cannot see a way out of his failures. He will not see the tools needed for a new life in his current environment. His tragic, confining world has been created by the violation of eternal law, motivated by desire for a quick response.

### Breaking the chains of sin

Do you find yourself in a similar circumstance? Have you done things that you wish you had not done? Is it difficult for you to see any way to solve your problems? Does there seem to be an oppressive, crushing weight that's always there no matter how you seek to shake it? Under the influence of powerful emotions or stimulants, you may have periods where there seems to be relief. Yet in the quiet moments of reflection that inevitably will come, you realize that your life is not what

you want it to be. You may publicly complain that your friends and even the Lord have abandoned you, but in times of sober reflection you realize it is you who have abandoned them. Oh, please decide now to find the way back to the refreshing peace and joy that can replace the fleeting pleasures of sin and the subsequent agony and emptiness. You have confirmed what the scriptures teach: "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>2</sup> Earn enduring joy now from a clean and purposeful life.<sup>3</sup>

I know that you can escape the controlling influence of the evil one and the repressive chains that bind your life. That relief will require you to accept a solution that is likely foreign to your current personal experience. It will require you to exercise faith in Father in Heaven, who loves you. While you may not understand why now, you must trust that the Savior has given His life so that you can make the required changes in your life—changes that will bring peace and the elusive success that always seem beyond your reach. Believe that you can overcome the depressing environment in which you live by trusting that there is a better way. You must seek the help of others who understand and live that better way, even though you cannot see it now. This will require you to learn and obey the teachings of the Lord. Once you have fully committed yourself to that change, you will find that it is not as difficult as it now may seem.

The painful consequences of sin were purposely put in His plan of happiness by a compassionate Father in Heaven so that you need not follow that tragic path in life. A sinner will not only suffer in this life, but sins that have not been forgiven through true repentance will cause anguish beyond the veil.<sup>4</sup>

### **The cleansing process of repentance**

Satan strives to convince one that sins can be hidden from others, yet it is he who causes them to be revealed in the most

compromising circumstances. His objective is the enslavement of God's children. All of his enticing, alluring temptations have as their root the destruction of the individual. In fact, each of us needs consistently to repent and obey so that the gift of the Savior will satisfy the demands of justice for even our small errors of commission or omission.

The Savior will take upon Himself the consequences of your sins as you repent now. If that is not done, in time you will have to suffer for them yourself.

Seek out your bishop. He will show you how to repent and will help you do it. As you pray and act, you will be led to others who will support you.<sup>5</sup> Repentance is a process of cleansing. It is difficult, but it has an end—a glorious end with peace and refreshing forgiveness and the miracle of a new beginning. Confession of improper acts is an important step, but that is not full repentance. Your bishop will carefully explain what you must do. I will mention two aspects of repentance that bring great healing power. One is found in this declaration of the Master:

"For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord* shall be forgiven."<sup>6</sup>

That scripture emphasizes that the Lord cannot abide sin, but He will forgive the repentant sinner because of His perfect love. It also teaches that not only is it important to keep a commandment you have broken, but by obeying *all* of the commandments you will obtain additional power and support in the process of repentance.

### **The healing power of the Atonement**

Another vital aspect of repentance is to recognize the role of the Savior through His Atonement. Indeed, it is that very Atonement that makes repentance even possible. As you pray and ponder the role

of Jesus Christ as your Savior and Redeemer, you will acquire great motivation and encouragement to help you repent. Follow this example of Alma:

"I was . . . in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

". . . I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world."<sup>7</sup>

You will be helped by studying the magnificent explanation of the need for repentance and how it can be obtained, as Alma counseled his wayward son, Corianton, in the Book of Mormon.<sup>8</sup> Through trust in the plan of happiness and the capacity of the Savior to realize His promises, the darkness of sin can be swept away and the joy of a worthy life returned with the trust of loved ones, when earned the Lord's way. Do not blame others for your mistakes. Humbly repent, for it is written, "He offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."<sup>9</sup> Please, decide to repent—now.

### **Forgiving others brings peace**

You may be carrying a heavy burden of feeling injured by another who has seriously offended you. Your response to that offense may have distorted your understanding so that you feel justified in waiting for that individual to ask forgiveness so that the pain can leave. The Savior dispelled any such thought when He commanded:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses

standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."<sup>10</sup>

Don't carry the burden of offense any longer. Genuinely ask forgiveness of one that has offended you, even when you consider you have done no wrong. That effort will assuredly bring you peace and will likely begin the healing of serious misunderstandings.

### **Do not suffer needlessly for others' sins**

If you are free of serious sin yourself, don't suffer needlessly the consequences of another's sins. As a wife, husband, parent, or loved one, you can feel compassion for one who is in the gall of bitterness from sin. Yet you should not take upon yourself a feeling of responsibility for those acts. When you have done what is reasonable to help one you love, lay the burden at the feet of the Savior. He has invited you to do that so that you can be free from pointless worry and depression.<sup>11</sup> As you so act, not only will you find peace, but you will demonstrate your faith in the power of the Savior to lift the burden of sin from a loved one through his repentance and obedience.

### **Healing the wounds of abuse**

Now to you who have been scarred by the ugly sin of abuse. Mental, physical, or sexual abuse can cause serious, enduring consequences unless healed by the Lord. They may include fear, depression, guilt, self-hatred, and a deepening lack of trust in others that becomes a barrier to healing. Your abuse results from another's unrighteous attack on your moral agency against your will. In justice, the Lord has provided a way for you to overcome the destructive consequences of abuse. That relief can begin with the counsel of parents, priesthood leaders, and, when necessary, the help of competent professionals.

Yet you need not experience a lifetime of counseling. Complete healing will come through your faith in Jesus Christ and His power and capacity, through His Atonement, to heal the scars of that which is unjust and undeserved. You may find that hard to believe with your current feelings. I have witnessed how the Savior has healed aggravated cases of abuse in that way. Ponder the power of the Atonement.<sup>12</sup> Pray to understand how it can heal you.<sup>13</sup> Seek the aid of your bishop so that the Lord can free you of a burden you did not originate.

In closing, if you have felt impressions to be free of burdens caused by yourself or others, those promptings are an invitation from the Redeemer. Act upon them now. He loves you. He gave His life that you may be free of needless burdens. He will help you do it. I know that He has the power to heal you. Begin now. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Mosiah 24:14.
2. Alma 41:10.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:4, 15–24.
5. See Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 220–21; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 177–90, 201–12, 339–60.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32; italics added.
7. Alma 38:8–9.
8. See Alma 39–42.
9. 2 Nephi 2:7; see also Psalm 34:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10; see also Mark 11:25–26; Luke 6:37; Mosiah 26:29–32; 3 Nephi 13:14–15.
11. See Matthew 11:28–30.
12. See John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882).
13. See Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 43–46; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 31–33.

## Elder Kenneth Johnson

### Lessons from a childhood experience

I was raised by caring parents in a home where the values taught and practiced prepared the way for my introduction to the Church and an acceptance of gospel principles. I was baptized in the month of August 1959, shortly after my 19th birthday. As I ponder the events that preceded my conversion, my thoughts go back to a childhood experience.

#### *The home of Mr. and Mrs. Lyons*

Close to the home where I lived as a child was a large house. It was located on beautiful grounds, enclosed by what was to me a towering fence made of wood paneling, probably six feet in height. I recall peeping through holes in the panels where knots of wood had dropped out. It was like looking through a telescope into a different world. The beautifully manicured

lawns, the well-kept flower gardens, and a small orchard provided an idyllic setting for the distinctive dwelling. Unfortunately the opportunity to enjoy the view was always brief due to the vigilant British bulldog that patrolled the gardens and was immediately attracted to anyone standing close to the exterior of the fencing. Even though the fierce dog was confined in the garden, the sound of his sniffing as he approached the fence caused me to retreat in fear as my vivid imagination conjured up a variety of possibilities.

Mr. and Mrs. Lyons, who lived in the home, were schoolteachers. They had a dignified demeanor and seemed to enjoy the privacy that the house setting afforded them. To add to the intrigue, Mr. Lyons had no right hand, using instead a steel hook that protruded below the cuff of his jacket. In my boyish mind, I could imagine Mr. Lyons pursuing me, catching me by

the collar with the hook, and taking me captive.

### *Access to the apple trees*

I recall an August morning when I was 10 or 11 years old, following a night of unusually strong winds, being greeted by friends as I left my home. They were obviously excited by something and inquired, "Did you hear the wind last night?"

When I said that I had, they proceeded to tell me what they had discovered—that the wind had blown down sections of the fencing surrounding the Lyonses' home. I could not understand why this would cause so much excitement and asked them to explain the significance.

They responded with even greater enthusiasm: "We have access to the apple trees!"

I was still very cautious and asked, "But what about Mr. Lyons?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Lyons are not at home; they are away visiting relatives."

"Where is the dog?" I probed.

"The family has placed him in boarding kennels," came the reply.

My friends had certainly carried out detailed research. So, reassured by their words, we headed for our target with all haste. Entering the grounds, we climbed trees and hurriedly plucked fruit, filling our pockets and also the space between our shirts and our bodies. My heart was pounding and my pulse racing, since I feared that any moment the dog or Mr. Lyons, or both, would appear in the garden and apprehend us. We ran from the scene of our trespass to a secluded place in a nearby wooded area and, after regaining our composure, began to consume the apples.

### *Discomfort of eating bitter spoils*

It was August, and the apples were not yet ripe enough to eat. In fact, they had a very bitter taste, but the tartness of these green apples did not deter us as we enthu-

siastically consumed our spoils, acting out of a compulsion I cannot now explain. After devouring a significant number, I contented myself with taking a bite out of each remaining apple and throwing the remnants of the fruit into the nearby bushes. The frivolity diminished as our bodies began to gradually react to the invasion they had experienced. The chemical reaction between my gastric juices and the unripe apples caused me to experience stomach cramps and to feel nauseated.

### *Filled with remorse*

As I sat regretting what I had done, I realized that a feeling within me was producing even more discomfort than the unripe apples. The greater discomfort resulted from the realization that what I had done was wrong.

When my friends had proposed that we invade the garden, I had felt uncomfortable but lacked the courage to say no and so suppressed my feelings. Now, after the deed had been accomplished, I was filled with remorse. To my regret, I had ignored the promptings warning me of the error of my actions.

### *Still, small voice warns us against evil*

Physical barriers and external forces may prevent us from pursuing deviant paths, but there is also a feeling within each of us, sometimes described as a still, small voice,<sup>1</sup> that when recognized and responded to will keep us from succumbing to temptation.

Years later the words of President Boyd K. Packer touched a tender chord within me when he taught, "We cannot set off on a wrong course without first overruling a warning." I thought of that moment and others like it—the impressions and insights that come as we contemplate the consequences of our actions.

The prophet Mormon expands our view of the source of those impressions in these words: "The Spirit of Christ is given

to every man, that he may know good from evil."<sup>2</sup>

The proposition that we all have this gift of guidance is supported in the Gospel according to St. John, wherein it is written concerning the Savior that He was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."<sup>3</sup>

These stirrings within us originate from a divine source and, when followed, will help to keep us on course, thus protecting us from harmful influences and dangerous detours.

### **A prompting to resist temptation to smoke**

Several weeks after the experience with the apples, I set out to join my friends in the wooded area close to home, anticipating that we would devise some activity or game to play. As I approached them, they were huddled together. I saw smoke rising in the air above them and recognized the aroma of burning tobacco. One of them had obtained a packet of cigarettes, and they were smoking. They invited me to join them, but I declined. They persisted, suggesting that my reluctance to participate was a sign of weakness. Their taunts turned to ridicule, combined with condescending remarks. But nothing they could say or do could persuade me to change my mind. I had not been raised with a knowledge of the restored gospel and knew nothing of the Word of Wisdom, but I was restrained by a feeling within that I should not participate with them.

As I walked home reflecting on the decision I had made, I felt good inside. Although my expectations for the day had not materialized and I would have to find a way to occupy my time without my friends, I had discovered something about myself—about the source of real happiness and the invigoration that results from making the right decision, whatever the circumstances or outcome may be.

### **Hearken to the Spirit**

Revelation received by Joseph Smith the Prophet describes the benefits associated with adhering to this inherent compass in this passage of scripture:

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit."<sup>4</sup>

Not only does this verse provide a further witness that we all have access to this source of divine direction, it also emphasizes the need for us to hearken, or listen and respond, to the promptings we receive. The promise that follows is of great significance to me:

"And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father."<sup>5</sup>

These intimations, sometimes referred to as conscience but more accurately defined as the Light of Christ, not only help us in deciding what is right and what is wrong, but they will, if followed, lead us to the source of that light which emanates from the presence of the Father and the Son.<sup>6</sup>

The Savior promised His disciples: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth."<sup>7</sup> He further describes this gift as "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost."<sup>8</sup> One may experience manifestations of the Holy Ghost, but the gift is conferred and can be received only by the laying on of hands following baptism.<sup>9</sup>

I have come to more fully appreciate why it is written of His disciples on the Western Hemisphere, "They did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them."<sup>10</sup>

He is the consummate courier of truth.

### Holy Ghost guides us, reveals God's ways

As I have looked back over my life, it is clear to me that many decisions—some seemingly small at the time and others with which I have wrestled, recognizing their import—have caused me to climb to higher planes than I would have reached if I had not yielded to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

Without this glorious gift, we cannot comprehend the purpose of life or the great plan of the Eternal Father.<sup>12</sup> For “it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him.”<sup>13</sup>

Relying on logic and exercising intellect will not suffice: “Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him.”<sup>14</sup>

### Gratitude for the gift of the Holy Ghost

I cannot find words to adequately express my feelings concerning the Light of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are as “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”<sup>15</sup>

Consider the petition of the Savior to the Father concerning the twelve disciples in the land of Bountiful, expressed in these words:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.”<sup>16</sup>

In this turbulent, troubled world, we can find assurance and enjoy peace of conscience by believing the words of the prophets and through the companionship of the

Comforter. Thus we may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.<sup>17</sup>

I declare my witness of these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1987), 250.
2. Moroni 7:16.
3. John 1:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:47.
6. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 60.
7. John 14:15–17.
8. John 14:26.
9. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 2:154; see also Acts 2:38; 8:12–17; 19:1–6.
10. 3 Nephi 19:9.
11. See Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 7:13.
12. See Alma 34:9.
13. Jacob 4:8.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:116.
15. Psalm 119:105; see also *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:149–51.
16. 3 Nephi 19:20–21.
17. See 1 Corinthians 12:3; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 243.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy will address us, and he will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

### The difference between fun and happiness

About four months ago I received the assignment to serve in Bogotá, Colombia, and moved there. One day, as I was trying to find the way to my new ward's meeting-house, I stopped at a park to ask for directions.

I could see many families enjoying a pleasant sunny morning. I stood there for a while, watching the children as they cheerfully played in the park. They had a special glow in their countenances; their cheeks were flushed from the sun and from the effort they made to run and play together. They were all very friendly with each other.

I could tell they were really having fun. As I watched them closely, I realized that, more than having a fun time, those pure little children were truly happy.

Later, as I was driving to the chapel, my thoughts went back to the time I was baptized in the Church. An old friend of mine came to me and asked what I had found so different there. I answered, "I have found true happiness." To which he replied, "There is no such thing as true happiness—only happy moments."

I understand that my good friend did not know the difference between *fun* and *happiness*. What he called "happy moments" were in fact the moments when he had fun. What he did not know then was that happiness is much more than just fun. Fun is just a fleeting moment, but happiness is a lasting thing.

Many people in this world do not understand the difference between fun and happiness. Many try to find happiness by having fun, but the two words have different meanings.

I looked them up in the dictionary to find out what each of them meant. *Fun* is play, pleasure, gaiety, merriment, source of enjoyment, amusement, to behave play-

fully, playful, often a noisy activity, and teasing. *Happiness* is contentedness, joy, delight, and satisfaction.

I was taught, after becoming a member of the Church, that there is indeed a big difference between fun and happiness. I learned, even before my baptism, that the Lord has a plan of salvation for all His children (see 2 Nephi 2:9). Through this plan, depending on what we accomplish here on earth, we shall return to our Heavenly Father's presence and live with Him forever in a state of eternal happiness.

Both fun and happiness are fine, but certainly happiness is the most worth seeking. Happiness can encompass fun, but fun alone will not ensure true happiness.

### Prodigal son learns about happiness

In Luke, chapter 15, we find the parable of the prodigal son. In this parable the younger son asks the father to give him his share of the inheritance. The father does so, and this young man goes out into the world, seeking what he believes to be true happiness. He starts to have fun, and for as long as he has money, he is surrounded by many people who claim to be his friends. When his fortune is totally wasted with all the fun he has had with his so-called friends, all of them turn their backs on him, and he is left without a penny. He then goes through much suffering and disappointment. He starts working for a man feeding swine, and, starving, he tries to eat even the husks that the swine would eat. He thinks of his father's servants, who have enough bread to eat and to spare, and he does not have anything to eat.

He decides to return home to his father and ask him for a job as one of his hired servants. He returns, repentant from all he has done, and his father, a righteous man, greets him as a special son. He finally



understands that true happiness is there, in that simple life with his family.

### **True happiness comes from obedience**

All who seek full happiness can find it in the gospel of Jesus Christ, taught in His Church. Through Christ's doctrine, we are taught that we can be part of the great plan of happiness that He has prepared for all of us, His sons and daughters. As we keep His commandments, we are blessed and come to know true happiness. We learn that happiness lies in doing small things that build us up, that increase our faith and testimony—small things we do in our everyday lives, such as:

We are happy as we pray every morning and every night, when we can feel that the Lord hears us and is always willing to bless, forgive, and help us. We are happy as we feel the promptings of the Holy Ghost in our lives—as we feel the Spirit when we have to make important life decisions. We are happy as we go home after a stressful and tiresome day at work to the arms of our families, as they express love and appreciation for us. We are happy to talk to our children, to enjoy the family, to get together on family night. In short, we can feel happiness every day in our lives through little things we do, and we are fully happy as we keep the commandments of a loving God, who cares about us.

True happiness comes from keeping the commandments of God. We are taught in 2 Nephi 2:25 that "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy," or, in other words, that they might be happy.

### **A young man illustrates true happiness**

I have witnessed this happiness in the lives of many members of the Church. Several weeks ago I had the assignment to preside over a stake conference in Cali, Colombia. I met a very special young man

there who is a member of the Church and can well illustrate the meaning of true happiness.

His name is Fabián. His family belongs to the Church, and he learned of the plan of happiness when he was just a little boy. In 1984, when he was three years old, Fabián and his family lived in a house close to a large and busy avenue. That avenue was a route for many city bus lines.

One day, seeing the gate open, little Fabián tried to cross the avenue and got hit by a bus. Thanks to Heavenly Father's goodness, Fabián survived the accident. His parents took him to three different hospitals that indicated they could not treat him. They continued looking for help, and, upon finding the proper medical assistance, they learned the prognosis was not very good. After performing multiple surgeries, the doctors informed the family that the damage to his feet and legs was so extensive that to save him, they had to amputate his right leg.

Little Fabián started a different life then, without one of his legs. He slowly learned to control his body balance and to walk with the help of crutches. He went to school and had the support of his teachers and friends. Some people used to mock him, but he soon learned not to care about the jokes they played on him.

He wanted to participate in all physical activities and did so frequently. Even though winning was very hard to come by, he was always brave and ready to participate.

Fabián currently serves as a counselor in his stake Young Men organization. He attends institute of religion classes and is active in the student body organization. He plays basketball and soccer. He also plays Ping-Pong with his friends from the institute. He rides a bike and does everything a young man can do. He works as a volunteer teaching English at a foundation that cares for poor children.

Fabián wants to serve his fellowmen and God with all his strength. He has a smiling face and is always there to help those in need. He is truly a happy young man. With an overwhelming strength that comes from his faith and trust in God, Fabián is a great example to the citizens of his hometown.

His happiness comes from striving to live worthily every day and to obey God's commandments. He reminds me of a scripture found in Mosiah 2:41:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it."

Being obedient to God's commandments, we will live happily for all eternity. Alma said in Alma 41:10 that "wickedness never was happiness."

## An invitation to happiness

As a servant of God and as a member of His Church, I invite you to be truly happy by giving heed to His counsel, by living His commandments, and by obeying the words of His living prophets.

I know that one of the factors that greatly influences our happiness is listening to the counsel of the living prophets who teach us in this Church.

I have a testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He gave His precious life for each one of us. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. This I know with all my heart. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that it can lead us to the pathways of happiness.

I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today and that he teaches with love and patience how we can be happy in this life and in the life to come.

These things are part of my testimony of the truth, and I share them with you, my brothers and sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### Keeping your dish right side up

As we meet with Church members around the world, one challenge seems universal: having enough time to do everything that needs doing. Among those who have few resources, the need is for more time to secure the necessities of life. Among those who have sufficient, the need is for more time to attend to the niceties of life. The challenge is daunting because time is fixed; man can neither lengthen out the day nor extend the year.

The world is the culprit. As the world grapples with more efficient ways of man-

aging time, it lures us into more and more earthly pursuits. But life is not a struggle with time—it is a struggle between good and evil.

What to do about all this can be one of the more vexing decisions in life. In 1872, the prophet Brigham Young counseled the Saints on this very subject. Said he:

"Stop! Wait! When you get up in the morning, before you suffer yourselves to eat one mouthful of food, . . . bow down before the Lord, ask him to forgive your sins, and protect you through the day, to preserve you from temptation and all evil,

to guide your steps aright, that *you may do something that day that shall be beneficial to the kingdom of God on the earth*. Have you time to do this? . . . This is the counsel I have for the Latter-day Saints to day. Stop, do not be in a hurry. . . . You are in too much of a hurry; you do not go to meeting enough, you do not pray enough, you do not read the Scriptures enough, you do not meditate enough, *you are all the time on the wing, and in such a hurry that you do not know what to do first*. . . . Let me reduce this to a simple saying—one of the most simple and homely that can be used—‘Keep your dish right side up,’ so that when the shower of porridge does come you can catch your dish full.”<sup>1</sup>

### Seek first to establish Zion

Use the gospel plan to set proper priorities. The Lord instructed, “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God [or Zion], and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>2</sup>

When I was a young boy growing up in southern Utah, the concepts of Zion were much less clear to me than they are today. We lived in a small town not far from Zion National Park. In church we often sang the familiar words:

Israel, Israel, God is calling,  
Calling thee from lands of woe.  
Babylon the great is falling;  
God shall all her tow'rs o'erthrow.  
Come to Zion, come to Zion  
Ere his floods of anger flow.  
Come to Zion, come to Zion  
Ere his floods of anger flow.<sup>3</sup>

In my little-boy mind, I saw the magnificent cliffs and towering stone pinnacles of that national park. Meandering through the high-walled canyons flowed a river of water—sometimes placid, sometimes a

raging torrent. You can probably imagine the confusion experienced as this little boy tried to put together the words of the hymn with the familiar surroundings of that beautiful park. Though it was not a perfect fit, lodged in my mind was the impression that Zion was something majestic and divine. Over the years a grander understanding has emerged. In the scriptures we read, “Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—the pure in heart.”<sup>4</sup>

### Blessings of seeking to establish Zion

The establishment of Zion should be the aim of every member of this Church. It can be safely said: *As we seek with all our hearts to bring forth and establish Zion, the vexations of too little time will disappear*. There are joys and blessings by enlisting in this noble cause. One’s personal life is transformed. The home is no longer a hotel but a place of peace, security, and love. Society itself changes. In Zion, contentions and disputations cease, class distinctions and hatreds disappear, no one is poor—spiritually or temporally, and all manner of wickedness is no more. As many have attested, “Surely there could not be a happier people among all the people . . . created by the hand of God.”<sup>5</sup>

### Be of one heart; set aside selfishness

The ancient prophet Enoch labored many years to bring his people to this state of righteousness. Like us, they also lived in a time of wickedness, wars, and bloodshed. But the righteous people responded, “And the Lord called his people Zion, *because* they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”<sup>6</sup>

Take special note of the word *because* in this scripture. Zion is established and flourishes *because* of the God-inspired lives and labors of its citizens. Zion comes

not as a gift but because virtuous covenant people are drawn together and build it. President Spencer W. Kimball said, "As we sing together 'Come to Zion,' we mean . . . come to the ward, the branch, the mission, the stake, and give assistance to build up Zion."<sup>7</sup> Thus gathered in the Lord's appointed way, Latter-day Saints conscientiously strive to bring forth Zion as the "kingdom of our God and his Christ,"<sup>8</sup> preparatory to the Lord's Second Coming.<sup>9</sup>

President Hinckley has reminded us that "this cause in which we are engaged is not an ordinary cause. It is the cause of Christ. It is the kingdom of God our Eternal Father. It is the building of Zion on the earth."<sup>10</sup>

"If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God."<sup>11</sup>

### Foundational truths for building Zion

Among the doctrines that give rise to this highest order of priesthood society are *love, service, work, self-reliance, consecration, and stewardship*.<sup>12</sup> To better understand how we can build Zion on these foundational truths, let us consider four of them.

#### Love

The first is *love*.

"Jesus said . . . , Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>13</sup>

To love God more than anything else impels us to take control of our priorities and order our lives so as to be in accord with Him. We come to love all of God's creations, including our fellowman. Placing God first in all things kindles greater love and devotion between husband and wife, parents and children. In Zion, we find "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God."<sup>14</sup>

#### Work

Next is *work*. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. The Lord commanded, "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."<sup>15</sup> Work is the source of happiness, self-esteem, and prosperity. In the economy of God, there is no room for chicanery and greed. Work is to be honest toil with this overarching, divine purpose: "The laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish."<sup>16</sup>

#### Self-reliance

*Self-reliance* comes next. It is the harbinger of personal agency and security. The Lord has commanded this Church and its people to be prepared, self-reliant, and independent.<sup>17</sup> Times of plenty are times to live providently and lay up in store. Times of scarcity are times to live frugally and draw on those stores.

"No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will . . . supply himself and his family with the spiritual and temporal necessities of life."<sup>18</sup>

We are sons and daughters of God and truly dependent upon Him for all that we have. If we keep His commandments, He will never forsake us. But Heavenly Father does not do for us what we can

and should do for ourselves. He expects us to use the means we receive of Him to care for ourselves and our families. When we do so, we are self-reliant.<sup>19</sup>

### Consecration

Lastly, *consecration*. The covenant of consecration encompasses sacrifice; circumscribes *love, work, and self-reliance*; and is fundamental to establishing God's kingdom. "Zion cannot be built up," the Lord said, "unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom."<sup>20</sup> The covenant of consecration is central to this law. We shall one day apply it in its fulness. This covenant embraces the "giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom."<sup>21</sup>

### A work with a great destiny

These principles of *love, work, self-reliance, and consecration* are God given. Those who embrace them and govern themselves accordingly become pure in heart. Righteous unity is the hallmark of their society. Their peace and harmony become an ensign to the nations. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; . . . it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory [of Zion], . . . a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family."<sup>22</sup>

I bear witness that these things are true. President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet on the earth, as was Joseph Smith Jr. The kingdom of God is The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and will become Zion in all her beauty. Christ is the Savior of the world, the Beloved Son of the living God, the Holy One. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Deseret News*, 5 June 1872, 248; italics added.
2. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
3. "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," *Hymns*, no. 7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.
5. See 4 Nephi 1:16; see also verses 1–18.
6. Moses 7:18; italics added.
7. In Conference Report, Paris Area Conference 1976, 3.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 105:32; see also 68:25–31; 82:14; 115:1–6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 65:2, 6.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 53.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 59.
12. See Spencer W. Kimball, "'And the Lord Called His People Zion,'" *Ensign*, Aug. 1984, 2–6.
13. Matthew 22:37–40.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.
15. Moses 4:25; see also Genesis 3:19.
16. 2 Nephi 26:31.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:13–14; 38:29–31.
18. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 120; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 79; see also 1 Timothy 5:8.
19. See *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), 5.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 105:5.
21. Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Aug. 1984, 4.
22. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 231–32; italics added.

## Elder F. Melvin Hammond

### Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program

A short while ago, Elder Pace, Elder Condie, and I met with the First Presidency. As we entered the room, President Hinckley looked carefully at us and then with a smile on his face said, "How can three white-headed old men be the Young Men presidency of this Church?" Our only response was, "Because you called us to be, President."

Young men, we hope that you are excited about the Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God program. It has been introduced to all the Aaronic Priesthood throughout the world. It is designed to bless you spiritually, physically, socially, and mentally. The requirements are meaningful and will stretch you almost to the limits of your capability. You will be able to establish personal goals and achieve them with the help of your parents and your great leaders. There is a wonderful excitement associated with this program all over the Church. We want *every one of you* to qualify and receive the coveted Duty to God Award.

### Dad, are you awake?

Many years ago I took our only son on his first camping-fishing trip. He was just a boy. The canyon was steep, and the descent was difficult. But the fishing was good. Every time I hooked a fish, I would give the pole to the eager boy, and with shouts of joy he would reel in a beautiful trout. In the shadows and coolness of the late afternoon, we began our climb back up to the rim high above us. He scrambled rapidly up the mountain ahead of me with a challenging, "Come on, Dad. I'll bet I can beat you to the top." The challenge was heard but wisely ignored. His small frame seemed literally to fly over, under,

and around every obstacle, and when every step that I took seemed ridiculously like my last, he had reached the top and stood cheering me on.

After supper we knelt in prayer. His small voice rose sweetly heavenward in benediction to our day. Then we climbed into our large double sleeping bag, and after a bit of pushing and pulling I felt his little body snuggle and settle tightly against mine for warmth and security against the night. As I looked at my son beside me, suddenly I felt a surge of love pass through my body with such force that it pushed tears to my eyes. And, at that precise moment, he put his little arms around me and said, "Dad?"

"Yes, son."

"Are you awake?"

"Yes, my son, I am awake."

"Dad, I love you a million, trillion times!"

And immediately he was asleep. But I was awake far into the night, expressing my great thanks for such wonderful blessings clothed with a little boy's body.

Now my son is a man with a son of his own. Once in a while the three of us go fishing. I look at my little redheaded grandson beside his father, and I see in my mind's eye the image of that wonderful moment long ago. The question so innocently asked, "Dad, are you awake?" still rings in my heart.

### Determining whether fathers are awake

To every father I pose the same penetrating question, "Dad, are you awake?" Do your sons ever wonder if you are asleep when it comes to the things that are most important to them? I would suggest that there are several areas that would indicate whether we are "awake" or "asleep" in the eyes of our sons.

*Magnify your responsibility as patriarch*

*First, our love for God and accepting our role as the family leader in keeping His commandments.* Some years ago, following a stake conference, I felt impressed to pay a visit to a priesthood brother who had fallen away from the Church. We found him working in his garden. I approached him and said, "Dear brother, the Lord Jesus Christ has sent me to see you. I am Elder Hammond, one of His servants."

We exchanged a Latin *abrazo* and entered into his lovely little home. He called for his wife and three children to join us. Two handsome young men and a beautiful girl sat beside their father and mother. I asked the children what they would like, more than anything else in the world, right now. The oldest son spoke: "If only all of us could go back to church as a family, we would be so happy—so grateful." We told them how much they were needed by the Savior and how He loved them. We bore our testimonies to them and then knelt in prayer. The father prayed. The mother wept. They are now back in full fellowship. The children are proud of their father, and they are happy.

Every father in the Church should function as the patriarch of his home. He should take the lead in spiritually guiding the family. He ought not to delegate or abrogate his responsibilities to the mother. He should call for family prayer, family home evening, scripture reading, and occasional father's interviews. He is the protector, the defender, and the kindly source of discipline.

It is the father who should lead, unify, and solidify the family unit by accepting the priesthood of God and responding to the calls and privileges associated with priesthood authority. His relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is one of

the beacons which will lead his sons and daughters through the stormy shoals of life.

If Dad is a true disciple of Jesus Christ, then the sons will follow him as the night the day. "Dad, are you awake?"

*Honor and respect your wife*

*Second, the relationship we have with our wives—their mothers.* Considering everything else we do, the way we treat our wives could well have the greatest impact on the character of our sons. If a father is guilty of inflicting verbal or physical abuse in any degree on his companion, his sons will resent him for it, perhaps even despise him for it. But interestingly enough, when they are grown and marry, they are likely to follow the same pattern of abuse with their wives. There is an urgent need in our society for fathers who respect their wives and treat them with sweet, tender love.

Recently I heard of a father who foolishly called his beautiful, intelligent wife "stupid" and "dumb" in a most degrading manner for some small mistake she innocently made. The children listened, embarrassed and frightened for their mother. She was belittled in front of those that she loved most. Although an apology and forgiveness were expressed, there still remained the hurt and shame of a senseless moment.

The Spirit of the Lord cannot be expected to bless our lives if we persist in being angry, callous, and cruel to our mates. We cannot expect our sons to develop respect and gentleness toward their mothers if we do not provide them a proper example. President David O. McKay said, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother" (quoted from Theodore Hesburgh, *Reader's Digest*, Jan. 1963, 25; in *Richard Evans' Quote Book* [1971], 11).

"Dad, are you awake?"

*Discipline with love*

*Third, to provide discipline that is just and is administered with love.* Too often, out of our own frustration and weakness, we raise our hands to strike our children, usually in an attempt to protect our own selfish pride. Every child needs to be disciplined. Not only do they need it; they expect it; they want it. Discipline gives direction and teaches self-control, but in all discipline there should be a sense of righteous judgment and pure love.

When I was a little boy, my widowed mother gave me the most severe discipline possible. She said, with tears in her eyes, "My son, I am so disappointed in you." The pain in my heart was more than I could bear. A thousand lashes could not have cut me so deeply. I knew that such a rebuke could only have been made to me out of her pure love, for if there was one thing that I was certain of, it was that my mother loved me. I resolved never again to be subject to the disappointment and the broken heart of an angel mother. I believe that I have succeeded in that resolve.

When it comes to discipline, "Dad, are you awake?"

**Help sons become men of honor, respect**

Dads, it is imperative that the challenges I have mentioned be mastered in our lives if our sons are to be spiritually and emotionally mature. If we do, then they will not be ashamed of us, nor will they ever be ashamed of themselves. They will become men of honor, respect, full of love, willing to serve the Savior and submit their will to Him. Then we will rejoice

in the fact that they are ours forever. They will say, "Dad, are you awake?"

And we will respond, "Yes, my son, I am awake."

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Monson**

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon.

Likewise we thank all who have assisted in any way: our city officials, for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; and the ushers and interpreters.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries of the world.

As you leave the conference, once again we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "We Ever Pray for Thee." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gerald L. Taylor of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley****Each a better person**

What a wonderful conference this has been, my brothers and sisters. As we

return to our homes and to our daily activities, each of us should be a better individual than we were when the conference opened.



All who have spoken have done very well. The prayers have been inspirational. The music has been magnificent.

But what matters most is what may have occurred within each of us as a result of our experience. I, for one, have made a stronger resolution within myself to be a better person than I have been in the past. I hope that I will be a little kinder to any I meet who may be in distress. I hope that I will be a little more helpful to those who are in need. I hope that I will be a little more worthy of your confidence. I hope that I will be a better husband, a better father and grandfather. I hope that I will be a better neighbor and friend. I hope that I will be a better Latter-day Saint, with an increased understanding of the wonderful aspects of this glorious gospel.

I challenge every one of you who can hear me to rise to the divinity within you. Do we really realize what it means to be a child of God, to have within us something of the divine nature?

I believe with all my heart that the Latter-day Saints, generally speaking, are good people. If we live by the principles of the gospel, we must be good people, for we will be generous and kind, thoughtful and tolerant, helpful and outreaching to those in distress. We can either subdue the divine nature and hide it so that it finds no expression in our lives, or we can bring it to the front and let it shine through all that we do.

### **Room for improvement**

There is room for improvement in every life. Regardless of our occupations, regardless of our circumstances, we can improve ourselves and while so doing have an effect on the lives of those about us.

We do not need to wear our religion on our sleeves. We certainly do not need to be boastful about it or to be arrogant in any way. Such becomes a negation of the Spirit of the Christ, whom we ought to try to emulate. That Spirit finds expression

in the heart and the soul, in the quiet and unboastful manner of our lives.

All of us have seen those we almost envy because they have cultivated a manner that, without even mentioning it, speaks of the beauty of the gospel they have incorporated in their behavior.

We can lower our voices a few decibels. We can return good for evil. We can smile when anger might be so much easier. We can exercise self-control and self-discipline and dismiss any affront levied against us.

Let us be a happy people. The Lord's plan is a plan of happiness. The way will be lighter, the worries will be fewer, the confrontations will be less difficult if we cultivate a spirit of happiness.

### **Work harder to succeed in our homes**

Let us work a little harder at the responsibility we have as parents. The home is the basic unit of society. The family is the basic organization of the Church. We are deeply concerned over the quality of the lives of our people as husbands and wives and as parents and children.

There is too much of criticism and faultfinding with anger and raised voices. The pressures we feel each day are tremendous. Husbands come home from their employment each day tired and short tempered. Unfortunately, most of the wives work. They too face a serious challenge that may be more costly than it is worth. Children are left to seek their own entertainment, and much of it is not good.

My brothers and sisters, we must work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it.

If we fail in our homes, we fail in our lives. No man is truly successful who has failed in his home. I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisper-

ings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting.

### **Bring to pass God's eternal purposes**

God bless you, my beloved associates. May a spirit of peace and love attend you wherever you may be. May there be harmony in your lives. As I've said to our youth in many areas, be smart, be clean, be true, be grateful, be humble, be prayerful. May you kneel in prayer before the

Almighty with thanksgiving unto Him for His bounteous blessings. May you then stand on your feet and go forward as sons and daughters of God to bring to pass His eternal purposes, each in your own way, is my humble prayer as I leave my love and blessing with you, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder Gerald L. Taylor offered the benediction.

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## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC**

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Jared L. Dunn directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah, provided music for

the priesthood session. Andrew Crane directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-third  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 5 and 6, 2003**



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# Report of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 2003, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, 2003. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live worldwide over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Charles Didier, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Merrill J. Bateman

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, Duane B. Gerrard, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, D. Lee Tobler, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, April 5, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "High on the Mountain Top." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via Internet at lds.org.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "High on the Mountain Top" and will now favor us with "Where Love Is." At the conclusion of the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder J. Kent Jolley of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Where Love Is."

Elder J. Kent Jolley offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **The progress of the Church**

My beloved brethren and sisters, what a miracle it is that we are able to address you out across the world. We speak here in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City. We speak in our native tongue. But many thousands of you are assembled in Church facilities in many lands, and you hear us in 56 languages.

We are met again in a great world conference of the Church according to the will and instruction of the Lord.

As we do so, the world is in turmoil. There is war and contention. There is much of unrest. Members of the Church family are citizens of many nations. We find ourselves on both sides of a great debate. I intend to speak about this tomorrow morning.

But with all the troubles with which we are confronted, I am pleased to report that the work of the Church moves forward. We continue to grow across the world. Our missionary work goes on without serious impediment. Converts continue to come into the Church, and our numbers are constantly being increased.

Paralleling this activity is the need to solidly integrate all those who are baptized as converts. We call upon every member of the Church to reach out to new converts, to put your arms around them and make them feel at home. Bless them with your friendship. Encourage them with your faith. See that there are no losses among them. Every man, woman, or child who is worthy of baptism is worthy of a secure and friendly situation in which to grow in the Church and its many activities.

Our sacrament meeting attendance gradually edges up. There is room for improvement, and I urge you to work at it constantly. Even so, I do not know of another church with as high a percentage of consistent attendance at its meetings.

### **Increased strength of our youth**

I am so grateful for the strength of the youth of the Church. Sadly enough, some fall between the cracks. But it is a miracle to witness the strength of our young people in the midst of all of the sordid temptation that is constantly around them. The sleaze and the filth of pornography, the temptation to partake of drugs, the titillating invitation to drop all bars on sexual behavior, these are among some of the enticing attractions they constantly face. Notwithstanding the allurements of the world in which they live, they remain true to the faith of their fathers and the gospel they love. I cannot say enough of good concerning our wonderful young people.

### **Faithfulness in tithes and offerings**

Faith in the payment of tithes and offerings increases despite the straitened

economic circumstances in which we find ourselves. We are able to go forward with the building of meetinghouses and temples, with our vast education program, with the very many activities which are conditioned upon the tithing income of the Church. I promise you that we will not put the Church in debt. We will strictly tailor the program to the tithing income and use these sacred funds for the purposes designated by the Lord.

I call attention to that which has received much notice in the local press. This is our decision to purchase the shopping mall property immediately to the south of Temple Square. We feel that we have a compelling responsibility to protect the environment of the Salt Lake Temple. The Church owns most of the ground on which this mall stands. The owners of the buildings have expressed a desire to sell. The property needs very extensive and expensive renovation. We have felt it imperative to do something to revitalize this area. But I wish to give the entire Church the assurance that tithing funds have not and will not be used to acquire this property. Nor will they be used in developing it for commercial purposes.

Funds for this have come and will come from the commercial entities owned by the Church. These resources, together with the earnings of invested reserve funds, will accommodate this program.

### **Building of chapels and temples**

I am pleased to report that we are able to go forward with the building of chapels. We are constructing about 400 new chapels a year to accommodate the growth in the membership of the Church. This is a significant and wonderful thing for which we are deeply grateful. We are also continuing to build temples across the earth and are pleased to report an increase in temple activity. This very important work, in behalf of the living and the dead, is a fundamental part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Increased family preparedness**

We are pleased to note an increase in family preparedness among our people. This program, which has been advocated for more than 60 years, adds immeasurably to the security and well-being of the Latter-day Saints. Every family has a responsibility to provide for its own needs to the extent possible. We again urge our people to avoid unnecessary debt, to be modest in the financial obligations which they undertake, to set aside some cash against an emergency. We warn our people against “get rich” schemes and other entanglements which are nearly always designed to trap the gullible.

### **Volunteer service**

I am constantly amazed at the vast amount of volunteer service which our people give. I am convinced that volunteer service is the Lord’s way of accomplishing His work. The operation of wards and stakes and quorums, and the functions of the auxiliary organizations, all move forward under the direction of volunteers. The vast missionary program is dependent on volunteer service.

Additionally, we have a large number of older members who serve in a Church-service missionary capacity. More than 18,000 give all or a large part of their time to this work. We thank them for their dedicated service.

### **Progress of the Perpetual Education Fund**

This conference marks the second anniversary of the establishment of the Perpetual Education Fund. I am pleased to report that this program is now going forward on a solid basis. Some 8,000 young men and women are now in training to improve their skills and their employment opportunities. On average, with the two years of education they are now receiving,

they are increasing their income some four and a half times. It is a miracle!

### **Increased faith and love for the Lord**

And so I might go on. Suffice it to say, the Church is in good condition. I believe its affairs are prudently handled. Our people are growing in faith, in love for the Lord, and in adherence to His teachings.

These are difficult times. The economy is struggling. There is conflict in the world. But the Almighty is keeping His promise that He will bless those who walk in faith and righteousness before Him.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the way of peace. To the extent we follow it and incorporate it in our lives—to this extent will we be blessed and prospered. What a wonderful thing it is to be involved in this glorious work. Let us rejoice in our great opportunity. Let us serve with gladness.

May heaven’s richest blessings rest upon you, my beloved associates. May faith grow in your hearts. May there be love and peace in your homes. May there be food upon your tables and clothing on your backs. May the smiles of heaven warm your hearts and bring comfort in times of trial. This is my prayer this morning as we open this great conference, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Praise to the Man.”

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### **President Faust**

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “Praise to the Man.”

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorenson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder

Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Come unto Him.”

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

In this day of computers, phones, and pagers, people communicate with one another better than ever before. Even so, good communication is often lacking. Recently while visiting a nursing care facility, I spoke with a woman about her family. She told me that she had three sons, two of whom visit her regularly.

“What about your third son?” I asked.

“I don’t know where he is,” she replied tearfully. “I haven’t heard from him for years. I don’t even know how many grandchildren I have.”

### Why we pray

If such a mother yearns to hear from her sons, it is easy to see why a loving Father in Heaven wants to hear from His children.<sup>1</sup> Through prayer, we can show our love for God. And He has made it so easy. We may pray to Him any time. No special equipment is needed. We don’t even need to charge batteries or pay a monthly service fee.

Some people pray only when confronted with personal problems. Others don’t pray at all. A scripture makes this observation: “Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord . . . for their.”<sup>2</sup>

Prophets have long told us to pray humbly and frequently.<sup>3</sup>

### How to pray

Jesus taught us how.<sup>4</sup> We pray to our Heavenly Father,<sup>5</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ,<sup>6</sup> by the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>7</sup>

This is the “true order of prayer,”<sup>8</sup> in contrast to “vain repetitions”<sup>9</sup> or recitations given to “be seen of men.”<sup>10</sup>

Jesus revealed that we pray to a wise Father who knows what things we have need of, before we ask Him.<sup>11</sup>

Mormon taught his son Moroni that we should pray “with all the energy of heart.”<sup>12</sup> Nephi exclaimed, “I pray continually for [my people] by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, . . . and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.”<sup>13</sup>

The sweet power of prayer can be intensified by fasting, on occasion, when appropriate to a particular need.<sup>14</sup>

Prayers can be offered even in silence. One can *think* a prayer, especially when words would interfere.<sup>15</sup> We often kneel to pray; we may stand or be seated.<sup>16</sup> Physical position is less important than is spiritual submission to God.

We close our prayers “in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”<sup>17</sup> When we hear another’s prayer, we audibly add our “amen,” meaning, “That is my prayer too.”<sup>18</sup>

### When to pray

When should we pray? The Lord said, “Search diligently, pray *always*, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good.”<sup>19</sup>

Alma said, “Counsel with the Lord in *all* thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God.”<sup>20</sup>

We pray privately, with our families regularly, at mealtime, and in daily activities. Simply summarized, we are a praying people.

### Personal experience with prayer

Many of us have had experiences with the sweet power of prayer. One of mine was shared with a stake patriarch from southern Utah. I first met him in my medical office more than 40 years ago, during the early pioneering days of surgery of the heart. This saintly soul suffered much because of a failing heart. He pleaded for help, thinking that his condition resulted from a damaged but repairable valve in his heart.

Extensive evaluation revealed that he had *two* faulty valves. While one could be helped surgically, the other could not. Thus, an operation was *not* advised. He received this news with deep disappointment.

Subsequent visits ended with the same advice. Finally, in desperation, he spoke to me with considerable emotion: “Dr. Nelson, I have prayed for help and have been directed to you. The Lord will not reveal to me *how* to repair that second valve, but He can reveal it to you. Your mind is so prepared. If you will operate upon me, the Lord will make it known to you what to do. Please perform the operation that *I* need, and pray for the help that *you* need.”<sup>21</sup>

His great faith had a profound effect upon me. How could I turn him away again? Following a fervent prayer together, I agreed to try. In preparing for that fateful day, I prayed over and over again, but still did not know what to do for his leaking tricuspid valve. Even as the operation commenced,<sup>22</sup> my assistant asked, “What are you going to do for that?”

I said, “I do not know.”

We began the operation. After relieving the obstruction of the first valve,<sup>23</sup> we exposed the second valve. We found it to be intact but so badly dilated that it could

no longer function as it should. While examining this valve, a message was distinctly impressed upon my mind: *Reduce the circumference of the ring*. I announced that message to my assistant. “The valve tissue will be sufficient *if* we can effectively reduce the ring toward its normal size.”

But how? We could not apply a belt as one would use to tighten the waist of oversized trousers. We could not squeeze with a strap as one would cinch a saddle on a horse. Then a picture came vividly to my mind, showing how stitches could be placed—to make a pleat here and a tuck there—to accomplish the desired objective. I still remember that mental image—complete with dotted lines where sutures should be placed. The repair was completed as diagrammed in my mind. We tested the valve and found the leak to be reduced remarkably. My assistant said, “It’s a miracle.”

I responded, “It’s an answer to prayer.”

The patient’s recovery was rapid and his relief gratifying. Not only was he helped in a marvelous way, but surgical help for other people with similar problems had become a possibility. I take no credit. Praise goes to this faithful patriarch and to God, who answered our prayers. This faithful man lived for many more years and has since gone to his eternal glory.

### Inquire of the Lord

When we pray, we should not presume to give counsel but should inquire of the Lord<sup>24</sup> and hearken to His counsel.<sup>25</sup> Joseph Smith’s first prayer ushered in the Restoration of the gospel.<sup>26</sup> In 1833 he received the Word of Wisdom after asking the Lord for counsel.<sup>27</sup> The revelation on the priesthood received in 1978 by President Spencer W. Kimball came after intense inquiry.<sup>28</sup> Inspiration regarding the construction of smaller temples came after the pondering of President Gordon B. Hinckley.<sup>29</sup>

## Answers to prayers

Not all of our prayers will be answered as we might wish. Occasionally the answer will be no. We should not be surprised. Loving mortal parents do not say yes to every request of their children.<sup>30</sup>

At a recent extended family home evening, our grandchildren were having a wonderful time. A six-year-old grandson became *very* upset when his father said it was time to go home. So what did this dear boy do? He came to me and said, “Grandfather, may I have your permission to disobey my father?”

I said, “No, sweetheart. One of life’s great lessons is to learn that happiness comes through obedience.<sup>31</sup> Go home with your family, and you will be happy.” Though disappointed, he dutifully obeyed.

We should pray in accord with the will of our Heavenly Father.<sup>32</sup> He wants to test us, to strengthen us, and to help us achieve our full potential. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was held in Liberty Jail, he pled for relief. His prayers were answered with an explanation: “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”<sup>33</sup>

## Song of prayer

I have felt impressed to conclude this message on prayer with a prayer—presented as a hymn. The Lord has said that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.”<sup>34</sup> The music comes from our book of *Hymns*,<sup>35</sup> for which I have written new words. With thanks to Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and other dear friends in the Tabernacle Choir, we may hear that song of prayer. Brother Jessop, please:

### Our Prayer to Thee

We pray to Thee, our Heavenly  
Father,  
With grateful hearts and fond  
emotion.

We thank Thee for our great  
Exemplar—

Thy beloved and atoning Son—  
Who gave Himself as sacred ransom,  
That we could live again with Thee!  
Our joy is full, our song so gladsome;  
Renew our faith and hope in Thee.

We pray to Thee, our Heavenly  
Father,

With thankful hearts and adoration.  
We thank Thee for our loving Savior,  
Who redeemed us from death and sin;  
He gave to us His truth to brighten  
Our path, to help us walk His way,  
To love and serve, to lift and lighten  
The lives of all who will obey.

We pray to Thee, our Heavenly  
Father,

With gratitude and deep devotion  
For loving faith and endless  
splendor—

Eternal glory—bound as one!

We pray for mercy and forgiveness

And hope to know Thy holy will.

We yearn for Thee, we plead in  
meekness,

Thy trust in us may we fulfill.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Many scriptures refer to those who were “slow to remember the Lord” (see Mosiah 9:3; 13:29; Helaman 12:5).
2. Helaman 13:22.
3. For examples, see Jeremiah 29:11–13; Joel 2:32; Philippians 4:6; 1 Nephi 15:8–11; Alma 37:37.
4. As Jesus wrought the Atonement, He maintained prayerful communication with His Father both in Gethsemane (see Luke 22:39–44) and on Calvary’s cross (see Luke 23:33–34, 46).
5. See Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; 3 Nephi 13:9.
6. See Jacob 4:4–5; 3 Nephi 20:31; 27:9; Moses 5:8.
7. See Moroni 6:9; 10:4–5.

8. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 380.
9. Matthew 6:7.
10. Matthew 6:5.
11. See Matthew 6:8.
12. Moroni 7:48.
13. 2 Nephi 33:3; see also Jacob 3:1; Alma 31:38; Doctrine and Covenants 37:2.
14. See Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Mosiah 27:22–23; Alma 5:46; 3 Nephi 27:1; Doctrine and Covenants 88:76.
15. One of our hymns recounts that “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, / Uttered or unexpressed, / . . . The upward glancing of an eye / When none but God is near” (“Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” *Hymns*, no. 145).
16. As may be appropriate for the occasion.
17. For other helpful instruction, see Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 16–20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 15–18.
18. See *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (2000), 57: “amen. . . . Used at the end of a prayer or a statement to express assent or approval. [Middle English, from Old English, from Late Latin *āmēn*, from Greek, from Hebrew *’āmēn*, certainly, verily, from *’āman*, to be firm.]”
19. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24; italics added.
20. Alma 37:37; italics added. See also Mosiah 26:39; Alma 26:22. For comparable teaching from Paul, see 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
21. While his words may not have been quoted *verbatim*, this is an accurate representation of his declaration.
22. This operation was performed on 24 May 1960.
23. He had stenosis (narrowing) of his mitral valve, caused by an earlier attack of rheumatic fever.
24. The Lord said, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge” (D&C 42:61). For an example, refer to section 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord explained that “you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought” (verses 8–9). See also Jacob 4:10.
25. See Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 13:17–18; 1 Samuel 15:22; Jeremiah 26:4–6; Omni 1:13; Doctrine and Covenants 41:1; 133:16.
26. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 89.
28. See Official Declaration 2.
29. See *Church News*, 1 Aug. 1998, 3, 12; 13 Mar. 1999, 9; 4 Mar. 2000, 7; 24 June 2000, 9.
30. Even the Son of God endured such an experience, “saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The Father and the Son both knew what had to be done.
31. Regarding obedience to divine law, see Abraham 3:25. Regarding obedience to wise counsel from loving parents, see Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20.
32. See Helaman 10:4–5.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
35. *Hymns*, no. 337; music composed by Joseph Parry; tune: Swansea.

## Elder David E. Sorensen

Isn’t it amazing, the gifts of the Spirit that the Lord has given to Elder Nelson. His talents bless not only the Church, but the whole world.

### A conflict over irrigation water

I’d like to speak today of forgiveness. I grew up in a small farming town where



water was the lifeblood of the community. I remember the people of our society constantly watching, worrying, and praying over the rain, irrigation rights, and water in general. Sometimes my children chide me; they say they never knew someone so preoccupied with rain. I tell them I suppose that's true because where I grew up the rain was more than a preoccupation. It was a matter of survival!

Under the stress and strain of our climate, sometimes people weren't always at their best. Occasionally neighbors would squabble over one farmer taking too long a turn from the irrigation ditch. That's how it started with two men who lived near our mountain pasture, whom I will call Chet and Walt. These two neighbors began to quarrel over water from the irrigation ditch they shared. It was innocent enough at first, but over the years the two men allowed their disagreements to turn into resentment and then arguments—even to the point of threats.

One July morning both men felt they were once again short of water. Each went to the ditch to see what had happened, each in his own mind reckoning the other had stolen his water. They arrived at the headgate at the same time. Angry words were exchanged; a scuffle ensued. Walt was a large man with great strength. Chet was small, wiry, and tenacious. In the heat of the scuffle, the shovels the men were carrying were used as weapons. Walt accidentally struck one of Chet's eyes with the shovel, leaving him blind in that eye.

### **Unwillingness to forgive leads to tragedy**

Months and years passed, yet Chet could not forget nor forgive. The anger that he felt over losing his eye boiled inside him, and his hatred grew more intense. One day Chet went to his barn, took down the gun from its rack, got on his horse, and rode down to the headgate of the ditch. He put a dam in the ditch and

diverted the water away from Walt's farm, knowing that Walt would soon come to see what had happened. Then Chet slipped into the brush and waited. When Walt appeared, Chet shot him dead. Then he got on his horse, went back to his home, and called the sheriff to inform him that he had just shot Walt.

My father was asked to be on the jury that tried Chet for murder. Father disqualified himself because he was a longtime friend of both men and their families. Chet was tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

After many years, Chet's wife came to my father and asked if he would sign a petition to the governor, asking for clemency for her husband, whose health was now broken after serving so many years in the state penitentiary. Father signed the petition. A few nights later, two of Walt's grown sons appeared at our door. They were very angry and upset. They said that because Father had signed the petition, many others had signed. They asked Father to have his name withdrawn from the petition. He said no. He felt that Chet was a broken and sick man. He had suffered these many years in prison for that terrible crime of passion. He wanted to see Chet have a decent funeral and burial beside his family.

Walt's sons whirled in anger and said, "If he is released from prison, we will see that harm comes to him and his family."

Chet was eventually released and allowed to come home to die with his family. Fortunately, there was no further violence between the families. My father often lamented how tragic it was that Chet and Walt, these two neighbors and boyhood friends, had fallen captive to their anger and let it destroy their lives. How tragic that the passion of the moment was allowed to escalate out of control—eventually taking the lives of both men—simply because two men could not forgive each other over a few shares of irrigation water.

## Two responses to a snakebite

The Savior said, “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him,”<sup>1</sup> thus commanding us to resolve our differences early on, lest the passions of the moment escalate into physical or emotional cruelty, and we fall captive to our anger.

Nowhere does this principle apply more than in our families. Your specific concern may not be water, but each of us on earth, living under the stress and strain of this telestial climate, will have reason—real or perceived—to take offense. How will we react? Will we take offense? Will we find fault? Will we let the passions of the moment overcome us?

President Brigham Young once compared being offended to a poisonous snakebite. He said that “there are two courses of action to follow when one is bitten by a rattlesnake. One may, in anger, fear, or vengeance, pursue the creature and kill it. Or he may make full haste to get the venom out of his system.” He said, “If we pursue the latter course we will likely survive, but if we attempt to follow the former, we may not be around long enough to finish it.”<sup>2</sup>

## Reduce criticism, resentment, and anger

Now let me take a moment here to note that we must take care in our families not to cause spiritual or emotional snakebites in the first place! In much of today’s popular culture, the virtues of forgiveness and kindness are belittled, while ridicule, anger, and harsh criticism are encouraged. If we are not careful, we can fall prey to these habits within our own homes and families and soon find ourselves criticizing our spouse, our children, our extended family members. Let us not hurt the ones we love the most by selfish criticism! In our families, small arguments and petty criticisms, if allowed to go unchecked, can poison relationships and escalate into estrangements, even abuse and

divorce. Instead, just like we learned with the poisonous venom, we must “make full haste” to reduce arguments, eliminate ridicule, do away with criticism, and remove resentment and anger. We cannot afford to let such dangerous passions ruminate—not even one day.

## Joseph of Egypt forgives his brothers

Contrast Walt and Chet’s tragic story with the example of Joseph of Egypt. Joseph’s brothers jealously hated him. They plotted to take his life and finally sold him as a slave. Joseph was carried into Egypt and struggled for years to rise from slavery. During these challenging times, Joseph might have condemned his brothers and sworn revenge. He might have soothed his pain by scheming to get even someday. But he did not.

In time, Joseph became ruler over all of Egypt, second in command only to Pharaoh. During a devastating famine, Joseph’s brothers traveled to Egypt for food. Not recognizing Joseph, they bowed down to him because of his high position. Surely at that moment Joseph had the power to exact revenge. He might have put his brethren in prison or sentenced them to death. Instead he confirmed his forgiveness. He said:

“I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. . . .

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity . . . and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.”<sup>3</sup>

Joseph’s will to forgive changed bitterness to love.

## Forgiveness does not require tolerating evil

I would like to make it clear that forgiveness of sins should not be confused with tolerating evil. In fact, in the Joseph

Smith Translation the Lord said, “Judge righteous judgment.”<sup>4</sup>

The Savior asks us to forsake and combat evil in all its forms, and although we must forgive a neighbor who injures us, we should still work constructively to prevent that injury from being repeated. A woman who is abused should not seek revenge, but neither should she feel that she cannot take steps to prevent further abuse. A businessperson treated unfairly in a transaction should not hate the person who was dishonest but could take appropriate steps to remedy the wrong. Forgiveness does not require us to accept or tolerate evil. It does not require us to ignore the wrong that we see in the world around us or in our own lives. But as we fight against sin, we must not allow hatred or anger to control our thoughts or actions.

### **Forgiveness brings freedom, a better future**

The Savior said, “Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.”<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that forgiveness is easy. When someone has hurt us or those we care about, that pain can almost be overwhelming. It can feel as if the pain or the injustice is the most important thing in the world and that we have no choice but to seek vengeance. But Christ, the Prince

of Peace, teaches us a better way. It can be very difficult to forgive someone the harm they’ve done us, but when we do, we open ourselves up to a better future. No longer does someone else’s wrongdoing control our course. When we forgive others, it frees us to choose how we will live our own lives. Forgiveness means that problems of the past no longer dictate our destinies, and we can focus on the future with God’s love in our hearts.

May the seeds of unforgiveness that haunted my neighbors never be allowed to take root in our homes. May we pray to our Heavenly Father to help us overcome foolish pride, resentment, and pettiness. May He help us to forgive and love, so we may be friends with our Savior, others, and ourselves. “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”<sup>6</sup> In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Matthew 5:25.
2. As reported by Marion D. Hanks, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 16; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 21.
3. Genesis 45:4–5, 7–8.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9.
6. Colossians 3:13.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## **Sister Kathleen H. Hughes**

### **The woman at the well**

Early in Christ’s ministry, He traveled from Jerusalem to His boyhood home of Nazareth, in Galilee. He passed through Samaria and, weary from His journey, stopped to rest at Jacob’s ancient well. As

Jesus waited and His disciples sought food in a nearby town, a Samaritan woman approached the well. You know the story. When Jesus asked for a drink, she was surprised that a Jew would make such a request of her. For centuries, Jews and Samaritans had considered themselves

enemies. But Christ told her that if she understood whom it was she was talking to, she would ask *Him* for water—living water, water that would satisfy her thirst forever. She didn't understand, of course, and so He explained:

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13–14).

The Samaritan woman liked the idea of never having to drink again. Certainly she wouldn't miss the daily labor of carrying the heavy water jars from the well to her home. But when Christ testified to her that He was the Messiah and when the Spirit confirmed to her that it was true, she began to comprehend that Jesus was speaking of greater truths. She left the well water behind and hurried away to seek others who might come and listen. I doubt, however, at least at that point, that she fully understood—or whether we fully understand—what it means to have a wellspring of living water within us.

### **The healing power of living water**

Living water heals. It nourishes and sustains. It brings peace and joy.

A woman I know was struggling with anger toward someone who had hurt her and her family. Though she told her children not to become embittered and resentful, she fought those feelings herself. After weeks of entreating her Father in Heaven, she finally felt a change. She related: “One day, in the midst of my nearly constant prayers, the healing came. I felt a physical sensation spread through my body. After, I felt a sense of security and peace. I knew that regardless of what happened, my family and I would be all right. The anger left me and so did my desire for retaliation.”

The living water is the gospel of Jesus Christ; its communicator is the Holy Ghost. My friend knew what was right. She had said the appropriate words to her family. But only when she humbled herself enough to drink of the water—to feel the Holy Spirit—could she begin to heal.

As I have met with many women this last year—and their priesthood leaders—I have heard numerous accounts of Christ's healing power. There is so much suffering in mortality, so many causes for pain. I know people who have sent loved ones into harm's way and who daily pray for their safety in battle. I talk to parents who are frightened for their children, aware of the temptations they face. I have dear friends who are suffering from the ravaging effects of chemotherapy. I know single parents, abandoned by spouses, who are rearing children alone. I have dealt myself with the debilitating effects of depression. But I have learned from my own experience, and I learn from those I meet, that we are never left to our own resources. We are never abandoned. A wellspring of goodness, of strength and confidence is within us, and when we listen with a feeling of trust, we are raised up. We are healed. We not only survive, but we love life. We laugh; we enjoy; we go forward with faith.

### **The nourishing power of healing water**

The living water also nourishes. I testify to you that just as He promises, Christ comes to all who are heavy laden; He gives us rest (see Matthew 11:28). He sustains us when we are weary. A wellspring is a flowing well, offering continual refreshment—if we drink of it. Pride can destroy its effects, as can mere inattention. But those who drink deeply not only become whole themselves, but they become a fountain to others as one spirit nurtures and feeds another.

Last year a dear family friend passed away. Lucile was 89 years old and had

been a widow for more than 20 years. She was not a rich woman, she was not famous, and most of the world knew nothing of her passing. But her family knew. Her neighbors knew. The members of her ward knew. For all who had experienced her love, her death had left the world a diminished place. During her years as a widow, Lucile had endured difficult challenges, including the death of a beloved grandson and infirmities brought on by age. But Lucile continued to nourish everyone she knew with her spirit, with her baked goods, with her quilts and afghans, with her humor and goodwill. And she loved to work in the temple. One spring day in 1981, she wrote in her journal:

“This morning at 3:30 A.M., as I was walking up the path to the temple, I watched the flag gently blowing in the breeze and looked at the beautiful sky and thought how happy I was to be there. I felt sad for all the people who [were] sleeping and missing the awakening of a beautiful day.”

Most of us don’t think the world is “awakening” at 3:30 in the morning, and we’re perfectly happy to roll over in bed about then and allow Lucile to feel sorry for us. But what an attitude! Only a flow of goodness from within could explain it. Did she possess this purity of spirit at 15, at 25, or even 55? I don’t know. In most cases, it probably takes a lifetime of listening to the Holy Ghost before we know God’s voice so well and before we trust in the living waters enough to taste them throughout the entire day—especially a day that begins at 3:30 A.M. But I believe the living waters sustained Lucile during those long years when she might have given way to self-pity, and her life, her spirit, became nourishment to everyone she knew.

### **Living water brings peace and joy**

The living waters can bring peace and joy even when the wellspring within us

seems to have dried. Recently I heard of a woman whose son, suffering from emotional illness, died unexpectedly. The family was devastated. The mother couldn’t imagine that she could ever know happiness again. But she was blessed by the service of a young woman, one of her former Laurel girls—now a young Relief Society sister and her visiting teacher—who said, “You helped me; now I’ll help you—and we’ll get through this together.” Peace, even joy, began to return to her life.

It may take a lifetime—and longer—to refine our spirits fully, but the living water is available to all, including the young. I’m inspired when I watch young women of the Church, after receiving spiritual training from childhood, enter the Relief Society and immediately bring added strength to more experienced women. I’m overjoyed when I watch those same young women realize how much they can learn from women older than themselves. Peace comes to us from the Lord, but we can help each other feel that peace as we share our burdens and our happiness.

Christ’s promise is simple and sublime: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Brothers and sisters, turmoil is raging all about us. Economies are in distress; families are struggling; we are living in, as President Hinckley has said, “perilous times” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72). But the living waters still offer peace and joy. When we live righteously, when we have done all we can do, one of the gifts we receive is confidence. The Lord tells us, “Be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16). In the midst of chaos, we must pause. We must listen for the Spirit that tells us, “All is well!” (“Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30) just as the early Saints had to do. There is cause to be concerned, but there is greater reason to be at peace.

The Samaritan woman looked into the face of Christ, listened to His voice, and recognized Him at a time when most others rejected all He taught. We know Him too, or we can, if we allow His heal-

ing power, His nourishing strength, His peace and joy, to flow through us like “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). That we may do so is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The Savior's peace in troubled times

After teaching the multitude, Jesus, with His disciples, set sail for the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was night, and the Savior rested comfortably near the stern, asleep on a pillow. In time “there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship.” Terrified, the disciples awakened Him: “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”<sup>1</sup> His answer was characteristically calm: “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”<sup>2</sup> “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”<sup>3</sup>

He who had created the earth was again commanding the elements.<sup>4</sup> In wonderment, His disciples asked, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”<sup>5</sup>

We are living through turbulent times. A great storm of evil has come upon the earth. The winds of wickedness howl about us; the waves of war beat against our ship. As Paul wrote to Timothy:

“In the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . .

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”<sup>6</sup>

It is true that ominous clouds gather around us, but just as the Savior's words brought peace to the Apostles in the boat, they bring peace to us today: “And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars,

be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.”<sup>7</sup> “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>8</sup>

### Help from the still, small voice

To Elijah, Jehovah said, “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.” Elijah obeyed, and after a storm of wind and earthquakes and fire, he was finally visited with “a still small voice.” To Elijah, who had hid himself inside a cave, the Lord asked, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” And Elijah answered, “Because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” But the Lord had important work for Elijah to do, and therefore “said unto him, Go, return on thy way.”<sup>9</sup> So Elijah went.

We too must come forth from our *secure* caves, for we have important work to do. Through the still, small voice of His Spirit, the Lord will protect us, help us, and guide us.

### The Lord's lessons to the brother of Jared

Remember that He taught the brother of Jared how to construct vessels for his family to help them safely traverse the vast ocean waters, to preserve them against winds and waves, and to bring them to the promised land. These vessels were unusual in their design but very safe:

“And it came to pass that when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, . . . and no mon-

ster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them.”<sup>10</sup>

However, these vessels had no light. This concerned the brother of Jared. He did not want his family to make their journey in darkness; and so, rather than waiting to be commanded, he took his concern to the Lord. “And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?”<sup>11</sup>

The brother of Jared’s answer to this question required diligent effort on his part. He climbed Mount Shelem “and did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones.”<sup>12</sup> He then asked the Lord to touch those stones so that they would bring forth light.

As parents and leaders, we must remember that “it is not meet that [the Lord] should command in all things.”<sup>13</sup> Like the brother of Jared, we must carefully consider the needs of our family members, make a plan to meet those needs, and then take our plan to the Lord in prayer. This will require faith and effort on our part, but He will help us as we seek His assistance and do His will.

After his experience with the Lord, the brother of Jared continued to diligently prepare himself for the journey ahead.<sup>14</sup> So too must we hearken to the teachings of our prophets. The living prophets have counseled us time and again to put our lives in order—to eliminate debt, to store food and other essential items, to pay our tithing, to obtain appropriate education, and to live the commandments. Have we obeyed these essential instructions?

### **Children need to see us being faithful**

As we look into the eyes of our children and grandchildren, we see the doubt and fear of our times. Wherever these precious ones go in the world, they hear about unemployment, poverty, war, immorality, and crime. They wonder, “How can we cope with these problems?”

To find answers, they look back into our eyes and listen to our words. Do they

hear us speaking faithfully and hopefully, despite the tribulations of our times?

They need to see us continuing to pray and study the scriptures together, to hold family home evening and family councils, to serve faithfully in our Church callings, to attend the temple regularly, and to be obedient to our covenants. When they see our steadfastness in keeping the commandments, their fears will subside and their confidence in the Lord will increase.

By showing our faith through tribulation, we assure them that the fury of the adversary is not fatal. Jesus prayed to His Father on our behalf: “Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”<sup>15</sup> That prayer will be answered in Heavenly Father’s time and season, according to our faith.

### **Being faithful in times of trial**

In the meantime there is meaning and purpose in our earthly challenges. Consider the Prophet Joseph Smith: throughout his life he faced daunting opposition—illness, accident, poverty, misunderstanding, false accusation, and even persecution. One might be tempted to ask, “Why didn’t the Lord protect His prophet from such obstacles, provide him with unlimited resources, and stop up the mouths of his accusers?” The answer is that each of us must go through certain experiences to become more like our Savior. In the school of mortality, the tutor is often pain and tribulation, but the lessons are meant to refine and bless us and strengthen us, not to destroy us. Said the Lord to faithful Joseph:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment.”<sup>16</sup>

“If thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; . . .

know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite the many tribulations in the Prophet Joseph’s life, great things were brought to pass for the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. Joseph came to understand and has taught us that when he was struggling with a challenge, the Lord did not let him perish. Similarly, tests of our faith are priceless opportunities to discover how deeply the Master cares about the welfare of our souls to help us endure to the end.

### **Temple ordinances help us endure**

In our day, the steady arm of the Lord reaches us through the ordinances of His holy temples. Said the Prophet Joseph to the early Saints in Nauvoo, “You need an endowment, brethren, in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things.”<sup>18</sup> How right he was! Being blessed with the temple covenants and endowed with power made it possible for the Latter-day Saints to endure tribulation with faith. At the end of her own pioneer journey, Sarah Rich recorded, “If it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple . . . our journey would have been like . . . taking a leap in the dark.”<sup>19</sup>

### **The Savior’s example in affliction**

I am moved by the extent of the tribulation in the Savior’s experience. Even though He was the Only Begotten of the Father, cunning men sought to take His life from the very beginning. Throughout His ministry, a storm of rumors, lies, and persecutions followed Him wherever He went.

I am especially impressed as I consider the week leading to His death. The chief priests challenged His authority, tried to trap Him, and twice conspired to kill Him. In Gethsemane, while His dis-

ciples slept, He suffered the sins of all mankind and bled from every pore. He was betrayed, arrested, questioned, struck, spat upon, and beaten. After interrogation by the ruling council, He was mocked by Herod and finally taken to Pilate, where He was made to stand before an angry mob. Whipped and crowned with thorns, He was forced to carry His cross to Golgotha. Nails were driven into His hands and feet. His body was raised up between common thieves. Soldiers cast lots for His earthly possessions, and vinegar was given to quench His thirst. After six hours,<sup>20</sup> He commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, gave up the ghost, and died.

### **Seeing Jesus’ trials with an eye of faith**

When we observe the last week of the Savior’s life from our earthly perspective, our first impression may be one of suffering and destruction. We may see only the Savior’s mother and others weeping at the cross, soldiers afraid, the earth in great commotion, rocks broken up, the veil of the temple rent in twain, and three hours of darkness covering the land. A similar scene of storms and destruction unfolded in the New World. In short, we see the terrible tempest raging.

But look again—this time through the eye of faith.

In the last, most agonizing weeks of His life, consider that Jesus taught, testified, lifted, blessed, and strengthened those around Him. He raised Lazarus from the dead, taught about His Father, set the temple in order, gave several parables, witnessed the widow offering her mite, instructed His disciples about the signs of His Second Coming, visited the house of Simon the leper, instituted the sacrament, washed the feet of the Apostles, and taught His disciples to love one another. He testified of His divinity as the Son of God and taught of the Comforter—the Holy Ghost. In His great Intercessory Prayer, He prayed to His Father for His Apostles



and all who believe on their words, “that they might have [His] joy fulfilled in themselves.”<sup>21</sup>

In His darkest hour, the light of peace and joy did not fade. It grew brighter! After His death, He appeared to Mary Magdalene. What joy must have been felt that morning as the news spread: “He is risen”!<sup>22</sup> In time He came to the women on the road; to Cleopas and a disciple who were traveling to Emmaus; to the Apostles and disciples in the upper room; to Thomas, who doubted; and to others. Again, there was joy and rejoicing in the Atonement and the Resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Savior’s visit to the spirit world**

But this was not all. In vision, President Joseph F. Smith—a prophet, seer, and revelator—saw the Savior’s visit to the spirit world:

“There were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality. . . .

“All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, . . .

“ . . . [And] they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.

“They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death.”

These faithful spirits knew that shortly “their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a *fulness* of joy.

“[And] while this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death,

the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Jesus can bring joy in turbulent times**

My brothers and sisters, however dark conditions may seem in this world today, whatever the storms we are facing personally, in our homes, and in our families, this joy can be ours now. Sometimes we don’t understand death, illness, mental and physical disabilities, personal tragedies, war, and other conflict. Some of these are a necessary part of our mortal probation. Others, as Enoch foresaw, are part of the preparation for the Savior’s Second Coming, when “the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but,” said the Lord, “my people will I preserve.” And when Enoch saw all these things, he “received a fulness of joy.”<sup>25</sup>

On this morning, during this season of the Savior’s birth and Resurrection, I bear special witness with joy and rejoicing that He did come into this world, suffered for our sins, and will return again. Our faith in Him and obedience to His commandments will bring “a perfect brightness of hope”<sup>26</sup> and dispel the darkness and gloom of despair in these troubled times. The One who had power to calm the elements of earth has power to calm our souls, to give us refuge from the storm: “Peace, be still.”<sup>27</sup>

I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Mark 4:37–38.
2. Matthew 8:26.
3. Mark 4:39.
4. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 309.
5. Mark 4:41.
6. 2 Timothy 3:1–2, 5.
7. Mark 13:7.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
9. See 1 Kings 19:11–15.
10. Ether 6:7, 10.
11. Ether 2:23.
12. Ether 3:1.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26.
14. See Ether 6:4.
15. John 17:15.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
18. *History of the Church*, 2:309.
19. Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, “Autobiography, 1885–1893,” Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 66.
20. See *Jesus the Christ*, 660.
21. John 17:13.
22. Matthew 28:6.
23. See “New Testament Times at a Glance: The Savior’s Final Week,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 26–29.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 138:12, 14–18; italics added.
25. Moses 7:61, 67.

26. 2 Nephi 31:20.
27. Mark 4:39.

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The choir sang “Come unto Him.”

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### President Faust

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson’s remarks, the choir will sing “Arise, O God, and Shine.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gerald N. Lund of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### In search of treasure

When I was a boy I enjoyed reading *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. I also saw adventure movies where several individuals had separate pieces of a well-worn map which led the way to buried treasure if only the pieces could be found and put together.

I recall listening to a 15-minute radio program each weekday afternoon. The program of which I speak was *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*. It began with the jingle, “Have you tried Wheaties, the best breakfast food in the land?” Then, in a voice filled with mystery, there emanated from the radio the message, “We now join Jack and Betty as they approach the fabulous secret entry to the elephants’ burial ground, where a treasure is concealed. But wait; danger lurks on the path ahead.”

Nothing could tear me away from this program. It was as though I were leading

the search for the hidden treasure of precious ivory.

At another time and in a different setting, the Savior of the world spoke of treasure. In His Sermon on the Mount He declared:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>1</sup>

The promised reward was not a treasure of ivory, gold, or silver. Neither did it consist of acres of land or a portfolio of stocks and bonds. The Master spoke of riches within the grasp of all—even joy unspeakable here and eternal happiness hereafter.

Today I have chosen to provide the three pieces of your treasure map to guide you to your eternal happiness. They are:

1. Learn from the past.
2. Prepare for the future.
3. Live in the present.

Let us consider each segment of the map.

### **Learn from the past**

First, learn from the past.

Each of us has a heritage—whether from pioneer forebears, later converts, or others who helped to shape our lives. This heritage provides a foundation built of sacrifice and faith. Ours is the privilege and responsibility to build on such firm and stable footings.

#### *Selling a treasured violin*

A story written by Karen Nolen, which appeared in the *New Era* in 1974, tells of a Benjamin Landart who, in 1888, was 15 years old and an accomplished violinist. Living on a farm in northern Utah with his mother and seven brothers and sisters was sometimes a challenge to Benjamin, as he had less time than he would have liked to play his violin. Occasionally his mother would lock up the violin until he had his farm chores done, so great was the temptation for Benjamin to play it.

In late 1892 Benjamin was asked to travel to Salt Lake to audition for a place with the territorial orchestra. For him, this was a dream come true. After several weeks of practicing and prayers, he went to Salt Lake in March of 1893 for the much anticipated audition. When he heard Benjamin play, the conductor, a Mr. Dean, told Benjamin he was the most accomplished violinist he had heard west of Denver. He was told to report to Denver for rehearsals in the fall and learned that he would be earning enough to keep himself, with some left over to send home.

A week after Benjamin received the good news, however, his bishop called him

into his office and asked if he couldn't put off playing with the orchestra for a couple of years. He told Benjamin that before he started earning money there was something he owed the Lord. He then asked Benjamin to accept a mission call.

Benjamin felt that giving up his chance to play in the territorial orchestra would be almost more than he could bear, but he also knew what his decision should be. He promised the bishop that if there were any way to raise the money for him to serve, he would accept the call.

When Benjamin told his mother about the call, she was overjoyed. She told him that his father had always wanted to serve a mission but had been killed before that opportunity had come to him. However, when they discussed the financing of the mission, her face clouded over. Benjamin told her he would not allow her to sell any more of their land. She studied his face for a moment and then said, "Ben, there is a way we can raise the money. This family [has] one thing that is of great enough value to send you on your mission. You will have to sell your violin."

Ten days later, on March 23, 1893, Benjamin wrote in his journal: "I awoke this morning and took my violin from its case. All day long I played the music I love. In the evening when the light grew dim and I could see to play no longer, I placed the instrument in its case. It will be enough. Tomorrow I leave [for my mission]."

Forty-five years later, on June 23, 1938, Benjamin wrote in his journal: "The greatest decision I ever made in my life was to give up something I dearly loved to the God I loved even more. He has never forgotten me for it."<sup>2</sup>

Learn from the past.

### **Prepare for the future**

Second, prepare for the future.

We live in a changing world. Technology has altered nearly every aspect of our lives. We must cope with these advances—

even these cataclysmic changes—in a world of which our forebears never dreamed.

Remember the promise of the Lord: “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>3</sup> Fear is a deadly enemy of progress.

It is necessary to prepare and to plan so we don’t fritter away our lives. Without a goal, there can be no real success. One of the best definitions of success I have ever heard goes something like this: Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal. Someone has said the trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never crossing the goal line.

Years ago there was a romantic and fanciful ballad that contained the words, “Wishing will make it so / Just keep on wishing / And care will go.”<sup>4</sup> I want to state here and now that wishing will not replace thorough preparation to meet the trials of life. Preparation is hard work but absolutely essential for our progress.

Our journey into the future will not be a smooth highway which stretches from here to eternity. Rather, there will be forks and turnings in the road, to say nothing of the unanticipated bumps. We must pray daily to a loving Heavenly Father, who wants each of us to succeed in life.

Prepare for the future.

### **Live in the present**

Third, live in the present.

Sometimes we let our thoughts of tomorrow take up too much of today. Day-dreaming of the past and longing for the future may provide comfort but will not take the place of living in the present. This is the day of our opportunity, and we must grasp it.

Professor Harold Hill, in Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man*, cautioned, “You pile up enough tomorrows, and you’ll find you’ve collected a lot of empty yesterdays.”

There is no tomorrow to remember if we don’t do something today, and to live

most fully today, we must do that which is of greatest importance. Let us not procrastinate those things which matter most.

### *Every day is a special occasion*

I recently read the account of a man who, just after the passing of his wife, opened her dresser drawer and found an item of clothing she had purchased when they visited the eastern part of the United States nine years earlier. She had not worn it but was saving it for a special occasion. Now, of course, that occasion would never come.

In relating the experience to a friend, the husband said, “Don’t save something only for a special occasion. Every day in your life is a special occasion.”

That friend later said those words changed her life. They helped her to cease putting off the things most important to her. Said she, “Now I spend more time with my family. I use crystal glasses every day. I’ll wear new clothes to go to the supermarket if I feel like it. The words ‘some-day’ and ‘one day’ are fading from my vocabulary. Now I take the time to call my relatives and closest friends. I’ve called old friends to make peace over past quarrels. I tell my family members how much I love them. I try not to delay or postpone anything that could bring laughter and joy into our lives. And each morning, I say to myself that this could be a special day. Each day, each hour, each minute is special.”

A wonderful example of this philosophy was shared by Arthur Gordon many years ago in a national magazine. He wrote:

“When I was around thirteen and my brother ten, Father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunchtime there was a phone call; some urgent business required his attention downtown. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say [into the phone], ‘No, I won’t be down. It’ll have to wait.’

“When he came back to the table, Mother smiled. ‘The circus keeps coming back, you know,’ [she said].

“‘I know,’ said Father. ‘But childhood doesn’t.’”<sup>5</sup>

*Finding joy in the journey*

Elder Monte J. Brough of the First Quorum of the Seventy tells of a summer at his childhood home in Randolph, Utah, when he and his younger brother, Max, decided to build a tree house in a large tree in the backyard. They made plans for the most wonderful creation of their lives. They gathered building materials from all over the neighborhood and carried them up to a part of the tree where two branches provided an ideal location for the house. It was difficult, and they were anxious to complete their work. The vision of the finished tree house provided tremendous motivation for them to complete the project.

They worked all summer, and finally in the fall just before school began for the new year, their house was completed. Elder Brough said he will never forget the feelings of joy and satisfaction which were theirs when they finally were able to enjoy the fruit of their work. They sat in the tree house, looked around for a few minutes, climbed down from the tree—and never returned. The completed project, as wonderful as it was, could not hold their interest for even one day. In other words, the process of planning, gathering, building, and working—not the completed project—provided the enduring satisfaction and pleasure they had experienced.

Let us relish life as we live it and, as did Elder Brough and his brother, Max, find joy in the journey.

*Do not postpone chances to show affection*

The old adage “Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today” is doubly important when it comes to expressing

our love and affection—in word and in deed—to family members and friends. Said author Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone.”<sup>6</sup>

A poet set to verse the sorrow of opportunities forever lost. I quote a portion:

Around the corner I have a friend,  
In this great city that has no end;  
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,  
And before I know it, a year is gone,  
And I never see my old friend’s face,  
For Life is a swift and terrible race. . . .  
But to-morrow comes—and to-morrow  
goes,  
And the distance between us grows and  
grows.

Around the corner!—yet miles away . . .  
“Here’s a telegram, sir,”  
“*Jim died to-day.*”

And that’s what we get, and deserve in  
the end:  
Around the corner, a vanished friend.<sup>7</sup>

*Visiting a cherished friend*

Just a little over a year ago, I determined that I would not put off any longer a visit with a dear friend whom I hadn’t seen for many years. I had been meaning to visit him in California but just had not gotten around to it.

Bob Biggers and I met when we were both in the Classification Division at the United States Naval Training Center in San Diego, California, toward the close of World War II. We were good friends from the beginning. He visited in Salt Lake once before he married, and we remained friends through correspondence from the time I was discharged in 1946. My wife, Frances, and I have exchanged Christmas cards every year with Bob and his wife, Grace.

Finally, at the beginning of January 2002, I scheduled a stake conference visit to Whittier, California, where Bob lives. I telephoned my friend, now 80 years old,

and arranged for Frances and me to meet him and Grace, that we might reminisce concerning former days.

We had a delightful visit. I took with me a number of photographs which had been taken when we were in the Navy together over 55 years earlier. We identified the men we knew and provided each other an update on their whereabouts as best we could. Although not a member of our Church, Bob remembered going to a sacrament meeting with me those long years before when we were stationed in San Diego.

As Frances and I said our good-byes to Bob and Grace, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and joy at having finally made the effort to see once again a friend who had been cherished from afar throughout the years.

One day each of us will run out of tomorrows. Let us not put off what is most important.

Live in the present.

### Lay up treasures in heaven

Your treasure map is now in place: Learn from the past, prepare for the future, live in the present.

I conclude where I began. From our Lord and Savior:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>8</sup>

My brothers and sisters, from the depths of my soul I bear you my personal witness: God is our Father; His Son is our Savior and Redeemer; we are led by a prophet for our time, even President Gordon B. Hinckley.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 6:19–21.
2. See “Benjamin: Son of the Right Hand,” *New Era*, May 1974, 34–37.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
4. “Wishing Will Make It So,” lyrics by B. G. DeSylva.
5. *A Touch of Wonder* (1974), 77–78.
6. In Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, comp., *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (1988), 173.
7. Charles Hanson Towne, “Around the Corner,” in *Poems That Live Forever*, sel. Hazel Felleman (1965), 128.
8. Matthew 6:19–21.

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The choir sang “Arise, O God, and Shine.”

Elder Gerald N. Lund offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 173rd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 5, 2003, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald Staheli and Rosalind

Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the

173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "If You Could Hie to Kolob." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "If You Could Hie to Kolob."

Elder Donald L. Staheli offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. Brother Wesley L. Jones, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2002.

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The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

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## **The Sustaining of Church Officers**

### **President James E. Faust**

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Ken-

neth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of his announced appointment as president of Brigham Young University, it is proposed that we release Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. as a member of the

Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as general president of the Sunday School. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release J. Devn Cornish as an Area Authority Seventy because of his call as a mission president. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Merrill J. Bateman as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as general president of the Sunday School, with John H. Groberg and Val R. Christensen to remain as counselors. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Bruce D. Porter as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Elders Mervyn B. Arnold, Shirley D. Christensen, Clate W. Mask Jr., William W. Parmley, and W. Douglas Shumway as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies:

D. Fraser Bullock, Luis G. Chaverri, Ronaldo da Costa, Stanley G. Ellis, Randy

D. Funk, José A. García, Robert H. Garff, Julio G. Gaviola, Francisco I. Gímez, Carlos A. Godoy, S. Horacio Guzmán, Yu Chen Ho, Beaver T. Ho Ching, Robert Koch, G. Steven Laney, Barry Lee, Miguel A. Lee, Kuen Ling, Lamont W. Moon, Alexander A. Odume, Adesina J. Olukanni, Fernando D. Ortega, Antonio R. Oyola, Adilson de Paula Parrella, Luigi S. Peloni, Rafael E. Pino, Gelson Pizzirani, Gerold Roth, A. Kim Smith, W. Blake Sonne, Ronald A. Stone, Subandriyo, Jeffrey C. Swinton, Donald P. Tenney, José L. Torres, Pita R. Vamanrav, Perry M. Webb. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy to take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report

### Wesley L. Jones

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an auditing department, which performs its work independently from all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consist of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other qualified, credentialed professionals.

By charge from the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments and operations worldwide. The Church Auditing Department has access to all records, personnel, properties, and systems needed to audit Church contributions, expenditures, and resources. Professional auditing standards govern the performance of audit work. Risk is the primary factor guiding the selection of audits.

The Council on the Disposition of the Tithes is responsible for, and for 2002 authorized, the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Pres-



idency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. Under direction of this council, contributions and expenditures were controlled through the Church's Budget and Finance Departments. Administration of contributions received and budgeted expenditures was audited and reported.

Based on our audits, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received and funds expended during the year ended December 31, 2002, have been managed in accordance with approved budget guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

The financial activities of Church-affiliated organizations, which are oper-

ated separately from the Church, were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2002. These organizations include, among others, Deseret Management Corporation, its subsidiaries, and the Church's institutions of higher education, including Brigham Young University. Independent public accounting firms audited the financial statements and corresponding control activities of these organizations. Nevertheless, the Church Auditing Department did verify that appropriate reporting of these firms' audit results occurred with each organization's audit committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Auditing Department

Wesley L. Jones

Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2002:

#### Church units

Stakes .....	2,602
Districts .....	641
Missions .....	335
Wards and branches .....	26,143

#### Church membership

Total membership .....	11,721,548
Increase in children of record	
during 2002 .....	81,132
Converts baptized during 2002 ..	283,138

#### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	61,638
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#### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2002 .....	7
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(Snowflake Arizona, Lubbock Texas, Monterrey Mexico, Campinas Brazil, Asunción Paraguay, Nauvoo Illinois, and The Hague Netherlands)

Temples rededicated during 2002 .....	2
(Freiberg Germany and Monticello Utah)	

Temples in operation .....	114
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#### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Minnie Preece Burton*, widow of Elder Theodore M. Burton, former Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and member of the Seventy; *Melba Parker Hill*, widow of Elder George R. Hill III, former member of the Seventy; *Bonnie Lee Adamson Caldwell*, wife of Elder C. Max Caldwell, former member of the Seventy; *Gertrude Ryberg Garff*, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency; *Walter Joshua Eldredge Jr.*, former Young Men general president; *Mayola Miltenberger*, former secretary-treasurer of the Relief Society general presidency and board.

## President Monson

We have heard Brother Wesley L. Jones, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, read the auditing report and Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, present

the statistical report of the Church for the year 2002.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### The Light of Christ

It is a privilege to be with you today. I love hearing the word of the Lord spoken by our leaders as they are guided by the divine gift of the Holy Ghost. Today I would like to say a few words regarding this wonderful gift.

Have you ever thought about the amount of light and energy generated by our sun? The amount is almost beyond comprehension. Yet the heat and light that we receive come as a free gift from God. This is another proof of the goodness of our Heavenly Father.<sup>1</sup>

The light from the sun breaks through space, bathing our planet as it encircles the sun with life-giving warmth and light. Without the sun, there could be no life on this planet; it would be forever barren, cold, and dark.

As the sun gives life and light to the earth, a spiritual light gives nourishment to our spirits. We call this the Light of Christ. The scriptures teach us that it “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, all mankind can enjoy its blessings. The Light of Christ is the divine influence that allows every man, woman, and child to distinguish between good and evil. It encourages all to choose the right, to seek eternal truth, and to learn again the truths that we knew in our premortal existence but have forgotten in mortality.

The Light of Christ should not be confused with the personage of the Holy Ghost, for the Light of Christ is not a personage at all. Its influence is preliminary

to and preparatory to one’s receiving the Holy Ghost. The Light of Christ will lead the honest soul to “[hearken] to the voice”<sup>3</sup> to find the true gospel and the true Church and thereby receive the Holy Ghost.

### The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit, a separate and distinct member of the Godhead.<sup>4</sup> He is a witness or testifier of the power of God, the divinity of Christ, and the truth of the restored gospel. Many throughout history in all nations have sought diligently to commune with the heavens and gain the light of gospel truth. They have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost confirm the truth of the gospel.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this . . . ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him.”<sup>5</sup>

### Blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to receive the Holy Ghost as a constant companion, is obtained only on condition of faith in Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the laying on

of hands by authorized servants endowed with the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is a most precious gift available only to worthy members of the Lord's Church.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord calls the gift of the Holy Ghost "the unspeakable gift."<sup>6</sup> It is the source of testimony and spiritual gifts. It enlightens minds, fills our souls with joy,<sup>7</sup> teaches us all things, and brings forgotten knowledge to our remembrance.<sup>8</sup> The Holy Ghost also "will show unto [us] all things what [we] should do."<sup>9</sup>

President James E. Faust added that the gift "of the Holy Ghost is the greatest guarantor of inward peace in our unstable world."<sup>10</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, "How great a blessing it is to have the ministering influence of a member of the Godhead."<sup>11</sup> Think of what this means—the ability and the right to receive the ministrations of a member of the Godhead, to commune with infinite wisdom, infinite knowledge, and infinite power!

### **Earn the Holy Ghost's companionship**

As with all gifts, this gift must be received and accepted to be enjoyed. When priesthood hands were laid upon your head to confirm you a member of the Church, you heard the words, "Receive the Holy Ghost." This did not mean that the Holy Ghost unconditionally became your constant companion. Scriptures warn us that the Spirit of the Lord will "not always strive with man."<sup>12</sup> When we are confirmed, we are given the *right* to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, but it is a right that we must continue to earn through obedience and worthiness. We cannot take this gift for granted.

The Holy Ghost will warn us of danger, and it will inspire us to help others in need. President Thomas S. Monson counseled us: "We watch. We wait. We listen for that still, small voice. When it speaks, wise men and women obey. Promptings of the Spirit are not to be postponed."<sup>13</sup>

### **The Holy Ghost penetrates darkness**

I once had the opportunity to tour a large cave. While there, the guide turned off the lights for a moment to demonstrate what it was like to be in total darkness. It was an amazing experience. I put my hand an inch from my eyes and could not see it. It was frightening in a way. I was relieved when the lights were turned back on.

As light penetrates the darkness and makes physical things visible, so does the Holy Ghost penetrate the spiritual darkness that surrounds us and make plainly visible spiritual things that once were hidden. The Apostle Paul taught that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>14</sup>

### **Enjoy the full blessings of the gift**

I fear that some members of the Lord's Church "live far beneath our privileges" with regard to the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>15</sup> Some are distracted by the things of the world that block out the influence of the Holy Ghost, preventing them from recognizing spiritual promptings. This is a noisy and busy world that we live in. Remember that being busy is not necessarily being spiritual. If we are not careful, the things of this world can crowd out the things of the Spirit.

Some are spiritually deadened and past feeling because of their choices to commit sin. Others simply hover in spiritual complacency with no desire to rise above themselves and commune with the Infinite. If they would open their hearts to the refining influence of this unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, a glorious new spiritual dimension would come to light. Their eyes would gaze upon a vista scarcely imaginable. They could know for themselves things of the Spirit that are choice, precious, and capable of enlarging the soul, expanding the mind, and filling the heart with inexpressible joy.

President Brigham Young spoke of a sacred experience when the martyred Prophet Joseph Smith came in vision to him, bringing the Saints one more message. It is a message that Saints need today more than ever before:

“[Be sure to] tell the people to . . . keep the spirit of the Lord,” Joseph said, “and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Assessing whether we have the Spirit**

Brothers and sisters, do we turn away the still, small voice? Do we do things that offend the Holy Ghost? Do we allow influences into our homes that drive the Spirit from our homes? The type of entertainment that we permit into our homes will certainly have an impact on the power of the Holy Ghost. Much of the entertainment of the world is offensive to the Holy Ghost. Surely we should not watch movies or television shows that are filled with violence, vulgar language, and immorality.

I invite you to ponder individually in a humble and prayerful manner and ask yourself, “Do I have the Spirit in my life? Am I happy? Am I doing anything in my life that is offensive to the Spirit and preventing the Holy Ghost from being my constant companion?” Have the courage to repent, if needed, and again enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

### **We need the Holy Ghost in our homes**

Do we enjoy the influence of the Holy Ghost in our homes? Are we doing anything as a family that is offensive to the Spirit? Can we more effectively invite the Holy Ghost into our homes?

Our homes need to be more Christ-centered. We should spend more time at the temple and less time in the pursuit of pleasure. We should lower the noise level in our homes so that the noise of the world will not overpower the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost. One of our greatest goals as parents should be to enjoy the power and influence of the Holy Ghost in our homes. We should pray and study the scriptures. We could sing the hymns of the Restoration to invite the Holy Ghost into our homes. Regular family home evening will also help.

In these perilous times, we need this unspeakable gift in our lives. President Boyd K. Packer reminds us: “We need not live in fear of the future. We have every reason to rejoice and little reason to fear. If we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we will be safe, whatever the future holds. We will be shown what to do.”<sup>17</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Saints could distinguish the gift of the Holy Ghost from all other spirits, for “it will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness and build up the kingdom of God.”<sup>18</sup>

### **An outpouring that fills the soul with joy**

A friend of mine once told me about his experience in coming to know and understand the gift of the Holy Ghost. He had prayed often and longed to know the truth of the gospel.

Although he felt at peace with his beliefs, he had never received the certain knowledge for which he hungered. He had reconciled himself to the fact that he might be one of those who would have to walk through this life relying upon the faith of others.

One morning, while pondering the scriptures, he felt something surge through his body from the top of his head to the

bottom of his feet. "I was immersed in a feeling of such intense love and pure joy," he explained. "I cannot describe the measure of what I felt at that time other than to say I was enveloped in joy so profound there was no room in me for any other sensation."

Even as he felt this outpouring of the Holy Ghost, he wondered if possibly he was just imagining what was happening. "The more I wondered," he said, "the more intense the feelings became until it was all I could do to tearfully say, 'It is enough.'"

As a boy, my father had a similar experience the day he was baptized. He related that when the bishop laid his hands upon his head and said, "Receive the Holy Ghost," "I had a peculiar feeling, . . . something that I had never experienced before. . . . [It was] a feeling of happiness, a feeling that filled my soul."

From that moment on and throughout his life, he always knew that Jesus Christ lived and directed His Church through a living prophet.<sup>19</sup>

### Receive this unspeakable gift

There are many today who have felt promptings from the Holy Ghost as they study the Book of Mormon or listen to the testimonies of missionaries and friends. Unto these I say, as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel in its fulness is restored to the earth once again! Joseph Smith was a true prophet who translated the Book of Mormon through the gift and power of God. I urge all to read the Book of Mormon and apply its promise:

"When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."<sup>20</sup>

To you who are not members of the Church, I urge you with all the tenderness of my heart—do not resist the truth any longer. Give place in your hearts to this heavenly light. Have faith, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you too shall receive this unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost.

Our Heavenly Father lives! Jesus is the Christ! Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet, seer, and revelator in our day. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Experts at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) estimate that "the total energy radiated [by the sun] is 383 billion trillion kilowatts, which is equivalent to the energy generated by 100 billion tons of TNT exploding each second" (NASA Office of Space Science, "Solar System Exploration," Internet, [www.solarsystem.nasa.gov/features/planets/sun/sun.html](http://www.solarsystem.nasa.gov/features/planets/sun/sun.html)).
2. John 1:9; see also Moroni 7:16; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:555.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:26.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.
8. See John 14:26.
9. 2 Nephi 32:5.
10. In Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 41; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 32.
11. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 259.
12. Genesis 6:3; see also 2 Nephi 26:11; Doctrine and Covenants 1:33; Moses 8:17.
13. *Live the Good Life* (1988), 59.
14. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
15. See Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 32.
16. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847*, comp. Elden J. Watson (1971), 529.

17. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 8; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 8.  
 18. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 529.

19. Joseph L. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Apr. 1956, 12.  
 20. Moroni 10:4.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Sharing the gospel on market day

All of us who are under the baptismal covenant have promised to offer the gospel to others.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, fear of rejection or of giving offense looms before us like an impassable obstacle. Yet some members clear that barrier with ease. I have observed them carefully in my travels. I can picture some of them now.

Saturday is a market day across the world. In the countryside of Ghana, in Ecuador, and in the Philippine Islands, countless people bring the produce of their farms and their handicrafts to a town to sell. They talk with those they meet on the road. And they visit with those near them as they wait for someone to buy. Much of the talk is about the struggles of existence, of breaking out of poverty, and sometimes about danger.

Among those on the roads and in the markets are Latter-day Saints. Much of their talk with those they meet would be the same as you would hear anywhere in the world. "Where are you from?" "Is that your son with you?" "How many children do you have?" But there will be a difference in the Latter-day Saints. It would be noticeable in their eyes as much as in their words. They listen carefully with the look of someone who cares about the answers to questions and who cares about the person.

If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, it would turn to things that matter deeply to both of them. They would talk of what they believe brings happiness and what brings sadness. And the talk

would turn to hopes for this life and the next. The Latter-day Saint would express quiet assurance. Not every time, but sometimes, the Latter-day Saint would be asked, "Why are you so much at peace? How do you know these things you say you know?"

And then there would come a quiet answer. Perhaps it would be about Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appearing to the young boy Joseph Smith. It might be about the resurrected Savior's loving ministry, as described in the Book of Mormon, to common people who had faith in Him and who loved Him as we do.

### How can I do better at sharing my faith?

If you could hear such a conversation, which reaches spiritual things in a marketplace or on a street, you might ask, "How could I do that? How could I become better at sharing my faith with those who do not yet feel what I feel?" It is a question for all of us who are members. That same question is on the mind of every bishop and branch president in the Church, who now have the charge to lead missionary work among his people. The answer to that question is at the heart of the harvest which will come.

I've studied carefully and prayerfully some who are remarkably faithful and effective witnesses of the Savior and His Church. Their stories are inspiring. One humble man was called as the president of a tiny branch. There were so few members he could not see how the branch could function. He walked into a grove of trees to pray. He asked God what he should do.

An answer came. He and the few members began inviting friends to join with them. In a year, hundreds had come into the waters of baptism and become fellow citizens in the Lord's Church.

I know a man who travels almost every week in his work. On any day there are missionaries somewhere in the world teaching someone he met. There is another man who seems undeterred by how many he must speak to before any of them wish to be taught by the missionaries. He doesn't count the cost in his effort but only the happiness of those whose lives are changed.

There is no single pattern in what they do. There is no common technique. Some always carry a Book of Mormon to give away. Others set a date to find someone for the missionaries to teach. Another has found questions which draw out feelings about what matters most in life to a person. Each has prayed to know what to do. They each seem to get a different answer, suited especially to them and to the people they meet.

### **Characteristics of those who share the gospel**

But in one way they are all alike. It is this: they have a common way of seeing who they are. They can do what they have been inspired to do because of who they are. To do what we are to do, we will have to become like them in at least two ways. First, they feel that they are the beloved children of a loving Heavenly Father. Because of that, they turn to Him easily and often in prayer. They expect to receive His personal direction. They obey in meekness and humility, like the children of a perfect parent. He is close to them.

Second, they are the grateful disciples of the resurrected Jesus Christ. They know for themselves that the Atonement is real and necessary for all. They have felt cleansed through baptism by those in authority and the receipt of the Holy Ghost

for themselves. And because of the peace they have experienced, they are like the sons of Mosiah, "desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble."<sup>2</sup>

Those who speak easily and often of the restored gospel prize what it has meant to them. They think of that great blessing often. It is the memory of the gift they have received which makes them eager for others to receive it. They have felt the love of the Savior. For them these words are their daily, hourly reality:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

"We love him, because he first loved us."<sup>3</sup>

### **Pray for the gift of perfect love**

Even having felt that love, the true disciple sometimes feels anxiety. The Apostle John was clear about that: fear will be gone when we are made *perfect* in love. We can pray for that gift of perfect love. We can pray with confidence that we can feel the Savior's love for us and for all we meet. He loved us and them enough to pay the price of all our sins. It is one thing to believe that. It is something far more to have our hearts changed to feel it every moment. The command to pray to feel the Savior's love is also a promise. Listen:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

"But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.”<sup>4</sup>

### **A man is prepared to share the gospel**

The Lord trusts His true disciples. He sends prepared people to His prepared servants. You have had the experience, as have I, of meeting people where you were sure the meeting could not have been by chance.

I have a friend who prays every day to meet someone who is prepared to receive the gospel. He carries with him a copy of the Book of Mormon. The night before a short trip recently, he decided not to take a copy with him but instead to carry what is called a pass-along card. But in the morning a spiritual impression came: “Take a Book of Mormon with you.” He put one in his bag.

A woman he knew sat next to him on the plane, and he wondered, “Is this the one?” She rode with him again on the return trip. Now he thought, “How should I bring the gospel up?”

Instead, she said to him, “You pay tithing to your church, don’t you?” He said that he did. She said she was supposed to pay tithing to her church but she didn’t. And then she said, “What is this about the Book of Mormon?” He explained that the book is scripture, another witness of Jesus Christ, translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith. She seemed interested, so he reached down into his bag and said, “I was impressed to bring this book with me. I think it is for you.”

She began to read it. As they parted, she said, “You and I are going to have to

have more conversations about this.” What my friend could not know—but God did—was that she was looking for a church. God knew she had watched my friend and wondered what about his church made him so happy. God knew she would ask about the Book of Mormon, and He knew she would be willing to be taught by the missionaries. She was prepared. So was my friend. And so can you and I be.

### **Our life and words should bear testimony**

Your worthiness and your desire will shine in your face and your eyes. You will be excited about the Lord’s Church and His work, and it will show. You will be His disciple 24 hours a day in every situation. You won’t need to build up your courage for one great moment to speak to someone and then retreat. The fact that most people are not interested in the restored gospel will have little bearing on what you do and say. Speaking what you believe will be part of what you are.

My father was like that. He was a scientist. He lectured to audiences in countries around the world. Once I read a talk he had given to a large scientific convention. In it he referred to creation and a Creator as he talked about his science. I knew that few, if any, in that audience would have shared his faith. So I said to him with wonder and admiration, “Dad, you bore your testimony.” He looked at me with surprise on his face and said, “Did I?”

He had not even known that he was being brave. He simply said what he knew was true. When he bore testimony, even those who rejected it knew it came not by design but because it was part of him. He was what he was, wherever he was.

That is the mark of every person who is bold and effective in sharing the gospel. They see themselves as children of a loving, living Father in Heaven. And they see themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ. It



takes no discipline for them to pray. They do it naturally. It is no special effort to remember the Savior. His love for them and theirs for Him is always with them. That is who they are and how they see themselves and see those around them.

### **The gospel will go to every nation**

Now that may seem to us to require a great change, but we can be confident that it will come. The change in individual members is happening across the Church in every nation. This is the great time foreseen by prophets since the Creation. The restored gospel will go to every nation. The Savior sent these words to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“I have sent forth mine angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, who hath appeared unto some and hath committed it unto man, who shall appear unto many that dwell on the earth.

“And this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>5</sup>

Whatever tumults occur, we can know that God will set bounds to fulfill His promises. He, not just men, has the ultimate control of nations and of events to allow His purposes to be fulfilled. Among every people and every nation there will be raised up those who serve with absolute assurance that they are children of God and who have become purified disciples of the resurrected Christ in His Church.

### **Be part of the miracle**

A few years ago I spoke to the missionaries in the training center in Japan. I promised them that a great day would dawn in that nation. I said that there would be a great increase in the members speaking eagerly to those they met of their testimony of the restored gospel. My thought then was that the courage to speak would come from an increased admiration for

the Church in that land. I know now that the great miracle, a mighty change, will come inside the members, not in the world around them.

They and members across the earth will love and listen and talk and testify out of changed hearts. Bishops and branch presidents will lead them by example. The harvest of souls will be great, and it will be safe in the Lord's hands.<sup>6</sup>

To be part of that miracle, you must not wait until you feel closer to Heavenly Father or until you are sure that you have been purified through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Pray for the chance to encounter people who sense there could be something better in their lives. Pray to know what you should do to help them. Your prayers will be answered. You will meet people prepared by the Lord. You will find yourself feeling and saying things beyond your past experience. And then in time you will feel yourself drawing closer to your Heavenly Father, and you will feel the cleansing and the forgiveness the Savior promises His faithful witnesses. And you will feel His approval, knowing you have done what He asked of you, because He loves you and trusts you.

I am grateful to live in such a time. I am grateful to know that you and I are loved children of a glorified Heavenly Father. I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that He is my Savior and yours and the Savior of all the people you will ever meet. The Father and the Son came to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of the priesthood were restored, and the last, great gathering has begun. I know that is true.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:81; Mosiah 18:9.
2. Mosiah 28:3.
3. 1 John 4:18–19.
4. Moroni 7:46–48.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 133:36–37.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:41–42.

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Craig C. Christensen and James M. Dunn of the Seventy

will address us. They will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## Elder Craig C. Christensen

### Seek, and ye shall find

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that I may be guided by the Spirit of the Lord as I share with you my personal feelings and testimony.

One of the most compelling invitations and profound promises given by the Savior is found in the simple phrase “seek, and ye shall find.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the process of seeking includes prayer and supplication, it goes much deeper than that. Seeking is more of a journey than a single event. I liken it to taking a long, cross-country vacation. Although we know what our ultimate destination is, the rich experiences and real learning come day by day as we progress toward our goal.

### The pattern for seeking answers from God

As we seek the things of God, we must humble ourselves before Him, remembering that it is by His grace that we receive them, and focus our thoughts and our prayers, our faith and our desires, even all of the energy of our hearts that we might receive light and understanding directly from a loving Heavenly Father.

The pattern for seeking answers from God is simple to explain yet much more personal when applied. To begin, we are invited to study in our minds and ponder in our hearts those things that we most desire of Him.<sup>2</sup> This process of reflection brings clarity and inspiration to our souls. We are then instructed to present our thoughts

and desires directly to Heavenly Father in humble prayer with the promise that, if we ask Him, in the name of Christ, if what we are seeking is right, and if we “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost,” for it is “by the power of the Holy Ghost” that we “know the truth of all things.”<sup>3</sup>

### Seek the best gifts and shun evil

And what should we seek?

The scriptures teach us that we should “seek . . . earnestly the [very] best gifts”<sup>4</sup> and that we should seek wisdom and understanding and “prepare every needful thing.”<sup>5</sup> We are admonished to lose ourselves in the service of others<sup>6</sup> and to seek those things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, we are cautioned not to seek the unclean things of the world.<sup>8</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: “There is so much evil, enticing evil, in the world. Shun it, my brothers and sisters. Avoid it. It is as a dangerous disease. It is as a poison that will destroy you. Stay away from it.”<sup>9</sup> In the book of Amos we read, “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you.”<sup>10</sup>

### Seek to know God and Jesus Christ

What we seek first and foremost, above all other things, is “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”<sup>11</sup> We seek

to know “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He has] sent.”<sup>12</sup>

In a very personal version of the invitation to seek and find, the Savior said, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me.”<sup>13</sup>

And what does it mean to find Him?

As we engage our faith and commit our energy to draw closer to Jesus Christ, we begin to understand more fully who He really is. As we seek Him diligently, we gain a deep and abiding testimony of His matchless love, His perfect life and example, and the blessings of His great atoning sacrifice. As we draw nearer to Him, we truly begin to find Him and to recognize Him as the Creator of the earth, the Redeemer of mankind, the Only Begotten of the Father, the King of kings, the Prince of Peace.

The deeper we seek, the more we begin to appreciate His role as the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Holy Messiah of the New Testament. We begin to understand more fully His eternal message of salvation and exaltation. We find that He continues to beckon us to come and follow Him, that His teachings are certain and are as applicable today as they were throughout all previous generations of time. We begin to know, with more profound appreciation, what occurred in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Although He was erroneously convicted and sentenced, He gave His life willingly; and in fulfillment of His own prophetic words He was resurrected on the third day. This priceless gift brings immortality to all and eternal life to the obedient and faithful.

As we begin to realize that His message was and is for all mankind everywhere, we accept, with great enthusiasm, the scriptural account of His visit to the ancient inhabitants of the American continent. We delight in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as a second witness—indeed another testament—of His messianic

mission as the Savior and the Redeemer of the world. We acknowledge that a man can get closer to Him by searching and praying about the Book of Mormon than by studying any other book.<sup>14</sup>

### **Blessings that come from seeking Him**

As we seek to find Him, we receive a witness of His personal visit, together with His Father, to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-awaited “dispensation of the fulness of times.”<sup>15</sup>

As we seek Him, we recognize that He has restored His Church to the earth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that within His Church He has bestowed the power and authority to provide essential ordinances that will permit us to return and live with Him once again.

As we seek Him, we find that He continues to guide His Church through His living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and that the organization of His Church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, “Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>16</sup>

As we seek Him diligently, we feel His love for us and understand more clearly the answers to our prayers. We acknowledge that through His Spirit we “find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures”<sup>17</sup> and gain a greater desire to live our lives in accordance with His commandments and direction.

As we seek Him, we find that He is “the light and the life of the world.”<sup>18</sup> As we seek Him, brothers and sisters, we shall indeed find Him and experience the inner peace He has promised us. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8; Moroni 10:3.
3. Moroni 10:4–5.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 109:7–8.

6. See Luke 17:33.
7. Articles of Faith 1:13.
8. See 3 Nephi 20:41; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
9. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 709.
10. Amos 5:14.
11. Matthew 6:33.
12. John 17:3.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
14. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 194.
15. Ephesians 1:10.
16. Ephesians 2:20.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
18. Mosiah 16:9.

## Elder James M. Dunn

### Words to live by

The world is full of words. Many are shrill and accusatory, and many are sarcastic. Together they are a noise, a blur, and we do not listen to or seriously consider them. Then, once in a while, through the din as it were, we hear precious words, such as in this conference, words to live by.

President Thomas S. Monson, in the April 1988 general conference, stated:

“We treasure the inspired thought:

“‘God is a Father.

Man is a brother.

Life is a mission

And not a career.’”

(Quoting Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 62; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 54.)

These are words to live by.

### We are all children of God

God is our Heavenly Father. We are His spiritually begotten children. Knowing our relationship to God helps us better understand where we came from and what our eternal possibilities are. Knowing Him, we learn better how to approach Him and how we ought to live in order to please Him. Our earthly sojourn is part of a divine plan of happiness designed by Him, which beckons us to live by faith, to gain mortal experiences, and to become qualified through obedience and the power of the Atonement to return to His presence forever.

We live in a world marked by great diversity: different lands, cultures, races, and languages. To some degree, at least, one must believe that this is the way God intended it to be. The gospel teaches us that, notwithstanding these differences, we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. The human race is one family, and we are all, therefore, brothers and sisters.

As siblings we must see that Heavenly Father loves His children equally, as any good earthly father would. Courtesy, kindness, generosity, and forgiveness are all elements of proper conduct among family members. Imagine the disappointment of a perfect, loving Father who sees His children treating each other badly.

### Keep focused on life's true purposes

Life is short. “It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). In the precious time that we have in mortality, there are many things to be done. Some of these things are more important than others, and we must make wise decisions. Some things are obviously wrong. Some are good. But some are vital if we are to meet the expectations of our Father and succeed in our mortal probation.

The expectations of the Father exceed merely devising a way to make a living or indulging ourselves in the beauties and pleasures of this earth, even though the Lord has assured us, “It pleaseth God that

he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess" (D&C 59:20).

Successfully working our way through life, while keeping our eye on life's true purposes, blesses us both here and hereafter. Obeying the commandments, keeping sacred covenants, and being "anxiously engaged in a good cause" (D&C 58:27) enable us to partake of the joy that is the purpose of our earthly existence (see 2 Nephi 2:25).

The Lord has given us this additional assurance: "But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

So our earthly mission hasn't much to do at all with our mortal careers. It has, however, everything to do with preparing for our immortal destiny.

I testify that the godly life will lead us back to the Father, who gave us life here and who will receive us back into eternal life.

### **Distractions of the world**

Many of God's children live life as though there were no tomorrow, no day of reckoning. They fill their lives with the pursuit of comfort, gain, and pleasure. Of such, Nephi said, "Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us" (2 Nephi 28:7). Many compound this miscalculation by concluding:

"Nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 28:8).

As the result of such erroneous thinking, the world is filled with lurid and lascivious attractions. We see young men who refuse to marry; young women who foolishly surrender their virtue in pursuit of lustful relationships; couples who purposefully refuse to have children or who opt for a "trophy child" because a family would interfere with plans for adventure, leisure, or maximum financial gain.

### **Living by God's words keeps us on track**

Nevertheless, there are millions of faithful brothers and sisters throughout the world who strive daily to "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44). They plan and live their lives in compliance with the revealed word of Heavenly Father. They work hard, study hard, and pray hard. They know how to be serious, and they know how to have fun. They listen to the word, and they obey the word. They know the meaning of and the blessings that come from living the law of sacrifice. These faithful people help and defer to others. They love and care for little children and the elderly. Good manners and high morals are their hallmarks, and they lead by example in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities. God loves and blesses them. His words are the words they live by, words that "are sure and shall not fail" (D&C 64:31).

Words to live by. They are usually simple and to the point. They help us remember. They keep us on track. They will lead us back to our Heavenly Father and His rest.

May we remember:

"God is a Father.  
Man is a brother.  
Life is a mission  
And not a career."

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### The Savior's charge to feed His sheep

Brothers and sisters, Easter is a time when the Christian world focuses on and rejoices in the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That one moment in time changed everything forever. The Savior broke down every barrier that stood in the way of our return to a loving Heavenly Father. In return He asks that we “go . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20).

A more intimate version of the same message is recorded in the Gospel of John. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Lovest thou me?” Each time Peter’s reply was the same: “Thou knowest that I love thee.” And each time the Savior instructed Peter: “Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17).

The Savior’s impassioned charge to “feed [His] sheep” continues in force today. Like Peter and his brethren of old, the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ today have the charge to take the gospel to all the world. This charge is seldom far from our minds. Every General Authority has the responsibility to be a missionary.

But the Savior was not just talking to the Apostles. He was also talking to every person who has been blessed to hear the gospel and is a member of His Church. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord put it in very simple terms: “It becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81).

### Raising the standard for missionaries

During the last general conference we challenged our young men to better

prepare themselves to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We asked them to be worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries. With the unsettled conditions that exist in the world today, they need to be “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47). We don’t expect them to be perfect, but they need to be anxious, willing, and committed to serve so they can reach new levels of spirituality as gospel teachers. They need to know the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and teach it with power in their own words under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Church we are working hard to help all of our missionaries to increase their spiritual maturity. This worldwide effort has been referred to as “raising the bar” or “raising the standard.” We thank you parents, bishops, and stake presidents for your support in this effort. We also thank the faithful youth of the Church for your willingness to live up to the Lord’s standard. May our Heavenly Father continue to bless you as you prepare to serve Him in this troubled world.

### Raising the standard for all members

But as we raise the level of expectation for the performance of our missionaries, we must also raise the level of expectation for the performance of all of the members of the Church in fulfilling our missionary duties. We need your help, brothers and sisters, to support and assist our missionaries in finding and baptizing many more of our Heavenly Father’s children. We need you to watch over, protect, and inspire the missionaries, who are servants of the Lord. If the standard is to be raised, it is raised for all of us. We must be more faithful. We must be more spiritually in tune. We must prepare ourselves to assist

the missionaries in finding those of our Heavenly Father's children who will embrace the message of the Restoration.

Remember, brothers and sisters, we're not marketing a product. We're not selling anything. We're not trying to impress anyone with our numbers or our growth. We are members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, empowered and sent forth by the Lord Himself to find, nourish, and bring safely into His Church those who are seeking to know the truth.

Viewed from that eternal perspective, what we are to do seems so simple and clear, but I know that member missionary work can be challenging and sometimes frightening. Please allow me to suggest three simple things that we can do to assist in this divinely commissioned responsibility.

### **Pray for opportunities to share the gospel**

First, we should exercise our faith and pray individually and as families, asking for help in finding ways to share the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to open the way. Prayerfully set a date with your family to have someone in your home for the missionaries to teach.

Remember, brothers and sisters, this is the Lord's Church. Let Him guide you through constant prayer. With a prayer in your heart, talk to everyone you can. Don't prejudge. Don't withhold the good news from anyone. Talk to everyone, and trust in the promised power of the Spirit to give you the words you should say. Let them make the decision to accept or reject your invitation. Over time, the Lord will put into your path those who are seeking the truth. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep, and they will know His voice, spoken through you, and they will follow Him (see John 10).

President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "It will be a great day when our people not only pray for the missionaries throughout the world, but ask the Lord to help them

to assist the missionaries who are laboring in their own ward" ("Missionary Service," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 19).

### **Lead by example**

Second, leaders must lead by example. The Spirit will prompt and guide you in finding those interested in our message. Your personal worthiness will give you the courage and the spiritual power to inspire your members to actively help the missionaries.

### *Leadership of a branch president in Maine*

Some years ago a faithful convert, Brother George McLaughlin, was called to preside over a small branch of 20 members in Farmingdale, Maine. He was a humble man who drove a milk delivery truck for a living. Through his fasting and earnest prayer, the Spirit taught him what he and the members of his branch needed to do to help the Church grow in their area. Through his great faith, constant prayer, and powerful example, he taught his members how to share the gospel. It's a marvelous story—one of the great missionary stories of this dispensation. In just one year there were 450 convert baptisms in the branch. The next year there were an additional 200 converts. President McLaughlin indicated, "My job as branch president was to teach [the new converts] how to be Mormons. I had to teach them how to give talks and lessons in church. I had to teach them how to teach the gospel to their children. I trained the new members to become strong members." Pretty simple.

Just five years later the Augusta Maine Stake was organized. Much of the leadership of that new stake came from those converts in the Farmingdale Branch. Now we might ask why there was such great success in those days, and the answer may be because of the urgent need to strengthen the Church. Let me assure you that that

same urgency in all units of the Church is every bit as critical today as it was then.

*Missionary work is centered in the ward*

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have made it clear that missionary work is to be centered in the ward. Stake presidents and bishops have the responsibility and accountability to help members find the pure in heart and prepare them for baptism and for a life of service within their wards and stakes. President Hinckley has also said, "I would like to suggest that every bishop in the Church give as a motto to his people, 'Let's all work to grow the ward'" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106).

*Use of a ward council in Washington*

One bishop in the state of Washington has prayerfully followed that counsel. This is what he is doing. Through priesthood and auxiliary leaders, the ward council coordinates missionary work in the ward. Missionaries are invited to ward council meetings to discuss their work. Members are assigned to attend investigator visits with the missionaries. Members and missionaries also visit less-active and part-member families together. Last year this ward baptized and confirmed 46 new members, and retention of those members is very high. Those who come into the Church or who return to activity in this ward already have friends because the priesthood and auxiliaries are involved in the conversion process by direction of the bishop through the ward council (see "Ward Council Is Secret of Centralia Ward Success," *Church News*, 1 Feb. 2003, 5).

*Engage the whole ward in missionary work*

Bishops, engage the whole ward in proclaiming the gospel. You will see that

the Lord will bless you and your members with many more converts and many more who will return to full activity. Missionary work should not only be on the ward council agendas but also on elders quorum; Relief Society; and other quorum, group, and auxiliary agendas. Emphasis should be placed on baptizing and retaining in activity fathers and mothers along with their children. Thus the missionary work of priesthood and auxiliary leaders should be coordinated by the ward mission leader and the bishop through the ward council. As we do so, converts will be fully active members in their wards.

Right now, members have a special opportunity to share the gospel by using the *Finding Faith in Christ* DVD that was enclosed with your April 2003 *Ensign* magazine. Invite your neighbors and friends to spend an evening with you during the Easter season, sharing together the life, ministry, and glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It may also be appropriate to have the missionaries attend with you and teach how the Lord has restored His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

**Missionary work requires faith and love**

Third, member missionary work does not require the development of strategies or gimmicks. It does require faith—real faith and trust in the Lord. It also requires genuine love. The first great commandment is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

So let the power of love guide us in sharing the gospel with family members, friends, neighbors, business associates, and any other people we encounter as we go through life. Most everyone wants to enjoy peace and happiness. That is a natu-



ral human desire. People want to find answers to the problems they face. This is increasingly true in the world we now live in.

Professional advancement, increased income, bigger homes, or newer cars and recreational equipment do not bring lasting peace and happiness. Happiness comes from understanding God and knowing that He has a plan for our eternal joy and peace. Happiness comes from knowing and loving the Savior and living our lives in accordance with His teachings. Happiness comes from strong family and Church relationships based on gospel values.

Some members say, "I'm afraid to share the gospel because I might offend someone." Experience has shown that people are not offended when the sharing is motivated by the spirit of love and concern. How could anyone be offended when we say something like this: "I love the way my church helps me" and then add whatever the Spirit directs. It's when we appear only to be fulfilling an assignment and we fail to express real interest and love that we offend others.

Don't ever forget, brothers and sisters, that you and I have in our possession the very points of doctrine that will bring people to the Lord. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ has within it the power to bring deep and abiding happiness to the human soul—something that will be valued and cherished for the rest of time and for all eternity. We are not just trying to get people to join our Church; we are sharing with them the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. But as powerful as our message is, it cannot be imposed or forced on people. It can be shared—heart to heart, soul to soul, spirit to spirit—only by being good neighbors and by caring and showing love. We need to be watchful for one another and reach out to one another. And as we do so, we will radiate the gospel in our

own lives, and it will radiate to the people the blessings the gospel has to offer.

Let us follow the admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "After all that has been said, [our] greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel" (*History of the Church*, 2:478).

We can and we must do better, brothers and sisters. I pray that the Lord will grant to each of us the faith and courage to increase our participation in supporting our full-time missionaries in sharing the restored gospel with all of God's children throughout the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, Elder Ballard.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Duane B. Gerrard of the Seventy.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### The importance of the family

In a world of turmoil and uncertainty, it is more important than ever to make our families the center of our lives and the top of our priorities. Families lie at the center of our Heavenly Father's plan. This statement from "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" declares the responsibilities of parents to their families:

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."<sup>1</sup>

In recent meetings with the First Presidency, they have expressed concern about the deterioration of the family. Their mandate to the Priesthood Executive Council was to concentrate on the family in our assignments.

In response to the First Presidency's concern, many plans and efforts are already in place. We will use all of the resources we have to encourage greater harmony, greater love, and greater influence in the Lord's special designated unit—the family.

### Make the home a place of refuge

We need to make our homes a place of refuge from the storm, which is increasing in intensity all about us. Even if the smallest openings are left unattended, negative influences can penetrate the very walls of our homes. Let me cite an example.

Several years ago I was having dinner with my daughter and her family. The

scene is all too common in most homes with small children. My daughter was trying to encourage her young, three-year-old son to eat a balanced meal. He had eaten all the food on his plate that he liked. A small serving of green beans remained, which he was not fond of. In desperation, the mother picked up a fork and tried to encourage him to eat his beans. He tolerated it just about as long as he could. Then he exclaimed, "Look, Mom, don't foul up a good friendship!"

Those were the exact words he heard on a television commercial a few days earlier. Oh, what impact advertising, television programs, the Internet, and the other media are having on our family units!

### Church media resources to help families

We remind you that parents are to preside over their own families.

Helps and reminders will come from the Church Internet site and television channels, as well as through priesthood and auxiliary leadership, to assist you as we strive to fulfill our family responsibilities.

#### *Family-oriented television programs*

In some of the zones of the world, we have an alternative to commercial television networks and some of their antifamily programming. We have BYU Television, which presents family-oriented programs. In addition to programs that bring gospel teaching, there are programs directed to parent instruction and family entertainment. We will also be striving to increase the quality and frequency of our family-centered Home Front public service spots.

#### *The Church's Web site*

We have other helps covering a wider area than the television network. One such help is the Church Web site, [lds.org](http://lds.org). It has

recently been updated to include a new home and family page. The page includes thoughts from the scriptures and Church leaders to strengthen the family. It also includes ideas for family activities. A new home and family section provides:

- Teachings from Church leaders specifically for the family.
- Ideas for family activities.
- Family home evening quick tips to help you have meaningful and enjoyable family home evenings.
- Featured articles on topics such as making family home evenings more successful, strengthening the relationship between husband and wife, and ideas for feeling closer as family members.

As the site is updated, additional ideas for planning family home evenings will appear. One of these will offer suggestions for activities for Faith in God, Duty to God, and Personal Progress programs.

#### *Church magazines and Church News*

We do have one media source that reaches the entire Church—it is our wonderful Church magazines. These magazines come into our homes regularly and are another way of delivering information to help strengthen the family.

Perhaps you noticed in the March *Ensign* and *Liahona*—the international magazine—a message from President Gordon B. Hinckley on family home evenings:

“We have a family home evening program once a week [Monday night] across the Church in which parents sit down with their children. They study the scriptures. They talk about family problems. They plan family activities and things of that kind. I don’t hesitate to say if every family in the world practiced that one thing, you’d see a very great difference in the solidarity of the families of the world” (interview, *Boston Globe*, 14 Aug. 2000).<sup>2</sup>

Following President Hinckley’s encouragement for us to hold family home evenings, the next article in the *Ensign*

was entitled “The Calling I Didn’t Know I Had”:

“Family home evening was challenging when our children were young. My husband and I took seriously the latter-day prophets’ counsel to hold regular family home evenings, but between our Church callings and other responsibilities, we too often found there wasn’t time or energy to plan an effective, loving family home evening when Monday night came around.

“While visiting Primary one Sunday I noticed how captivated the children were by the stories, visual aids, and brief but effective activities planned for sharing time and music time. I was also absorbed in learning from the well-prepared efforts the Primary counselor and music leader put into their callings. ‘They obviously spent adequate time mingled with lots of love,’ I thought. ‘They do wonderful things in their callings.’

“Just then a thought came to mind: ‘Family home evening is one of your callings. In fact, it is part of your most important calling—motherhood!’ I reflected on that insight. ‘If I can make the time to magnify my callings as newsletter editor and visiting teacher, I can surely magnify my family home evening calling.’”<sup>3</sup>

What a wonderful thought she has brought to us to encourage us to be more effective in our planning for this special night set aside for the family.

We can also alert you to the fact that our June issues of the Church magazines will be dedicated to a family theme. In addition, throughout the year there will be issues of the *Liahona*, *Ensign*, *New Era*, and *Friend* containing materials for teaching in the home. There will be wonderful suggestions for family home evenings and ideas for everyday teaching moments. The articles are written so they can easily be adapted for lessons for your family.

Children and youth are shown, through prophetic words and through living examples, the importance of loving and honoring their parents. Parents are taught ways

of building and maintaining close family ties, both in good times and in difficult times. The good spirit in these magazines will help fill your homes with warmth, love, and the strength of the gospel.

The *Church News* is also helping to spread the message of the family. It has articles on strengthening love and respect in the home, putting the gospel in action, and planning wholesome recreation.

We hope that by flooding the Church with family-oriented media, members of the Church will be assisted and encouraged to build stronger and better families. We hope it will cause a conscious and sustained effort in building an eternal family unit. An abundance of Church materials will be available for you from which to pick and choose useful ideas. At least by seeing family issues mentioned so often, we all will be reminded to focus our attention on the most important organization the Lord has established here on earth.

### **Adam and Eve learn importance of family**

From the very beginning the Lord has established the importance of the family organization for us. Soon after Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, the Lord spoke to them:

“The Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, [and] beareth record of the Father and the Son. . . .

“[Then] in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

“And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: [If it were] not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

“And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.”<sup>4</sup>

“President Brigham Young explained that our families are not yet ours. The Lord has committed them to us to see how we will treat them. Only if we are faithful will they be given to us forever. What we do on earth determines whether or not we will be worthy to become heavenly parents.”<sup>5</sup>

### **The Sabbath is a special time for families**

The Church has established two special times for families to be together. The first is centered around the proper observance of the Sabbath day. This is the time we are to attend our regular meetings together, study the life and teachings of the Savior and of the prophets. “Other appropriate Sunday activities include (1) writing personal and family journals, (2) holding family councils, (3) establishing and maintaining family organizations for the immediate and extended family, (4) personal interviews between parents and children, (5) writing to relatives and missionaries, (6) genealogy, (7) visiting relatives and those who are ill or lonely, (8) missionary work, (9) reading stories to children, and (10) singing Church hymns.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Importance of family home evening**

The second time is Monday night. We are to teach our children in a well-organized, regular family home evening. No other activities should involve our family members on Monday night. This *designated* time is to be with our families.

We hope all of you have noticed the special emphasis the First Presidency has put on family home evenings. The First Presidency letter of October 4, 1999, was recently repeated in the magazines:

“To: Members of the Church throughout the World

“Dear Brothers and Sisters:

“Monday nights are reserved throughout the Church for family home evenings. We encourage members to set aside this time to strengthen family ties and teach the gospel in their homes.

“Earlier this year we called on parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. We also counseled parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities.

“We urge members, where possible, to avoid holding receptions or other similar activities on Monday evenings. Where practical, members may also want to encourage community and school leaders to avoid scheduling activities on Monday evenings that require children or parents to be away from their homes.

“Church buildings and facilities should be closed on Monday evenings. No ward or stake activities should be planned, and other interruptions to family home evenings should be avoided.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Build a gospel-centered home**

May it be our resolve this year to build a gospel-centered home, a safe harbor from the storms of the adversary. Let us again remember the promises and instructions from the Lord to His children:

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

“And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

“But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.”<sup>8</sup>

May this be our year for enjoying the light and truth of the gospel in our homes. May our homes truly become places of refuge from the world is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. “Family Home Evening,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 3.
3. Jan Whitley Hansen, “The Calling I Didn’t Know I Had,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 6.
4. See Moses 5:4–5, 9–12.
5. *Gospel Principles* [manual, 1997], 231.
6. “Suggestions for Individual and Family Sabbath-Day Activities,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1980, 76.
7. *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 4.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36–37, 39–40.

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The choir sang “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide.”

Elder Duane B. Gerrard offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 173rd Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 5, 2003. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Bluffdale, Riverton, and Herriman, Utah. Thomas

Waldron directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Hinckley, who presides at this session, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct the exercises.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the entire world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Bluffdale, Riverton, and Herriman, Utah, under the direction of Thomas Waldron, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Hark, All Ye Nations!” Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Hark, All Ye Nations!”

Elder Lynn G. Robbins offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing that old favorite “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” following which Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder Daryl H. Garn of the Seventy and Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

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The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

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## **Elder David B. Haight**

What a tremendous sight to look out at this Conference Center filled to capacity and think of the buildings all over the world filled with the priesthood. Probably this would be the largest gathering of the priesthood in the history of the Church. I would imagine that would be true because we continue to grow every year.

### **First experience with the priesthood**

My first brush with the priesthood was when I was baptized. I was baptized in an irrigation canal in the little town of Oakley, Idaho. I was with my friends on the bank of that irrigation canal. We had on our bib swimming suits, which consisted of bib overalls with the legs cut out so you wouldn't sink and holes cut in the pockets. We had never seen a swimming suit made out of knit or of other fabric. My father came out from the First Ward meeting-house with his counselors. He was carrying

a chair, and he put the chair on the side of the irrigation ditch. My father said, “David, come on over here; we're going to baptize you.”

I dove in the canal and swam over to the other side, shivering. It was in September and a little cold, and young boys get the shivers, you know, when you have only bib overalls on. My father got down into the canal. As I remember, he didn't take his shoes off or change anything but was just in his regular clothes. He showed me how to hold my hands, and then he baptized me. After I came up out of the water, we both crawled up on the bank of the canal. I sat in the chair, and they put their hands on my head and confirmed me a member of the Church. After that I dove in the canal and went over on the other side and joined my friends.

This was my first experience, really, with the priesthood.

## **The power and authority of God**

I would remind you that the priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man. Let me say that again: The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man. Here in these assemblies tonight, we have those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, the lesser priesthood, and the Melchizedek Priesthood, the higher priesthood. Isn't it interesting to visualize how the Lord and His Heavenly Father, in setting up the plan of salvation, organized it so that men could be worthy enough and could be honored to hold the priesthood and join in the large army of men necessary to bring about the eternal purposes of our Heavenly Father, to bring about the immortality and eternal life of man—mankind everywhere? What a mighty group that would entail!

## **Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities**

A few years after I had been baptized, becoming better acquainted with some duties in the Church, I was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. My father, who had baptized me, had died in the meantime of a heart attack, so the bishop conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon me and ordained me to the office of a deacon. I remember that I had a wonderful feeling about that as he conferred the priesthood upon me, that I now had responsibilities and would be accountable for my actions and would have things to learn to do as I would progress through life. I did have a special feeling that I now was a little different, that I wouldn't be exactly the same as friends who did not hold the priesthood or people that you would meet out in the world. I now had some responsibilities, things we would learn on Sundays in church as we would sit around the old coal stove down in the basement of the meetinghouse.

On Saturdays we would clean out the church, fill the coal buckets with coal, and see that the building was ready for Sunday

meetings. We had things to do in the lesser priesthood, in all the temporal affairs of the ward—collecting fast offerings and doing duties for the bishop. He and other leaders would teach us about the Aaronic Priesthood and the office of a deacon, then a teacher, and then, of course, a priest as we would advance in the priesthood. It seemed to me that I was developing an interesting understanding, a vision of the work to be done, and that I personally had some responsibility, even though I was just a young boy in a little country town. There was something very important about it.

## **Preparation for the higher priesthood**

When I was 11 years old, my father died, and at his funeral I was very touched as I heard the people speaking about what a kind man he had been. At the cemetery as they were lowering the casket down in the grave and starting to throw those shovels full of dirt and rocks down on the casket, I stood watching, thinking he was my hero, and I wondered what would ever happen to me having lost my father. I saw good men exercising the priesthood and doing what was right—the men who had helped in digging the grave and taking care of things—and I saw a good man push a five-dollar bill back into the hands of my mother, who had offered him some money for helping to dig the grave. He pushed that money back toward my mother and said, “No, you keep it because you will need this later on.”

And so I would like to declare to all of you in these assemblies tonight, in the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood, isn't it interesting to see the wisdom of our Heavenly Father and His Son in putting all of these things together, how in the lesser priesthood we learn to do the temporal chores? We'll have temporal duties, learning in a humble, simple way those things that need to be done. This will teach us of service and of living the commandments of the Lord, preparing

us so that we someday will be advanced to the Melchizedek Priesthood, with all of the majesty and the eternal glory that that entails.

### **Maintaining standards of the priesthood**

Those Aaronic Priesthood years were interesting years in my life. I was always learning new things and always getting a little broader concept and feeling about the gospel and our responsibility in carrying this message out to all the world. In that process we learned to mingle with other people. Sometimes we have the feeling that people might not accept us because we have higher standards. There are things that we don't do. We have the Word of Wisdom, which helps us to live a healthier life, a type of life that is conducive to our growing into manhood and having the standards and ideals and a way of living that most of the world would like to have. I found that if you live the way you should live, people notice it and are impressed with your beliefs, and then you have an influence on other people's lives. When they find out that they don't have to indulge in the smoking or the drinking or the pot—the drugs that are affecting the world so negatively—the fact that you don't do that has an influence on those people.

Maintaining your standards qualifies you for marriage in the temple. Incidentally, this is the 173rd Annual General Conference of the Church, and my wife and I have been married 73 years. So the year we were married, the Church was holding the 100th annual conference. I can remember that as I was holding Ruby's hand across the altar of the temple—listening to the words of the sealing ceremony—I had a special feeling in my heart, not only of the sacredness of it but of the responsibility I had to live as I should live, to take care of her and our children, and then our grandchildren, and then the other generations that would come along. I was determined to set an example of liv-

ing the way a person can live in honoring the priesthood and our marriage covenant.

### **Responsibilities of priesthood holders**

Tonight while we meet as priesthood holders, just think of the responsibility each one of us has as we consider what has to come about in this world—probably new things that we are not aware of today—after this war is over and things have been put back the way they should be. There's so much for us to do. For us to do it, we need to be worthy of the priesthood that we have so we can help in leading out as the Church moves on, perhaps in a broader way than we've ever done before. What a day that will be!

A few years ago, when I was in the navy during World War II, I received orders to report to the fleet headquarters at Pearl Harbor. My family took me to Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay, where I boarded the plane there, an old sea plane called a Pan-American clipper. On board that plane were some high-ranking medical officers going out to prepare and build up the hospital support because the battle of Tarawa would be taking place within a few weeks. Because of my rank, I was assigned to sleep in a sleeping bag out in the tail of that plane, where I could see the starboard engines as we were flying over San Francisco, which was under military blackout. It was black as we were flying out over the Pacific, and I thought the starboard engine on that old Pan-American plane was on fire. I couldn't sleep as I watched it throughout the entire flight.

During that sleepless night I wondered about my own life and whether I had been living up to the opportunities that would be mine and the responsibility that would be mine as a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood—the responsibility to be an example and to live the way I should so that I would be able to fulfill the calls that might come to me. In that sleepless night I took an inventory of myself, of my atti-



tudes, wondering if I was doing all that I might. Even though I had always accepted my Church assignments, I wondered if I was fulfilling them with all of my heart, might, mind, and soul and living up to the responsibility, the blessing, that I received as a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood and what would be expected of any of us who received this blessing.

Looking back on that sleepless night, I thank the Lord for His blessings today and for all that I have had the opportunity to be involved in. I try always to live the gospel to the fullest, to do everything I am called on to do with all of my heart, might, mind, and strength, to fulfill any call that might come to me so I may be qualified to do whatever I might be asked to do someday.

### **Resolve to live the way you should**

On this night when we are honoring the priesthood, you young men of the priesthood, resolve to live the way you

should. Don't be caught up in some of the silly things that are going on in the world, but bear in mind what has been given to you. I will repeat again, priesthood is the power and authority delegated to man by our Heavenly Father. The authority and the majesty of it are beyond our comprehension.

I bear you my witness, my testimony, that this work is true. I'm glad to be able, in the twilight of my life, to stand and bear witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, as I have witnessed it all the days of my life from my baptism on until the present time. I love the Lord. I love our Heavenly Father and this work. I bear witness to the truthfulness of this work.

And to all of you priesthood leaders, live as you should. We are different, and it is not good for you to be like everybody else because you hold the priesthood of God, with those great promises and blessings and expectations of you.

This work is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Daryl H. Garn**

### **Preparing for basketball—and missions**

At a recent stake conference, a returned missionary spoke on the subject of preparing for missionary service. He used the analogy of a father saying to his son, "I will be happy when you play in your first basketball game so you can learn to dribble and shoot the basketball." He compared that example to a father saying to his son, "I will be happy when you go on your mission so you can learn to be a good person and teach the gospel." This analogy had a significant impact on me as I reflected on my life.

When I was a young boy, my greatest desire was to play basketball. Fortunately I had a father who was anxious to see that his son's desire was met. Dad and I would

practice the basics of passing and dribbling the basketball hour after hour in our small kitchen. I would listen to college basketball games on the radio and dream of playing college ball someday. Serving a mission was far from my mind at that time; consequently, I spent very little effort in missionary preparation.

In an attempt to ensure some balance in my life, my dad—who had not held a Church calling in many years—accepted the call to serve as my Scoutmaster. He operated by the book, and due to his diligence some of my friends and I became Eagle Scouts. I realize now that Scouting is great preparation for a mission.

My boyhood dream came true when I made the basketball team at Utah State University. During my second year at Utah

State, a returned missionary befriended me. Because of his example I began looking at my associates at school, including those on the basketball team, and realized that the people I most wanted to be like were those who had served missions. With the kind and loving mentoring of my good friend—and, I am sure, as a result of my mother's prayers and good example—my desires changed. After my second year at Utah State, I was called to serve in the Western Canadian Mission.

Three months into my mission, a new missionary from Idaho was assigned to be my companion. We had been together only a few days when I realized something very significant: my new companion knew the gospel, while I only knew the discussions. How I wished that I had prepared to be a missionary as hard as I had prepared to be a basketball player. My companion had prepared for his mission throughout his life and was immediately a valuable member of the team. How important it is for fathers and sons to work together on the basics in preparing for a mission.

I believe it is appropriate to compare the game of basketball to missionary work. The game of basketball includes not only the time you compete with another team on the court but also the hours of proper training and practice. The great work of saving souls is not limited to the two years that you serve a mission but, rather, requires years of righteous living and preparation in order to meet the standard for full-time missionary service.

### **Raising the standard for missionaries**

On January 11, 2003, as part of the worldwide leadership training broadcast, President Gordon B. Hinckley instructed priesthood leaders regarding missionary work. His remarks have caused each of us to reflect on our individual responsibility to share the gospel. President Hinckley said, "The time has come when we must raise the standards of those who are called

to serve as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world" ("Missionary Service," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17).

### *Early preparation of missionaries*

There are two aspects of raising the standard for missionary service that we would do well to consider. The first is early preparation of young men and women. In their letter introducing some modifications to the Young Men and Young Women programs, the First Presidency said, "As youth work on these goals, they will develop skills and attributes that will lead them to the temple and prepare them for a lifetime of service to their families and the Lord" (First Presidency letter, 28 Sept. 2001). Listen carefully to their words: "develop skills and attributes." As parents and leaders of youth, we need to help our young people identify these skills and attributes.

### *Personal worthiness of missionaries*

The second aspect is personal worthiness, which comes through keeping the commandments of God. Some young men have had the notion that they can break the commandments, confess to their bishops one year before they plan to go on a mission, and then be worthy to serve. The repentance process is far more than planned confession followed by a waiting period. We often hear this question of one who has transgressed: "How long will I have to wait before I can go on my mission?" Keep in mind that repentance is not simply a waiting game. The Savior said: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Now is the time to kindle that fire. President Hinckley has said, "We simply cannot permit those who have not qualified themselves as to worthiness to go into

the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17). We now understand from the First Presidency’s statement on missionary work that there are transgressions that will disqualify young men and women from missionary service (see “Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002).

President James E. Faust said: “There need to be some absolutes in life. There are some things that should not ever be done, some lines that should never be crossed, vows that should never be broken, words that should never be spoken, and thoughts that should never be entertained” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 48).

The bar for missionary service has been raised. “Those individuals not able to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of full-time missionary work are honorably excused. . . . They may be called to serve in other rewarding capacities” (“Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002). We believe that by following the guidelines outlined by the First Presidency, there will be an increase in the number of full-time missionaries who are worthy and prepared to serve.

### Examples to follow

In sports we often have great athletes whom we admire, and we strive to develop skills to become like them. In our

spiritual lives we also have great examples to follow, the greatest being our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who responded to Thomas’s question, “How can we know the way?” (John 14:5).

The scriptures record Jesus saying, “I am the way” (John 14:6). In 2 Nephi we read: “Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?” (2 Nephi 31:10).

My young friends, there are many who are following “the way” of the Savior whom you can follow as your example as you prepare for missionary service. You will find them among your family, your friends, and your Church leaders. Even today I count as one of my greatest blessings those dear friends who set the proper example by following the Savior.

### Be the greatest generation of missionaries

It is my prayer that you young men will be diligent in your righteous desires, that you will be successful in all that you do, and that you will be, as Elder M. Russell Ballard has said, “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47).

I testify, as President Hinckley recently said of missionary service, that “there is no greater work. There is no more important work” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### And that’s the way it is

Good evening. I love to gather with bearers of the priesthood of God and enjoy the worldwide brotherhood we share and cherish. A special spirit arises from the expectation we will be instructed in

the plain and precious parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This evening my remarks will be directed to the young men of the Church. You who find yourselves in a different age category are welcome to listen.

During this past Christmas season, news correspondent Walter Cronkite participated with the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square in their Christmas concert. “He . . . spent 19 years as the anchorman for the ‘CBS Evening News.’ . . . [Mr. Cronkite] earned the reputation as ‘the most trusted man in America.’”<sup>1</sup> When asked how he would want to be remembered, his response was, “Oh, as a fellow who did his best.”<sup>2</sup> Over his distinguished career, Mr. Cronkite concluded each news report with the phrase, “And that’s the way it is.” Tonight let’s talk about the way it is.

### **Repetitive reminders**

At a recent stake conference, the stake president shared a story with me. He asked his son what was discussed at a recent Sunday evening fireside. The young man replied, “Raising the bar.” He then informed his father that he was weary of the theme because it was the subject of every recent class and meeting. My first thought was, “That’s great; the prophet’s message is being discussed, heard, and acted upon.” My second thought related to the young man’s feelings concerning repetitive reminders. Repetitive reminders can be an irritant when we are trying hard to do our best.

As a youth I would tune out my mother’s repetitive reminder: “David, remember who you are.” The reminder always brought some interesting comments from my friends. Irritation set in when my father repeatedly pointed out President George Albert Smith’s home as we traveled along 13th East in Salt Lake City and reminded me that a living prophet of God who loved me lived there. Today I am most grateful for those repetitive reminders.

### **Qualifying for spiritual events in our lives**

The term “raising the bar” is often used in the world of sports to describe achieving higher levels of performance.

The use of a sports metaphor may help describe why it is critical to respond to what President Hinckley asked us to do last conference when he said: “I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge [Elder Ballard] has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

A year ago we experienced a wonderful Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. For most Olympic events, athletes must attain minimum levels of achievement in order to qualify to compete. Our lives are similar to the Olympic qualification process in that we need to achieve and maintain standards in order to participate in the important *spiritual* events of life. World-class athletes have a disciplined daily routine. They master the skills demanded by their sport. Only then can they qualify to participate in the contest. And that’s the way it is.

Young men, if you want to be world class and qualified to be participants in the really important events of life like priesthood ordinations, blessings of the temple, and missionary service, you too must develop a disciplined daily routine of honesty, virtue, study, and prayer. And that’s the way it is.

### **The importance of obeying the rules**

Olympians know and understand the *rules* that govern their sport. Broken rules can bring severe penalties and even disqualification. At the last Olympics, failure to observe rules associated with performance-enhancing drugs brought medal forfeiture. One of the harshest penalties levied on an athlete occurs in the game of golf. Just signing a scorecard with an incorrect score entered for any one of the 18 holes brings *disqualification*. There is *zero* tolerance. It doesn’t matter if the error benefits or hurts the individual; the penalty is the same—*disqualification*.

After more than 50 years, I can still hear the words of a tournament official: "Sorry, son, we must disqualify you for signing an incorrect scorecard." My disqualification came as a result of my mentioning to the official that I needed to correct my score. For weeks I said to myself, "Why didn't I remain silent? Besides, the error was an innocent mistake. The total score was correct." Though my performance was good enough to find me in the winner's circle, I left the awards presentation empty-handed. And that's the way it is.

My young friends, rules are important, even critical. In life there are also penalties, perhaps even disqualification, if rules are broken. Our participation in life's important events may be jeopardized if we fail to follow the rules contained in our Father in Heaven's commands. Involvement in sexual sin, illegal drugs, civil disobedience, or abuse could keep us on the sidelines at key times. You would do well to view rules as *safety restraints*, not as *chains that bind*. Obedience builds strength. And that's the way it is.

In 1834 the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded, "No month ever found me more busily engaged than November; but as my life consisted of activity and unyielding exertions, I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*"<sup>4</sup>

### **A superb support team for youth**

For some, sports are a business. The difference between winning and losing can be a substantial amount of money. Athletes hire agents to handle their business affairs. Agents, personal trainers, coaches, and managers assist the athlete to enhance performance.

Our Father in Heaven has provided His precious young sons with a superb support team more than equal to the one used by the athlete. Our parents make *superb agents*. They look after our interests. They are not only interested in us, but be-

cause they love us, they are terrific consultants as well.

The Apostle Paul in teaching the Colossians said, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). In addition to our parents, think about the vast support network that has been provided to enhance our *spiritual* performance. Our bishops serve as *personal trainers* and use their sacred priesthood keys to bless our lives. Seminary teachers, quorum advisers, and home teachers round out the support team which has been assembled by the Lord to help us prepare for the big games of life. As you follow and obey, your performance will steadily improve. When the Lord commands, do it. And that's the way it is.

### **Focusing on what is truly important**

One of the defining differences between the good and the great is what sports psychologists call *focus*. Competitors who have the ability to set aside the unimportant and be completely attentive to that which is critical are able to improve their performance. Focus is a critical success factor.

I overheard a conversation between golfing great Arnold Palmer and a young caddie he was using for the first time. The young caddie, while handing Mr. Palmer his club, told him the distance to the flag was 165 yards, there was an unseen stream on the left, and a long and treacherous rough on the right. In a very kind but firm way, Mr. Palmer reminded the young man that the only information he required was the distance to the hole. He further suggested he didn't want to lose focus by worrying about what was on the right or left.

It is easy to lose sight of the really important objectives of life. There is much to distract us. Some are floundering in the water hazards on the left, and others are finding the long, treacherous rough on the right insurmountable. Safety and success

come when focus is maintained on the important opportunities found by driving the ball straight down the middle—priesthood advancement, temple worthiness, and missionary service. And that’s the way it is.

May our Father in Heaven bless each one of you. I testify to one and all that Jesus is the Christ. He lives, and His love for us is perfect. I’m grateful for a great prophet who helps us understand that when the Lord commands, do it, because that’s the way it is. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Walter Cronkite: A Lifetime Reporting the News,” *Voices from The Smithsonian*

*Associates*, Internet, [www.smithsonianassociates.org/programs/cronkite/cronkite.htm](http://www.smithsonianassociates.org/programs/cronkite/cronkite.htm).

2. Kira Albin, “That’s the Way It Is . . . with Walter Cronkite,” *Grand Times*, Internet, [www.grandtimes.com/cronkite.html](http://www.grandtimes.com/cronkite.html).
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 57.
4. *History of the Church*, 2:170.

#### President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “Sweet is the Work.” It will then be my opportunity to speak to you.

## President James E. Faust

### The Devil’s Throat

My dear brethren of the priesthood, tonight I address my remarks to all of you, but in particular to the young men. My purpose is to instruct and warn you of dangers that lie ahead, but I also want to express my love for you and the great confidence I have in you as the rising generation.

As a young man I served a mission to Brazil. It was a marvelous experience. One of the wonders of the world in that great country is Iguaçu Falls. In the flood season, the volume of water spilling over the brink is the largest in the world. Every few minutes, millions of gallons of water cascade into the chasm below. One part of the falls, where the deluge is the heaviest, is called the Devil’s Throat.

There are some large rocks standing just above, before the water rushes down into the Devil’s Throat. Years ago, reckless boatmen would take passengers in canoes to stand on those rocks and look down into the Devil’s Throat. The water above the falls is usually calm and slow moving,

and the atmosphere tranquil. Only the roar of the water below forewarns of the danger lurking just a few feet away. A sudden, unexpected current could take a canoe into the rushing waters, over the cliff, and down into the Devil’s Throat. Those foolish enough to leave the canoes to stand on these treacherous wet rocks could so easily lose their footing and be swept away into the swirling currents below.

### The only safe course

I recognize that some of you think of yourselves as daredevils, ready to take on almost any challenge. But some of these excursions for excitement will inevitably take you down into the Devil’s Throat. The only safe course is to stay well away from the dangers of the Devil’s Throat. President George Albert Smith strongly cautioned, “If you cross to the devil’s side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter’s power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Some of you young men may be letting others set your standards. You defend this by saying, “Who said we shouldn’t do this or we shouldn’t do that?” There are so many shades of right and wrong that each of you has to decide where the line will be. I strongly urge you that if there is any question in your minds or hearts about whether your personal conduct is right or wrong, don’t do it. Each of us has moral agency, and the gift of the Holy Ghost will sharpen our impressions of what is right and wrong, true and false. It is the responsibility of the prophets of God to teach the word of God, not to spell out every jot and tittle of human conduct. If we are conscientiously trying to avoid not only evil but the very appearance of evil, we will act for ourselves and not be acted upon.<sup>2</sup>

### **The opposing forces of good and evil**

Much of what comes from the devil is alluring and enticing. It glitters and is appealing to the sensual parts of our nature. His message sounds so reasonable and easy to justify. His voice is usually smooth and intriguing. If it were harsh or discordant, nobody would listen, nobody would be enticed. Some of Satan’s most appealing messages are: Everyone does it; if it doesn’t hurt anybody else, it’s all right; if you feel there is no harm in it, it’s okay; it’s the “cool” thing to do. Satan is the greatest imitator, the master deceiver, the arch counterfeiter, and the greatest forger ever in the history of the world. He comes into our lives as a thief in the night. His disguise is so perfect that it is hard to recognize him or his methods. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

There have always been two great competing forces in the world. These began before the world was created. These opposing forces are the forces of good and evil. Between these two powerful forces each of us is caught in a tug-of-war. In simple terms, that which is good comes from God, and that which is evil comes from

the devil.<sup>3</sup> You can’t have it both ways and find true happiness; some have tried, but in the long run all have failed. If any of you young men think you can have it both ways, you are only deceiving yourselves. It doesn’t work that way. It never has. It never will.

### **Everything has a price**

My dear young friends, there is another great truth that you young men must learn. It is that everything has a price. There is a price to pay for success, fulfillment, accomplishment, and joy. There are no freebies. If you don’t pay the price that is needed for success, you will pay the price of failure. Preparation, work, study, and service are required to achieve and find happiness. Disobedience and lack of preparation carry a terrible price tag.

As priesthood holders of this Church, part of the price we need to pay is to live differently from the world. We are the possessors and custodians of these commanding powers which can and do roll back the power of Satan on the earth. With all my heart I urge you to please help us push back the world. We must stand against the wind. Sometimes we must be unpopular and simply say, “This is not right.”

All of us want to find out who we really are and what our place is in the world. Some of you young people are trying to find your identity by being different from your parents and families in what they stand for. God made each of us to be different from anyone else in the world, as our DNA and fingerprints prove. You don’t have to work at having a separate identity; you already have one.

### **The consequences of disobedience**

Some young people want to rebel against restraints. Some of you think it isn’t “cool” to be obedient to your parents or to follow the counsel of your bishop

or quorum president. Bishop Richard C. Edgley shared an experience he had as a young boy about the consequences of being reckless and disobedient:

“When I was a young boy, our garage and the neighbor’s garage were about five feet apart. The neighbor’s garage was very old and dilapidated, and some of the boards were breaking. I, on occasion, would climb onto our garage and jump from one garage to the other and play on top of them. My father had told me, ‘Stay off the garages,’ but I didn’t. One time when I was playing on them, I jumped from our garage and fell through the roof of the neighbor’s garage, scraping my back and legs badly. Because I had been disobedient, I foolishly decided not to tell anyone that I had hurt myself. I went in the house and washed the scrapes and scratches as well as I could, but I couldn’t reach the ones on my back to put antiseptic on them or even wash them clean. I bore the burden of pain, worry over infection setting in, and guilt for several days while the healing process took place.”<sup>4</sup>

As someone once said, “One of the best things in the world to be is a boy; it requires no experience, but needs some practice to be a good one.”<sup>5</sup>

Some of you may have been deceived by thinking that you can find excitement by dabbling in drugs, alcohol, pornography, and illicit sex. I warn you that such enticements as these are slippery and dangerous like the rocks by the Devil’s Throat, and they will only lead you into Satan’s territory. The way out of that kind of danger is difficult and will leave you with far more than a few scrapes and scratches.

### **Be stronger spiritually to withstand evil**

You young men will be working out your eternal destiny at an interesting time. In the future there will continue to be an increase in scientific discoveries and inventions which will make life more comfortable and easier for many. No doubt

medical science will continue to find new treatments and cures not available now. In contrast, the worldly influences of evil will likely increase, and more people will become vulnerable to the deceit and enticement of Satan. You young men will need to become stronger spiritually and morally in order to withstand the temptations and snares of the world. Perhaps this is why such special spirits have been reserved for this time.

I also believe that in the future the opposition from Satan will be both more subtle and more open. While in some ways it may be more blatant, it will be masked with greater sophistication and cunning. We will need greater spirituality to perceive all the forms of evil and greater strength to resist it.

### **Warning to those serving in the military**

Many countries now face the dangers of terrorism. War exposes people to bodily harm, but there is also exposure to moral harm. Those of us who have served in the military in wartime have experienced the disruption in life that comes from being uprooted from home and family, wholesome associations, and the influence of the organized Church. I warn those who are now serving in the military, or who may do so, against the pitfalls of these disruptions. They can take us into the very jaws of the Devil’s Throat.

Many of the activities you will be engaged in are group situations where you cannot always choose your own company. But you can choose your standards. In the military you belong to an outfit where part of its strength comes from the unity of its members. You need to be loyal to the members of your unit because the fellow who is next to you may save your life tomorrow! But that doesn’t mean you have to lower your moral standards. In any association there needs to be one or more who stand up and say, “What we are do-



ing is not right.” It takes moral courage to do this!

The Church recently republished the servicemen’s edition of *Principles of the Gospel* for members of the Church serving in the military anywhere in the world. While it is now available only in English, it will be translated into other languages. This excellent resource contains instructions for Church activity and the wearing of the garment in the military, priesthood ordinances and blessings, gospel topics, and a few selected hymns. We had a similar resource available to those of us who served in the military in World War II. I found it to be invaluable.

### Sifting the wheat from the tares

There is a continuing sifting process going on. We are reminded of the parable of the wheat and the tares. In that parable the Lord said, “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field,” but while he slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the grain, so that when the blades of wheat sprouted, so did the weeds. The man’s workers did not understand how weeds got into the field and asked if they should go and pull the weeds. The owner of the field said no, because while you pull the weeds, you also pull up the grain. So he counseled that the grain and the weeds grow together until the time of harvest, when the wheat would be bundled separately from the weeds.<sup>6</sup>

The disciples of Jesus asked the Savior for an interpretation of the parable, and the Savior answered:

“He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

“The enemy that sowed them is the devil; . . . and the reapers are the angels.

“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.”<sup>7</sup>

This parable confirms the statement of Alma which I wish to repeat: “Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil.”<sup>8</sup>

### Stand firm and steady

Brethren, we are living in a challenging time, and it is a time for us to stand firm and steady in meeting our family and priesthood responsibilities. We should not be blown “like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”<sup>9</sup> We should go forward in a spirit of faith and not be fearful of anything except being too close to the Devil’s Throat. We will be strengthened and preserved if we follow the counsel and direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is at the helm. I have a special witness that he is our prophet, seer, and revelator. He is the mouthpiece of God on the earth today. I pray the Lord’s blessings to be with us all, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 43.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:13, 26.
3. See Alma 5:40.
4. “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Feb. 1995, 6.
5. Charles Dudley Warner, *Thesaurus of Quotations*, ed. Edmund Fuller (1941), 115.
6. Matthew 13:24–30.
7. Matthew 13:37–40.
8. Alma 5:40.
9. James 1:6.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Sweet Is the Work.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Let every man learn his duty

We are assembled this evening as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. Some hold the Aaronic Priesthood, while others bear the Melchizedek Priesthood.

President Stephen L. Richards, who served as a counselor to President David O. McKay, declared, "The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.'" He continues:

"This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.' . . . It is an instrument of service. . . . And the man who fails to use it is apt to lose it, for we are plainly told by revelation that he who neglects it 'shall not be counted worthy to stand.'" <sup>1</sup>

In the Pioneer Stake, located in Salt Lake City and where I received both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, we were taught to become familiar with the scriptures, including sections 20, 84, and 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In these sections we learn about priesthood and Church government.

Tonight I wish to emphasize one verse from section 107: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." <sup>2</sup>

President Harold B. Lee frequently taught: "When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand." <sup>3</sup>

We also learn from these sections the duties of quorum presidencies and the fact that we are responsible for others besides ourselves.

### Rescuing those who fall by the wayside

I firmly believe that the Church today is stronger than it has ever been. Activity levels of our youth testify that this is a generation of faith and devotion to truth. Yet there are some who drop by the wayside, who find other interests that persuade them to neglect their Church duties. We must not lose such precious souls.

There are growing numbers among the prospective elders who are not found in Church meetings or filling Church assignments. This situation can and must be remedied. The task is ours. Responsibility needs to be assigned and effort put forth without delay.

The presidencies of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, under the leadership of the bishopric and quorum advisers, can be empowered to reach out and rescue.

Said the Lord, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; . . . and how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!" <sup>4</sup>

### Gideon's overwhelming task

Sometimes the task appears overwhelming. We can take fresh courage from the experience of Gideon of old, who, with his modest force, was to do battle with the Midianites and the Amalekites. You will remember how Gideon and his army faced an overwhelming strength of forces vastly superior in equipment and in number. The book of Judges in the Old Testament records that the united enemy, the Midianites and the Amalekites, "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." <sup>5</sup> Gideon went to Almighty God for his strength.

To his surprise, Gideon was advised by the Lord that his forces were too many

in number for the Lord to deliver the enemy into their hands, lest they say, "Mine own hand hath saved me."<sup>6</sup> Gideon was instructed to proclaim to his people: "Who-soever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart . . . from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."<sup>7</sup>

Then the Lord said, "The people are yet too many."<sup>8</sup> He instructed Gideon to take the men to water to observe the manner in which they should drink of the water. Those who lapped the water were placed in one group, and those who bowed down upon their knees to drink were placed in another. The Lord said unto Gideon, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place."<sup>9</sup>

Gideon returned to his forces and said to them, "Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."<sup>10</sup> Then he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them:

"Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

"When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side . . . and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." He then said in effect, "Follow me." His exact words were, "As I do, so shall ye do."<sup>11</sup>

At the leader's signal, the host of Gideon did blow on the trumpets and did break the pitchers and did shout, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." The scripture records the outcome of this decisive battle: "And they stood every man in his place," and the victory was won.<sup>12</sup>

## Home teaching—a divine service

Home teaching is part of today's plan to rescue. When it was introduced by President David O. McKay to all of the General Authorities, he counseled:

"Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father's children. . . . [It] is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart."<sup>13</sup>

In certain areas where adequate Melchizedek Priesthood strength is missing, stake presidents and bishops, coordinating with the mission president, may use full-time missionaries to visit less-active and part-member families. Not only does this rekindle the missionary spirit in the home, but it also provides an ideal opportunity for quality referrals to be obtained.

## Examples of successful reactivation

Over the years as I have visited many stakes throughout the world, there have been those stakes where ward and stake leaders, out of necessity or in response to duty, stopped wringing their hands, rolled up their sleeves, and, with the Lord's help, went to work and brought precious men to qualify for the Melchizedek Priesthood and, with their wives and children, to enter the holy temple for their endowments and sealings. In brief form I will mention several examples.

On a visit to the Millcreek Stake in Salt Lake City some years ago, I learned that just over 100 brethren who were prospective elders had been ordained elders during the preceding year. I asked President James Clegg the secret of his success. Although he was too modest to take the credit, one of his counselors revealed that President Clegg, recognizing the challenge,

had undertaken to personally call and arrange a private appointment between him and each prospective elder. During the appointment, President Clegg would mention the temple of the Lord, the saving ordinances and covenants emphasized there, and would conclude with this question: "Wouldn't you desire to take your sweet wife and your precious children to the house of the Lord, that you might be a forever family throughout the eternities?" An acknowledgment followed, the reactivation process was pursued, and the goal was achieved.

In 1952 the majority of the families in the Rose Park Third Ward were members whose fathers or husbands held only the Aaronic Priesthood, rather than the Melchizedek Priesthood. Brother L. Brent Goates was called to serve as the bishop. He invited a less-active brother in the ward, Ernest Skinner, to assist in activating the 29 adult brethren in the ward who held the office of teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood and to help these men and their families get to the temple. As a less-active member himself, Brother Skinner was reluctant at first but finally indicated that he would do what he could. He began personally visiting with the less-active adult teachers, trying to help them see their role as priesthood leaders in their homes and as husbands and fathers to their families. He soon enlisted some of the less-active brethren to assist him in his assignment. One by one they became fully active again and took their families to the temple.

One day the ward clerk came out of a grocery checking line to greet the last of the group to go to the temple. Commenting on his position as the last, the man said, "I stood by and watched as all of that group became active in our ward and went to the temple. If only I had been able to imagine how beautiful it was in the temple, and how it would change my life forever, I never would have been the last of 29 to be sealed in the temple."

In each of these situations there were four elements which led them to success:

1. The reactivation opportunity was pursued at the ward level.
2. The bishop of the ward was involved.
3. Qualified and inspired teachers were provided.
4. Attention was given to each individual.

### **Reach out to those who need to be rescued**

Brethren, let us remember the counsel of King Benjamin: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."<sup>14</sup>

Let us reach out to rescue those who so need our help and lift them to the higher road and the better way. Let us focus our thinking on the needs of priesthood holders and their wives and children who have slipped from the path of activity. May we listen to the unspoken message from their hearts:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.  
Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.<sup>15</sup>

The work of reactivation is no task for the idler or dreamer. Children grow, parents age, and time waits for no man. Don't postpone a prompting; rather, act on it, and the Lord will open the way.

### **Patience is needed in activation efforts**

Frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required. As a bishop I felt prompted one day to call on a man whose wife was somewhat active, as were the children. This man, however, had never responded. It was a hot summer's day when I knocked on the screen door of Harold G. Gallacher. I could see Brother Gallacher sitting in his chair reading the newspaper. "Who is it?" he queried without looking up.

“Your bishop,” I replied. “I’ve come to get acquainted and to urge your attendance with your family at our meetings.”

“No, I’m too busy,” came the disdainful response. He never looked up. I thanked him for listening and departed the doorstep.

The Gallacher family moved to California shortly thereafter. The years went by. Then, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I was working in my office one day when my secretary called, saying, “A Brother Gallacher who once lived in your ward would like to talk to you. He’s here in my office.”

I responded, “Ask him if his name is Harold G. Gallacher, who, with his family, lived at Vissing Place on West Temple and Fifth South.”

She said, “He is the man.”

I asked her to send him in. We had a pleasant conversation together concerning his family. He told me, “I’ve come to apologize for not getting out of my chair and letting you in the door that summer day long years ago.” I asked him if he was active in the Church. With a wry smile, he replied, “I’m now second counselor in my ward bishopric. Your invitation to come out to church, and my negative response, so haunted me that I determined to do something about it.”

Harold and I visited together on numerous occasions before he passed away. The Gallachers and their children filled many callings in the Church. One of the youngest grandchildren is now serving a full-time mission.

### **Seeds may take time to root and flower**

To the many missionaries who may be listening this evening, I share the observation that the seeds of testimony frequently do not immediately take root and flower. Bread cast upon the water returns, at times, only after many days. But it does return.

I answered the ring of my telephone one evening to hear a voice ask, “Are you related to an Elder Monson who years ago served in the New England Mission?”

I answered that such was not the case. The caller introduced himself as a Brother Leonardo Gambardella and then mentioned that an Elder Monson and an Elder Bonner called at his home long ago and bore their testimonies to him and his wife. They had listened but had done nothing further to apply their teachings. Subsequently they moved to California, where, some 13 years later, they again found the truth and were converted and baptized. Brother Gambardella then asked if there were any way he could reach the elders who first had visited with them, that he might express his profound gratitude for their testimonies, which had remained with him and his wife.

I checked the records. I located the elders, now married with families of their own. Can you imagine their surprise when I telephoned them and told them the good news—even the culmination of their early efforts? They instantly remembered the Gambardellas. I arranged a conference telephone call so they could personally extend their congratulations and welcome them into the Church. They did. There were tears, but they were tears of joy.

Edwin Markham penned these lines:

There is a destiny that makes us  
brothers;

None goes his way alone:

All that we send into the lives of others  
Comes back into our own.<sup>16</sup>

### **Stand in your appointed place**

Tonight I pray that all of us who hold the priesthood may sense our responsibilities, that we, like Gideon of old, may stand every man in his appointed place and, as one, follow our Leader—even the Lord Jesus Christ—and His prophet, President

Gordon B. Hinckley. May we reach out and rescue those who have fallen by the wayside, that not one precious soul will be lost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
3. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 13.
5. Judges 7:12.
6. Judges 7:2.
7. Judges 7:3.
8. Judges 7:4.
9. Judges 7:7.
10. Judges 7:15.
11. Judges 7:17–18.
12. Judges 7:18, 21; see also Judges 6–7.
13. *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, rev. ed. (1967), ii–iii.
14. Mosiah 2:17.
15. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
16. “A Creed,” in James Dalton, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 464.

#### President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. Remind your wife to remind you.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Melchizedek Priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening. Following the remarks of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord’s prophet, this session will conclude with the choir singing “More Holiness Give Me.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Meeting in the bonds of brotherhood

There is not another meeting in all the world comparable to this meeting. Wherever we may be, whatever the language we speak, we are all men who have had hands laid upon our heads to receive the priesthood of God. Whether we be boys who have received the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, or men who have received the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, we each have had bestowed upon us something wonderful and magnificent, something of the very essence of godhood.

I repeat, there is no gathering in all the world like this. We meet together in the bonds of brotherhood, in a vast assemblage of men who have been endowed with a certain power or authority, honored

with the privilege of speaking and acting in the name of the Almighty. The Lord God of heaven has seen fit to confer upon us something of that which is uniquely His. I sometimes wonder if we are worthy of it. I wonder if we really appreciate it. I wonder about the infinity of this power and authority. It is concerned with life and death, with family and Church, with the great and transcendent nature of God Himself and His eternal work.

Brethren, I greet you as members of quorums of the holy priesthood. I greet you as servants of the living God, who has laid upon each of us a responsibility from which we must not and cannot shrink.

In harmony with that greeting, I have chosen to speak on various aspects of one word. That word is *loyalty*.

### **Loyalty to your best self**

I think of loyalty in terms of being true to ourselves. I think of it in terms of being absolutely faithful to our chosen companions. I think of it in terms of being absolutely loyal to the Church and its many facets of activity. I think of it in terms of being unequivocally true to the God of heaven, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must be true to the very best that is in us. We are sons of God, honored to hold His divine authority. But we live in a world of evil. There is a constant power pulling us down, inviting us to partake of those things which are totally inconsistent with the divine priesthood which we hold. It is interesting to observe how the father of lies, that wily son of the morning who was cast out of heaven, always has the means and capacity to entice, to invite, to gather to his ways those who are not strong and alert. Very recently a certain moving picture was acclaimed the best of the year. I have not seen it, nor do I anticipate doing so. But I am told that it is laden with sex, that the use of profanity runs throughout.

Pornography is one of the hallmarks of our time. Its producers grow rich on the gullibility of those who like to watch it. In the opening lines of the revelation which we call the Word of Wisdom, the Lord declares, "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

He then goes on to talk about the food we put into our mouths. The same language might be applied with reference to that which we take into our minds when we indulge in pornography.

Brethren, every man and boy within the sound of my voice knows what is de-

grading. You do not need a road map to foretell where indulgence will take you. Contrast that with the beauty, the peace, the wonderful feeling that comes of living near to the Lord and rising above the insidious narcotic practices that are all about us.

This applies to you, my dear boys who are in this meeting. You are particular targets for the adversary. If he can get you now, he knows he may win you for a lifetime. There has been implanted within you wondrous powers and instincts for a divine purpose. However, when these are perverted, they become destroyers rather than builders.

I am profoundly grateful for the strength of our youth. But I know also that some slip away from us. Every loss is a tragedy. The kingdom of our Lord needs you. Be worthy of it. Be loyal to your best selves. Never stoop to anything that would take from you the strength to abstain.

To you men I issue a challenge. Run from the tide of sleaze that would overcome you. Flee the evils of the world. Be loyal to your better self. Be loyal to the best that is in you. Be faithful and true to the covenants that are associated with the priesthood of God. You cannot wallow about in lasciviousness, you cannot lie, you cannot cheat, you cannot take advantage of others in unrighteousness without denying that touch of divinity with which each of us came into this life. I would pray with all of my strength, brethren, that we would rise above it and be loyal to our best selves.

### **Loyalty to your wife**

Be loyal in your family relationships. I have witnessed much of the best and much of the worst in marriage. Every week I have the responsibility of acting on requests for cancellation of temple sealings. Divorce has become a very common phenomenon throughout the world. Even where it is not legal, men and women simply step over

the line and live together. I am grateful to be able to say that divorce is much less frequent with those married in the temple. But even among these there is far more divorce than there should be.

The bride and groom come to the house of the Lord professing their love one for another. They enter into solemn and eternal covenants with each other and with the Lord. Their relationship is sealed in an eternal compact. No one expects every marriage to work out perfectly. But one might expect that every marriage in the house of the Lord would carry with it a covenant of loyalty one to another.

I have long felt that the greatest factor in a happy marriage is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion. In most cases selfishness is the leading factor that causes argument, separation, divorce, and broken hearts.

Brethren, the Lord expects something better of us. He expects something better than is to be found in the world. Never forget that it was you who selected your companion. It was you who felt that there was no one else in all the world quite like her. It was you who wished to have her forever. But in too many cases the image of the temple experience fades. A lustful desire may be the cause. Faultfinding replaces praise. When we look for the worst in anyone, we will find it. But if we will concentrate on the best, that element will grow until it sparkles.

I am not without personal experience. Sister Hinckley and I will soon have been married for 66 years. I do not know how she has put up with me all this long time. Now we have grown old. But how grateful I am for her. How anxious I am to see that she is comfortable. How much I desire the very best for her. What a wonderful companion she has been. What a marvelous wife and what a tremendous mother and grandmother and great-grandmother.

You, of course, have heard of the man who lived to a ripe old age and was asked

by reporters to what he attributed his longevity. He replied that when he and his wife were married they determined that if they argued, one would leave the house and go outside. He said, "Gentlemen, I attribute my longevity to the fact that I have breathed so much fresh air during all these many years."

Brethren, be loyal to your companion. May your marriage be blessed with an uncompromising loyalty one to another. Find your happiness with one another. Give your companion the opportunity to grow in her own interests, to develop her own talents, to fly in her own way, and to experience her own sense of accomplishment.

### **Loyalty to the Church**

Now may I say a word concerning loyalty to the Church.

We see much indifference. There are those who say, "The Church won't dictate to me how to think about this, that, or the other, or how to live my life."

No, I reply, the Church will not dictate to any man how he should think or what he should do. The Church will point out the way and invite every member to live the gospel and enjoy the blessings that come of such living. The Church will not dictate to any man, but it will counsel, it will persuade, it will urge, and it will expect loyalty from those who profess membership therein.

When I was a university student, I said to my father on one occasion that I felt the General Authorities had overstepped their prerogatives when they advocated a certain thing. He was a very wise and good man. He said, "The President of the Church has instructed us, and I sustain him as prophet, seer, and revelator and intend to follow his counsel."

I have now served in the general councils of this Church for 45 years. I have served as an Assistant to the Twelve, as a member of the Twelve, as a counselor in



the First Presidency, and now for eight years as President. I want to give you my testimony that although I have sat in literally thousands of meetings where Church policies and programs have been discussed, I have never been in one where the guidance of the Lord was not sought nor where there was any desire on the part of anyone present to advocate or do anything which would be injurious or coercive to anyone.

The book of Revelation declares:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16).

I make you a promise, my dear brethren, that while I am serving in my present responsibility I will never consent to nor advocate any policy, any program, any doctrine that will be otherwise than beneficial to the membership of this, the Lord’s Church.

This is His work. He established it. He has revealed its doctrine. He has outlined its practices. He created its government. It is His work and His kingdom, and He has said, “They who are not for me are against me” (2 Nephi 10:16).

In 1933 there was a movement in the United States to overturn the law which prohibited commerce in alcoholic beverages. When it came to a vote, Utah was the deciding state.

I was on a mission, working in London, England, when I read the newspaper headlines that screamed, “Utah Kills Prohibition.”

President Heber J. Grant, then President of this Church, had pleaded with our people against voting to nullify Prohibition. It broke his heart when so many members of the Church in this state disregarded his counsel.

On this occasion I am not going to talk about the good or bad of Prohibition

but rather about uncompromising loyalty to the Church.

How grateful, my brethren, I feel, how profoundly grateful for the tremendous faith of so many Latter-day Saints who, when facing a major decision on which the Church has taken a stand, align themselves with that position. And I am especially grateful to be able to say that among those who are loyal are men and women of achievement, of accomplishment, of education, of influence, of strength—highly intelligent and capable individuals.

Each of us has to face the matter—either the Church is true, or it is a fraud. There is no middle ground. It is the Church and kingdom of God, or it is nothing.

Thank you, my dear brethren—you men of great strength and great fidelity and great faith and great loyalty.

### **Loyalty to God**

Finally, loyalty to God, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every man in this Church is entitled to the knowledge that God is our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son is our Redeemer. The Savior gave the key by which we may have such knowledge. He declared, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

Judas Iscariot has gone down in history as the great betrayer, who sold his loyalty for 30 pieces of silver (see Matthew 26:15).

How many in our time, to quote the words of Paul, “crucify . . . the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” with profane and blasphemous language? (Hebrews 6:6).

You know of the profanity of the school grounds and the street. Avoid it. Never let it cross your lips. Show your loyalty to the God of heaven and to the

Redeemer of the world by holding Their names sacred.

Pray to your Heavenly Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and always, under all circumstances, by the very nature of your lives show your loyalty and your love.

Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
Now is the time to show.  
We ask it fearlessly:  
Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
["Who's on the Lord's Side?" *Hymns*,  
no. 260]

May the blessings of heaven rest upon you and your families, my dear brethren. May each of us always be found to be true and faithful, men and boys of integrity and absolute loyalty, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 173rd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 6, 2003. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists. The choir sang "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?" to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct the exercises.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting the conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session with the hymn "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?" and will now sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." The invocation will then be offered by Elder William R. Walker of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "He Sent His Son." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us.

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The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder William R. Walker offered the invocation.

The choir sang "He Sent His Son."

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## President James E. Faust

### Solace to heartbroken parents

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, my message this morning is one of hope and solace to heartbroken parents who have done their best to rear their children in righteousness with love and devotion but have despaired because a child has rebelled or been led astray to follow the path of evil and destruction. In contemplating your deep anguish, I am reminded of the words of Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, . . . Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted." To this the Lord gave this welcome reassurance: "Refrain thy voice from weeping, . . . for thy work shall be rewarded . . . ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

### The Lord's instructions to parents

I must begin by testifying that the word of the Lord to parents in this Church is contained in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants in this remarkable instruction:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents."<sup>2</sup>

Parents are instructed to "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord."<sup>3</sup> As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather I accept this as the word of the Lord, and as a servant of Jesus Christ I urge parents to follow this counsel as conscientiously as they can.

### The measure of good parents

Who are good parents? They are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord."<sup>4</sup> This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly. Children come into this world with their own distinct spirits and personality traits. Some children "would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. . . . Perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother."<sup>5</sup> Successful parents are those who have sacrificed and struggled to do the best they can in their own family circumstances.

### The love of parents transcends all

The depth of the love of parents for their children cannot be measured. It is like no other relationship. It exceeds concern for life itself. The love of a parent for a child is continuous and transcends heartbreak and disappointment. All parents hope and pray that their children will make wise decisions. Children who are obedient and responsible bring to their parents unending pride and satisfaction.

But what if the children who have been taught by faithful, loving parents have rebelled or been led astray? Is there hope? The grief of a parent over a rebellious child is almost insupportable. King David's third son, Absalom, killed one of his brothers and also led a rebellion against his father. Absalom was killed by Joab. Upon hearing of Absalom's death, King David wept and expressed his sadness: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"<sup>6</sup>

This paternal love is also expressed in the parable of the prodigal son. When his rebellious son returned home after having squandered his inheritance in riotous living, the father killed the fatted calf and celebrated the return of the prodigal, saying to his obedient, if resentful, son, “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”<sup>7</sup>

### Comfort of the sealing power

I believe and accept the comforting statement of Elder Orson F. Whitney:

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.”<sup>8</sup>

### Repentance of wayward children

A principle in this statement that is often overlooked is that they must fully repent and “suffer for their sins” and “pay their debt to justice.” I recognize that now is the time “to prepare to meet God.”<sup>9</sup> If the repentance of the wayward children does not happen in this life, is it still possible for the cords of the sealing to be strong enough for them yet to work out their re-

pentance? In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told:

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”<sup>10</sup>

We remember that the prodigal son wasted his inheritance, and when it was all gone he came back to his father’s house. There he was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent.<sup>11</sup> Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will claim wayward children only on the condition of their repentance and Christ’s Atonement. Repentant wayward children will enjoy salvation and all the blessings that go with it, but exaltation is much more. It must be fully earned. The question as to who will be exalted must be left to the Lord in His mercy.

There are very few whose rebellion and evil deeds are so great that they have “sinned away the power to repent.”<sup>12</sup> That judgment must also be left up to the Lord. He tells us, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps in this life we are not given to fully understand how enduring the sealing cords of righteous parents are to their children. It may very well be that there are more helpful sources at work than we know.<sup>14</sup> I believe there is a strong familial pull as the influence of beloved ancestors continues with us from the other side of the veil.

President Howard W. Hunter observed that “repentance is but the homesickness of the soul, and the uninterrupted and watchful care of the parent is the fairest earthly type of the unfailing forgiveness of God.” Is not the family the nearest analogy which the Savior’s mission sought to establish?<sup>15</sup>

### **The example of our own parents**

We learn much of parenting from our own parents. My love for my father deepened profoundly when he was kind, patient, and understanding. When I damaged the family car, he was gentle and forgiving. But his sons could expect strong discipline if there was any shading of the truth or continued breaking of the rules, particularly showing disrespect for our mother. My father has been gone for almost half a century, but I still sorely miss being able to go to him for wise and loving counsel. I admit I questioned his counsel at times, but I could never question his love for me. I never wanted to disappoint him.

### **Provide loving, firm discipline**

An important element of doing the best we can as parents is to provide loving but firm discipline. If we do not discipline our children, society may do it in a way that is not to our liking or our children's. Part of disciplining children is to teach them to work. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "One of the greatest values . . . is the virtue of honest work. Knowledge without labor is profitless. Knowledge with labor is genius."<sup>16</sup>

Satan's pervasive snares are increasing, and raising children is becoming harder because of this. Therefore, parents need to do the very best they can and to enlist the help that Church service and activity can provide. If parents misbehave and stray even temporarily, some of their children may be prone to take license from that example.

### **Turn hearts to parents**

Now there is another side to this coin that needs to be mentioned. I make a plea for children who are estranged from their parents to reach out to them, even if they have been less than they should have been.

Children who are critical of their parents might well remember the wise counsel of Moroni when he said, "Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been."<sup>17</sup>

When Moroni visited young Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted the following verse concerning the mission of Elijah: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers."<sup>18</sup> I hope all children will eventually turn their hearts to their fathers and also to their mothers.

A wonderful couple I knew in my youth had a son who was rebellious and estranged himself from their family. But in their later years, he reconciled with them and was the most caring and solicitous of all their children. As we get older, the pull from our parents and grandparents on the other side of the veil becomes stronger. It is a sweet experience when they visit us in our dreams.

### **Do not judge parents whose children stray**

It is very unfair and unkind to judge conscientious and faithful parents because some of their children rebel or stray from the teachings and love of their parents. Fortunate are the couples who have children and grandchildren who bring them comfort and satisfaction. We should be considerate of those worthy, righteous parents who struggle and suffer with disobedient children.

One of my friends used to say, "If you have never had any problems with your children, just wait awhile." No one can say with any degree of certainty what their children will do under certain cir-

cumstances. When my wise mother-in-law saw other children misbehaving, she used to say, “I never say my children would not do that because they might be out doing it right while I am speaking!” When parents mourn for disobedient and wayward children, we must, with compassion, “forbid the casting of the first stone.”<sup>19</sup>

An anonymous Church member wrote about the continuous heartache her brother caused her parents. He got involved in drugs. He resisted all efforts at control and discipline. He was deceitful and defiant. Unlike the prodigal, this errant son did not come home of his own accord. Instead he got caught by the police and was forced to face the consequences of his actions. For two years his parents supported Bill’s treatment program, which brought about his eventual recovery from drugs. In summary, Bill’s sister observed: “I think my parents are extraordinary. They never wavered in their love for Bill, though they disagreed with and even hated what he was doing to himself and to their family life. But they were committed enough to their family to support Bill in any way necessary to get him through the tough times and onto more solid ground. They practiced the deeper, more sensitive, and extensive gospel of Christ by loving one who had gone astray.”<sup>20</sup>

Let us not be arrogant but rather be humbly grateful if our children are obedient and respectful of our teachings of the ways of the Lord.

### **The Good Shepherd watches over them**

To those brokenhearted parents who have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you, the Good Shepherd is watching over them. God knows and understands your deep sorrow. There is hope. Take comfort in the words of Jeremiah: “Thy work shall be rewarded,” and your children can “come again from the land of

the enemy.”<sup>21</sup> I so testify and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Jeremiah 31:15–16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
5. Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.
6. 2 Samuel 18:33.
7. Luke 15:32.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
9. Alma 34:32.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59.
11. See Luke 15:11–32.
12. Alonzo A. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 161.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
14. See John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 7–13.
15. See *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 32.
16. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 704.
17. Mormon 9:31.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
19. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (1973), 58.
20. “With Love—from the Prodigal’s Sister,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 19.
21. Jeremiah 31:16.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, President Faust.

We shall now hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing “How Firm a Foundation.”

Following the singing, Sister Susan W. Tanner, Young Women general president, and then Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak. The choir will then sing “The Morning Breaks.”

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Care for the life of the soul

Within the swirling global events—events from which we are not totally immune—is humanity’s real and continuing struggle: whether or not, amid the cares of the world, we will really choose, in the words of the Lord, to “care . . . for the life of the soul” (D&C 101:37). Whatever our anxious involvements with outward events, this inner struggle proceeds in both tranquil and turbulent times. Whether understood or recognized, this is the unchanging mortal agenda from generation to generation.

When we strive to keep God’s commandments, “the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). Then, even on bad days, we will still “[keep our] own soul” regardless of external conditions (Proverbs 19:16). Granted, some inward decisions to care for and “keep” our souls occur in otherwise uneventful times, as with the prodigal son. He had fed the swine day by day, finally experiencing a special day when he “came to himself” (Luke 15:17). Whatever else happened on that particular day in that “far country” (Luke 15:13), the prodigal son had “thought on [his] ways” (Psalm 119:59) and firmly concluded that “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18). Transformation followed introspection. Even so, one home-ward-bound swineherd would scarcely have been noticed by the passersby, though things of eternal significance had happened to him.

At other times, however, the interplay of outward and inward things is more visible. Pilate was dealing with a seemingly local disturbance surrounding one Jesus of Nazareth. His new accord with Herod—with whom Pilate had been “at enmity” (Luke 23:12)—was doubtless political news among those in the know. Though ambivalent, he yielded to a conditioned crowd, amnestying Barabbas instead of Jesus.

With washed but dirty hands, Pilate apparently returned to Caesarea. Christ, however, went on to Gethsemane and Calvary, performing the agonizing but emancipating universal Atonement whereby billions and billions would be resurrected.

### God’s work often proceeds quietly

Today, war clouds here and there rain upon the just and the unjust, but Christ’s glorious gift of the great Resurrection will be showered upon us all! Just as the white-caps do not disclose the deep sea changes underway, so in the case of the Atonement, things global and eternal in their significance were happening in a small garden and upon an obscure hill.

The unfolding of God’s work often proceeds quietly. For example, whatever the immediate economic reasons the Joseph Smith Sr. family had for moving from New England to upstate New York, they were being led—unawares—to sacred plates, buried in Cumorah’s Hill, waiting to become another testament of Christ for “as long as the earth shall stand” (2 Nephi 25:22).

### Do not rationalize breaking covenants

Therefore, though ours is a time of conflict, quietly caring for “the life of the soul” is still what matters most. Though events set up the defining moments which can evoke profiles in righteousness, outward commotions cannot excuse any failure of inward resolve, even if some seem to unravel so easily. If hostilities break out here and there, we still need not break our covenants! For example, adultery cannot be rationalized merely because there is a war on and some wives and husbands are separated. There is no footnote to the seventh commandment reading “Thou shalt not commit adultery except in times of war” (see Exodus 20:14).

In another time of war, President David O. McKay counseled members in the military to “keep yourselves morally clean” amid “the beastliness of war” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 153).

Even though nations shall rise against nations, such turbulence does not justify business partners rising against their partners or against their stockholders by stealing or bearing false witness, violating both the eighth and ninth commandments—for which there are no excusing footnotes (see Exodus 20:15–16).

Uncertainty as to world conditions does not justify moral uncertainty, and distracting churn will not cover our sins nor dim God’s all-seeing eye. Furthermore, military victories are no substitute for winning our individual wars for self-control. Nor do the raging human hatreds lessen God’s perfect and redeeming love for all His children. Likewise, the obscuring mists of the moment cannot change the reality that Christ is the Light of the World!

Let us, therefore, be like the young man with Elisha on the mount. Though he was at first intimidated by the surrounding enemy chariots, his eyes were mercifully opened and he saw “horses and chariots of fire,” verifying that “they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16, 17). Brothers and sisters, the spiritual arithmetic has not changed!

### **God will lead us and be with us**

Our own intellectual shortfalls and perplexities do not alter the fact of God’s astonishing foreknowledge, which takes into account our choices for which we are responsible. Amid the mortal and fragmentary communiques and the breaking news of the day concerning various human conflicts, God lives in an eternal now where the past, present, and future are constantly before Him (see D&C 130:7). His divine determinations are guaranteed, since whatever He takes in His heart to do, He will surely do it (see Abraham 3:17). He knows the end from the beginning!

(see Abraham 2:8). God is fully “able to do [His] . . . work” (2 Nephi 27:20) and to bring all His purposes to pass, something untrue of the best-laid plans of man since we so often use our agency amiss!

God has assured us:

“I will lead you along” (D&C 78:18).

“I will be in your midst” (D&C 49:27).

He will be with us, brothers and sisters, “in [our] time of trouble” (D&C 3:8), including through the guidance of His living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

### **Be kind and generous even during turmoil**

Meanwhile, the defining moments in the “life of the soul” continue to turn on whether we respond with self-indulgence or self-denial in our daily, individual decisions, as between kindness and anger, mercy and injustice, generosity and meanness.

Wars do not repeal the second commandment. It knows no borders. Its adherents wear no national insignia, nor do they have skin of a particular color.

We may experience hunger, for instance, but if so, we can still respond as did the widow who used the last of her meal to feed Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:8–16). Such sharing amid real deprivation and poverty is always touching. Earlier in his life, a wonderful bishop of my youth, M. Thirl Marsh, repeatedly tried to be hired at the mines during the Depression. Being underage but large of stature, he persisted and was hired, but several friends were not. Apparently, on more than one occasion after his hard day’s work, generous young Thirl shared his earnings equally with these friends until they too were hired. No wonder he was such a caring shepherd of the flock later on.

### **Strive for full conversion**

When pondering “the life of the soul,” it helps to strive for our own full conversion whereas the gospel seed first falls on



“good ground”—which is defined by Jesus as those with an “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15). Sequentially, such an individual “heareth the word” with “joy,” “understandeth it,” “beareth fruit,” “endureth,” and finally learns what it is to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 13:20, 23; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 13:21; Matthew 5:6). It is “a mighty change” (Mosiah 5:2). Conversion basically represents the transformation from the “natural man” to becoming the “man of Christ” (Mosiah 3:19; Helaman 3:29; see also 2 Corinthians 5:17). It is a labor which takes more than an afternoon.

The outcomes of this ongoing process include having “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). No wonder, therefore, this process enables those so converted to “strengthen [their] brethren” (Luke 22:32) and so lift others by being “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). Such righteous individuals perform another vital but quiet service to mankind:

they become part of the critical mass that can evoke God’s much-needed blessings on all humanity.

### Care for the soul in all circumstances

Truly converted disciples, though still imperfect, will pursue “the life of the soul” on any day, in any decade, amid any decadence and destruction. This process constitutes being about our “Father’s business” (Luke 2:49; see also Moses 1:39).

Since this full conversion is what is supposed to be happening anyway, stern events and turbulence may actually even help us by causing a resumption of the journey or an acceleration.

Brothers and sisters, amid the volatile and vexing cares of the world, let us, as instructed, care for the “life of the soul.” Thanks to Jesus’ glorious Atonement, the life of that immortal soul outlasts the stretching longevity of any star and hence the short span of passing mortal events, even if grim!

I so testify, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

## Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

### Places of spiritual refuge

In answer to Pilate’s question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” the Savior answered, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:33, 36). With these few words, Jesus declares His kingdom independent and distinct from this world. The Savior’s teachings, doctrine, and personal example lift all who truly believe in Him to a divine standard that requires both eye and mind be single to the glory of God (see D&C 4:5; 88:68). The glory of God encompasses all that is holy and sacred. Our ability to seek, recognize, and reverence the holy above the profane, and the sacred above the secular, defines our spirituality. Indeed,

without the holy and sacred, we are left with only the profane and secular.

Amidst the bustle of the secular world, with its certain uncertainty, there must be places that offer spiritual refuge, renewal, hope, and peace. There are indeed such places. They are both holy and sacred. They are places where we meet the divine and find the Spirit of the Lord.

### Stand in holy places

Three times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord counsels His people to “stand in holy places” (see D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22). The context of His counsel is all the more significant as we look at the

current condition of our world. Desolating disease, persecution, and war have an all-too-familiar face and have imposed themselves into our daily experience. In the face of such perplexing problems, the Lord counsels, “Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places” (D&C 101:22).

Holy places have always been essential to the proper worship of God. For Latter-day Saints, such holy places include venues of historic significance, our homes, sacrament meetings, and temples. Much of what we reverence, and what we teach our children to reverence as holy and sacred, is reflected in these places. The faith and reverence associated with them and the respect we have for what transpires or has transpired in them make them holy. The importance of holy places and sacred space in our worship can hardly be overestimated.

### **Sacrifice is what makes places sacred**

Great personal preparation is required for us to receive the spiritual benefit of standing in holy places. Holy places and sacred space are also distinguished by the *sacrifice* they require. Elder M. Russell Ballard has taught that “the word *sacrifice* means literally ‘to make sacred,’ or ‘to render sacred’” (“The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 8). The words *sacred* and *sacrifice* come from the same root. One may not have the sacred without first sacrificing something for it. There can be no sacredness without personal sacrifice. Sacrifice sanctifies the sacred.

### **Sacrifice makes the grove sacred**

To many, the grove near the Smith farm in upstate New York is simply beautiful and peaceful. To Latter-day Saints

across the world, however, it is sacred because of the faith and reverence we bring to it and the depth of sacrifice it represents.

Some months ago on a beautiful late fall day, my wife and I sat in that grove. It was indeed beautiful, and we did enjoy the solitary peace we found there. However, it was significantly more than that, for we sat in the immediate vicinity where God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to the young Prophet Joseph Smith. Our faith in, and our reverence for, their visit and the personal sacrifice that ensued because of it, both in the Prophet’s life as well as in the lives of our own ancestors, transformed this beautiful spot into sacred space and a holy place.

Similar deep and reverent feelings are aroused by other sacred places across the earth relating to the history and establishment of this Church. These sacred places inspire our faith and give us encouragement to be true to that faith and to move forward despite the challenges that may cross our path.

### **Sacrifice makes our homes sacred**

Our homes, likewise, are holy places filled with sacred space. Though not always tranquil, our homes can be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teach in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”:

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Such a home does require personal sacrifice. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the

Lord said, “Your family must needs repent and forsake some things” (D&C 93:48). Each of our families is confronted with a broad menu of activities and entertainment, not all of which is wholesome and good—and much of which is certainly not necessary. Like the Prophet’s family, do our families also need to repent and forsake some things to help us maintain the sacred nature of our homes? The establishment of our homes as holy places reflects the depth of sacrifice we are willing to make for them.

### **Sacrifice makes sacrament meetings sacred**

Sacrament meetings are really more than just meetings. They are sacred moments in a holy place. During these weekly moments, we reflect on the most merciful act of sacrifice this world has ever known. We ponder the love of God, who gave His Only Begotten Son that we might obtain eternal life. As we partake of the sacrament, we remember Him and express our willingness to take His name upon us and to keep His commandments. Careful personal preparation, including our own sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit, is prerequisite to the regular spiritual renewal offered through worthy participation. We must be willing and capable of slipping away from the world for just a few moments in order to reflect on holier things. Without this spiritual renewal, our faith is easily overcome by the secular and profane.

Many years ago when our boys were still very young, I made a remark at dinner regarding the excellence of our sacrament meeting and how much I had learned. Their response was a look that told me that they were not sure that we had even been in the same meeting. The difference between my experience and theirs was

simply one of a little maturity and personal preparation. The spiritual renewal we receive from our sacrament meetings will not exceed our preparation and our willingness and desire to be taught.

### **Sacrifice makes temples sacred**

The temples, with “Holiness to the Lord” inscribed on them, are among the most sacred of all places on the earth. They stand as evidence of God’s love to all His children, past and present. The blessings of the temple are intertwined and inseparable from significant sacrifice. The ordinances performed therein provide access to the full expression of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. This alone would qualify the temple as holy and sacred. However, personal sacrifice is also required. We sacrifice time in searching for our ancestors and time to attend to our temple responsibilities. We also strive to live the highest standards of personal worthiness, which qualify us to enter the sacred space of this most holy place.

### **Revere and respect the holy and sacred**

In holy places and in sacred space we find spiritual refuge, renewal, hope, and peace. Are these not worth every necessary personal sacrifice? My brethren and sisters, may each of us revere and respect the holy and sacred in our lives. May we teach our children likewise. Let us all stand in holy and sacred places of spiritual peace.

I express my testimony of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the very Prince of Peace and Hope, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Sister Susan W. Tanner

### Did I tell you?

Almost three years ago, one of our daughters got married and immediately left with her husband for medical school in a distant city. She was leaving the security of the nest to begin a family of her own. I wondered, “Did I teach her everything she needs to know? Does she know what is most important in this life? Is she prepared to build a happy home?”

As I watched her drive away, I remembered a little journal I gave her on her 17th birthday. It was entitled “Did I Tell You . . . ?” In it I recorded counsel I had often given her in our late-night conversations. As she and her new husband headed for their life together, I thought of three additional entries I wanted to add to that little journal to help her make a transition more important and challenging than that of crossing the country—the transition to starting her own home and family. Let me share these entries to her and to all young people in the Church, to teach and testify of the importance of family.

### Making home a place of peace, strength

First, did I tell you . . . how to make your home a haven of peace and a fortress of strength? You should follow the pattern you witnessed as you entered the Lord’s house, to “establish a house . . . of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, . . . a house of order” (D&C 109:8). As we follow this pattern, great peace will dwell within our homes in a world of increasing turmoil.

Look to the example of your grandparents’ homes. Both sets of grandparents brought up their “children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). Dad’s home was a house of learning. He said at his father’s funeral that he had never learned a gospel principle at a Church meeting that he hadn’t already learned in his own home.

The Church was a supplement to his home. My home was a house of order. It was of utmost importance (in spite of many hectic schedules) for us to be together for breakfast and dinner. Mealtime meant more than just refueling. It was a crucial time for nourishing spirits as well as bodies.

Small things make a happy home—things like praying, saying “I’m sorry,” expressing gratitude, reading a good book together. Remember how we laughed and cried as we built the backyard fence? Remember how every time we drove in the car we sang so we wouldn’t quarrel? Remember how we fasted for one member’s important decision and for another’s crucial test? The family proclamation reiterates this:

“Successful . . . families are established . . . on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome . . . activities” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

In your youth, you formed habits of praying and reading scriptures. Capitalize on those habits as well as the skills you learned of cooking and budgeting. With your righteous desires and your homemaking abilities, you will build a home that is a haven of peace and a fortress of strength.

### The joy of being a parent

Next, did I tell you . . . that “children are an heritage of the Lord”? (Psalm 127:3). The family proclamation declares, “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). We hope Heavenly Father will bless you with children. Many in the world miss the joy and see children only as an inconvenience. It is true that parenting is physically exhausting, emotionally draining, and mentally demanding. No one will give you good grades or blue ribbons for what you

do as a mother. Sometimes you might wonder, “Did I do this right? Is it all worth it?”

It is worth it! All latter-day prophets have borne witness to the sacred role of motherhood. President Spencer W. Kimball said, “It is important for you Latter-day Saint women to understand that the Lord holds motherhood and mothers sacred and in the highest esteem” (“Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 105). The Spirit testifies to my soul that this is true.

You will come to know, as I do, that parenting is not only challenging, but it provides life’s greatest joys. Joy comes when at family home evening a five-year-old tells a scripture story with complete and correct details or when a child reads the Book of Mormon faithfully every night. I feel joy when my cheerleader has the courage to tell her squad that the new cheer they are learning has inappropriate actions in it, and when a missionary daughter writes of her testimony of the gospel. Joy comes as I watch a daughter read to a blind woman and a son serve in the temple. In these moments I feel as John the Beloved: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). Did I tell you . . . that to the very depths of my being, I love being a mother?

### **Love and encourage children**

Finally, did I tell you . . . that love is the foundational virtue in building a strong home? Our Father in Heaven exemplifies the pattern we should follow. He loves us, teaches us, is patient with us, and entrusts us with our agency. President Hinckley said:

“Love can make the difference—love generously given in childhood and reaching through the awkward years of youth . . . and encouragement that is quick to compliment and slow to criticize” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 79–80; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 60).

Sometimes discipline, which means “to teach,” is confused with criticism. Chil-

dren, as well as people of all ages, improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from faultfinding.

When a young man I know had a long hippie hairstyle during his teens, his parents chose to concentrate instead on his good work ethic and his kindness to needy people. Eventually he himself chose to cut his hair. He went on to get a good education, serve in the Church, and follow in his own family this pattern of loving children into doing what is right.

We demonstrate our love for family members not only in teaching them affirmatively but also in giving them of our time. Some time ago I read an article called “Putting Children Last,” which told about parents who talk about their children in “appointment book” terms: 15 minutes at night when possible, regularly scheduled play time once a week, and so on (see Mary Eberstadt, *Wall Street Journal*, 2 May 1995). Contrast that with the mother who vowed to give her children not just quality time but quantity time. She recognized that a loving relationship requires constant and ongoing talking, playing, laughing, and working moments. I too believe that parents and children need to participate in each other’s everyday, ordinary experiences. So I know about your upcoming test; you know about my lesson preparation. I attend your games; you join me in the kitchen for dinner preparation. We are major players in each other’s lives, absorbing love through daily experiences.

And love endures through the hardships of life. The Apostle Paul taught: “Charity suffereth long. . . . [It] beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7, 8). I watched a mother’s enduring love for her alcoholic son. She never gave up praying for him and being available for him. In his later years, he finally “came to himself” (Luke 15:17), kept a respectable job, and used his mechanical skills to fix up his mother’s house.

Many families struggle with wayward children. We can take comfort in “the eternal sealings of faithful parents” which will draw children “back to the fold” (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110). We must never give up loving them, praying for them, and trusting in our Heavenly Father’s care.

So to my daughter, and to all young people in the Church, as you make the transition to this new phase in your life,

I tell you these things. I testify that in the eternal scheme of things, the most crucial and fulfilling thing you will do is to build a holy home and rear a strong family in love. This family unit will bless society and endure through eternity. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Come, Rejoice.”

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## Elder Richard G. Scott

### The sustaining power of faith

Who does not have need of assurance in times of uncertainty and testing? Who is so self-confident that there is never want for a stabilizing influence in life? A fundamental purpose of earth life is personal growth and attainment. Consequently, there must be times of trial and quandary to provide opportunity for that development. What child could ever grow to be self-supporting in maturity if all the critical decisions were made by parents? So it is with our Heavenly Father. His plan of happiness is conceived so that we will have challenges, even difficulties, where decisions of great importance must be made so that we can grow, develop, and succeed in this mortal probation.<sup>1</sup> Gratefully, in His perfect love, He has provided a way for us to resolve those challenges while growing in strength and capacity. I speak of the sustaining power of faith in times of uncertainty and testing.

God has given us the capacity to exercise faith so we may find peace, joy, and purpose in life. However, if we are to employ its power, faith must be founded on something. There is no more solid foundation than faith in the love Heavenly Father has for you, faith in His plan of happiness, and faith in the capacity and willingness of Jesus Christ to fulfill all of His promises.

### Comparison with nuclear particles

For some, faith is not understood and consequently not used to full advantage. Some feel that any discussion of religion and the guidance one can receive through robust faith have no rational basis. However, faith is not illusion nor magic but a power rooted in eternal principles. Are you one who has tried to exercise faith and has felt no benefit? If so, you likely have not understood and followed the principles upon which faith is founded. An example will illustrate what I mean.

Years ago I participated in the measurement of the nuclear characteristics of different materials. The process used an experimental nuclear reactor designed so that high-energy particles streamed from a hole in the center of the reactor. These particles were directed into an experimental chamber where measurements were made. The high-energy particles could not be seen, but they had to be carefully controlled to avoid harm to others.

One day a janitor entered while we were experimenting. In a spirit of disgust he said, “You are all liars, pretending that you are doing something important, but you can’t fool me. I know that if you can’t see, hear, taste, smell, or touch something, it doesn’t exist.” That attitude ruled out the possibility of his learning that there is

much of worth that can't be identified by the five senses. Had that man been willing to open his mind to understand how the presence of nuclear particles is detected, he would have confirmed their existence. In like manner, never doubt the reality of faith.

### **Principles for exercising faith**

You will gather the fruits of faith as you follow the principles God has established for its use. Some of those principles are:

- Trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed no matter how challenging the circumstance.
- Obey His commandments and live to demonstrate that He can trust you.
- Be sensitive to the quiet prompting of the Spirit.
- Act courageously on that prompting.
- Be patient and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and when answers come a piece at a time over an extended period.

Motivating faith is centered in trust in the Lord and in His willingness to answer your needs. For “the Lord . . . doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.”<sup>2</sup> The consistent, willing exercise of faith increases your confidence and ability to employ the power of faith.

### **Pattern for strengthening faith**

You can learn to use faith more effectively by applying this principle taught by Moroni: “Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the *trial of your faith*.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, every time you *try your faith*—that is, act in worthiness on an impression—you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit. Those feelings will fortify your faith. As you repeat that pattern, your faith will become stronger.

The Lord knows your needs. When you ask with honesty and real intent, He

will prompt you to do that which will increase your ability to act in faith. With consistent practice, faith will become a vibrant, powerful, uplifting, inspiring force in your life. As you walk to the boundary of your understanding into the twilight of uncertainty, exercising faith, you will be led to find solutions you would not obtain otherwise. I testify that I know that is true.

### **Faith is accepting of God's will**

Even if you exercise your strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, God will respond with what in His eternal plan is best for you. He loves you to a depth and completeness you cannot conceive of in your mortal state. Indeed, were you to know His entire plan, you would never ask for that which is contrary to it even though your feelings tempt you to do so. Sincere faith gives us understanding and strength to accept the will of our Heavenly Father when it differs from our own. We can accept His will with peace and assurance, confident that His infinite wisdom surpasses our own ability to comprehend fully His plan as it unfolds a piece at a time.

Faith is not just push a button and you get the answer. The Lord declared, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”<sup>4</sup> Brigham Young observed, “God never bestows upon his people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them.”<sup>5</sup> Personally, for some vital decisions I have experienced the grueling, anguishing struggle that precedes a confirming answer. Yet those trying experiences have been edifying. It is comforting to know that God will never try you more than you can manage with His help.

### **Faith forges strength of character**

God uses your faith to mold your character. Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Strong moral

character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Your faith can guide you to those correct choices. Clearly, it is what you do and what you think about that determine what you are and what you will become. Therefore, the choices you make need to be inspired by the Lord. Others can encourage you to make the right decisions, but those choices must not be prescribed by them. You need to ponder, pray, and exercise faith to willingly make choices consistent with the teachings of the Master. Such choices are made with trust in things that are believed and when acted upon will be confirmed. Only enough guidance is given to lead you aright and not to weaken your growing character. That guidance will solidify your trust in Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Faith will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is used. Character is woven patiently from threads of principle, doctrine, and obedience. In James we read: "The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."<sup>6</sup>

### **Character expands capacity for faith**

The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to respond obediently to the direction of the Spirit. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering. I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing char-

acter. Only you could do that through disobedience.

Our Father's plan is marvelous. Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise faith. Thus, your confidence in conquering the trials of life is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith.

The axiom "You get what you pay for" is true for spiritual rewards as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths that you learn. What you get is the molding of your character, with growth in capacity, and the successful completion of your purpose here on earth—to grow through being proven.

### **God's perfect love is our source of peace**

No matter what occurs, no matter how topsy-turvy the world becomes, you can always have the sustaining power of faith. That will never change. The perfect love of your Father in Heaven will never change. His gospel plan gives life meaning and can ensure your happiness. His plan is not only to prove you here on earth but also that you may receive the growth that comes from correct decisions prompted by faith, enabled by your obedience.

Why worry about future calamities or uncertainties over which you have no control? Your righteous character magnifies the probability that you will never have to suffer them. When challenges and testing do come, your faith will lead you to solutions. Your peace of mind, your assurance of answers to vexing problems, your ultimate joy depend upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Right will ultimately prevail. It will yield blessings now as you in faith obey the commandments of God.

Remember, an unfailing, continual, ever-present source of peace and comfort



is available to you. It is the certainty that your Father in Heaven loves you no matter what your circumstance, no matter what winds of trial, turmoil, or tribulation whirl about you. That certainty will never change. Your ability to access that support depends on the strength of your faith in Him and in His certain willingness to bless you.

I testify that faith in God and in His guidance through the Holy Spirit will sustain you in an increasingly more challenging world. I testify that the application of the principles we have reviewed will help you avail yourself of the sustaining power of faith in times of uncertainty and testing.

There are many around you who are confused and are seeking solutions to life's perplexing problems. Share your testimony of truth and the power of faith with them. Help them understand how faith in God and in His teachings, restored in their fullness in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can bless their lives now, in these turbulent times. Testify of the power of the Lord to bless their lives. Do it now. The Lord will help you. Your faith will guide you and sustain you. I know it will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### War and peace

My brethren and sisters, last Sunday as I sat in my study thinking of what I might say on this occasion, I received a phone call telling me that Staff Sergeant James W. Cawley of the U.S. Marines had been killed somewhere in Iraq. He was 41 years of age, leaving behind a wife and two small children.

Twenty years ago Elder Cawley was a missionary of the Church in Japan. Like so many others, he had grown up in the Church, had played as a schoolboy, had

### NOTES

1. See Revelation 3:19.
2. Helaman 12:1; see also Proverbs 3:5–6.
3. Ether 12:6; italics added.
4. Revelation 3:19.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 338.
6. James 1:3–4.

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The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

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### President Monson

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved president and prophet, will now speak to us. Following his remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing "He Watching over Israel." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

passed the sacrament as a deacon, and had been found worthy to serve a mission to teach the gospel of peace to the people of Japan. He returned home, served in the Marines, married, became a policeman, and was then recalled to active military duty, to which he responded without hesitation.

His life, his mission, his military service, his death seem to represent the contradictions of the peace of the gospel and the tides of war.

And so I venture to say something about the war and the gospel we teach.

I spoke of this somewhat in our October conference of 2001. When I came to this pulpit at that time, the war against terrorism had just begun. The present war is really an outgrowth and continuation of that conflict. Hopefully it is now drawing to a conclusion.

As I discuss the matter, I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. I have prayed and pondered much concerning this. I recognize it is a very sensitive subject for an international congregation, including those not of our religious faith.

The nations of the earth have been divided over the present situation. Feelings have run strong. There have been demonstrations for and against. We are now a world Church with members in most of the nations which have argued this matter. Our people have had feelings. They have had concerns.

### **Conflict throughout the ages**

War, of course, is not new. The weapons change. The ability to kill and destroy is constantly refined. But there has been conflict throughout the ages over essentially the same issues.

The book of Revelation speaks briefly of what must have been a terrible conflict for the minds and loyalties of God's children. The account is worth repeating:

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

Isaiah speaks further concerning that great conflict (see Isaiah 14:12-20). Modern revelation gives additional light (see D&C 76:25-29), as does the book of Moses

(see Moses 4:1-4), which tells of Satan's plan to destroy the agency of man.

We sometimes are prone to glorify the great empires of the past, such as the Ottoman Empire, the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and in more recent times, the vast British Empire. But there is a darker side to every one of them. There is a grim and tragic overlay of brutal conquest, of subjugation, of repression, and an astronomical cost in life and treasure.

The great English essayist Thomas Carlyle once ironically shared the observation, "God must needs laugh outright, could such a thing be, to see his wondrous mannikins here below" (quoted in *Sartor Resartus* [1836], 182). I think our Father in Heaven must have wept as He has looked down upon His children through the centuries as they have squandered their divine birthright in ruthlessly destroying one another.

In the course of history, tyrants have arisen from time to time who have oppressed their own people and threatened the world. Such is adjudged to be the case presently, and consequently great and terrifying forces with sophisticated and fearsome armaments have been engaged in battle.

### **Tears and fears, courage and casualties**

Many of our own Church members have been involved in this conflict. We have seen on television and in the press tearful children clinging to their fathers in uniform, going to the battlefield.

In a touching letter I received just this week, a mother wrote of her Marine son who is serving for the second time in a Middle Eastern war. She says that at the time of his first deployment, "he came home on leave and asked me to go for a walk. . . . He had his arm around me and he told me about going to war. He . . . said, 'Mom, I have to go so you and the family can be free, free to worship as you please. . . . And if it costs me my life, . . . then

giving my life is worth it.’” He is now there again and has written to his family recently, saying, “I am proud to be here serving my nation and our way of life. . . . I feel a lot safer knowing our Heavenly Father is with me.”

There are other mothers, innocent civilians, who cling to their children with fear and look heavenward with desperate pleadings as the earth shakes beneath their feet and deadly rockets scream through the dark sky.

There have been casualties in this terrible conflict, and there likely will be more. Public protests will likely continue. Leaders of other nations have, in no uncertain terms, condemned the coalition strategy.

### **Where does the Church stand?**

The question arises, “Where does the Church stand in all of this?”

First, let it be understood that we have no quarrel with the Muslim people or with those of any other faith. We recognize and teach that all the people of the earth are of the family of God. And as He is our Father, so are we brothers and sisters with family obligations one to another.

### *Subject to laws and governments*

But as citizens we are all under the direction of our respective national leaders. They have access to greater political and military intelligence than do the people generally. Those in the armed services are under obligation to their respective governments to execute the will of the sovereign. When they joined the military service, they entered into a contract by which they are presently bound and to which they have dutifully responded.

One of our Articles of Faith, which represent an expression of our doctrine, states, “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (Articles of Faith 1:12).

### *In defense of family and liberty*

But modern revelation states that we are to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16). In a democracy we can renounce war and proclaim peace. There is opportunity for dissent. Many have been speaking out and doing so emphatically. That is their privilege. That is their right, so long as they do so legally. However, we all must also be mindful of another overriding responsibility, which I may add, governs my personal feelings and dictates my personal loyalties in the present situation.

When war raged between the Nephites and the Lamanites, the record states that “the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for . . . power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.

“And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God” (Alma 43:45–46).

The Lord counseled them, “Defend your families even unto bloodshed” (Alma 43:47).

And Moroni “rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

“And he fastened on his headplate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren” (Alma 46:12–13).

It is clear from these and other writings that there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty,

and against tyranny, threat, and oppression.

*People who love peace and freedom*

When all is said and done, we of this Church are people of peace. We are followers of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Prince of Peace. But even He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

This places us in the position of those who long for peace, who teach peace, who work for peace, but who also are citizens of nations and are subject to the laws of our governments. Furthermore, we are a freedom-loving people, committed to the defense of liberty wherever it is in jeopardy. I believe that God will not hold men and women in uniform responsible as agents of their government in carrying forward that which they are legally obligated to do. It may even be that He will hold us responsible if we try to impede or hedge up the way of those who are involved in a contest with forces of evil and repression.

**What we can do**

*Do not let differing opinions lead to ill will*

Now, there is much that we can and must do in these perilous times. We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but never let us become a party to words or works of evil concerning our brothers and sisters in various nations on one side or the other. Political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord's people may be at peace one with another during times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties.

*Pray for those who bear arms*

Let us pray for those who are called upon to bear arms by their respective gov-

ernments and plead for the protection of heaven upon them that they may return to their loved ones in safety.

To our brothers and sisters in harm's way, we say that we pray for you. We pray that the Lord will watch over you and preserve you from injury and that you may return home and pick up your lives again. We know that you are not in that land of blowing sand and brutal heat because you enjoy the games of war. The strength of your commitment is measured by your willingness to give your very lives for that in which you believe.

*Comfort those who have lost loved ones*

We know that some have died, and others may yet die in this hot and deadly contest. We can do all in our power to comfort and bless those who lose loved ones. May those who mourn be comforted with that comfort which comes alone from Christ, the Redeemer. It was He who said to His beloved disciples:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, . . . that where I am, there ye may be also. . . .

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:1-3, 27).

*Hope and pray for peace*

We call upon the Lord, whose strength is mighty and whose powers are infinite, to bring an end to the conflict, an end that will result in a better life for all concerned. The Lord has declared, "For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth" (D&C 60:4).

We can hope and pray for that glorious day foretold by the prophet Isaiah when men "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into prun-

inghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

*Live righteously and proclaim salvation*

Even in an evil world we can so live our lives as to merit the protecting care of our Father in Heaven. We can be as the righteous living among the evils of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleaded that these cities might be spared for the sake of the righteous. (See Genesis 18:20–32.)

And, above all, we can cultivate in our own hearts, and proclaim to the world, the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His atoning sacrifice we are certain life will continue beyond the veil of death. We can teach that gospel which will lead to the exaltation of the obedient.

**Comfort and peace of the Redeemer**

Even when the armaments of war ring out in deathly serenade and darkness and hatred reign in the hearts of some, there stands immovable, reassuring, comforting, and with great outreaching love the quiet figure of the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. We can proclaim with Paul:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38–39).

This life is but a chapter in the eternal plan of our Father. It is full of conflict and seeming incongruities. Some die young. Some live to old age. We cannot explain it. But we accept it with the certain knowledge that through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord we shall all go on living, and this with the comforting assurance of His immeasurable love.

He has said, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

And there, my brothers and sisters, we rest our faith. Regardless of the circumstances, we have the comfort and peace of Christ our Savior, our Redeemer, the living Son of the living God. I so testify in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "He Watching over Israel."

Elder Dale E. Miller offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 173rd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 6, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

**President James E. Faust**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 173rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating

in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “They, the Builders of the Nation.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy, following which the choir will sing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Spencer E. Jones of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “They, the Builders of the Nation.”

Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

The choir sang “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### What grandparents do

Years ago on Christmas Eve, a cousin lost a little five-year-old boy to quick-pneumonia. The family gathered around the casket for the family prayer. A small blanket, made by his mother, lay folded across the little boy's feet.

Just as they were to close the casket, my mother stepped forward, put her arm around the grieving mother, and helped her unfold the blanket and tuck it around the little boy. The last his parents saw of their little son, he was asleep, covered with that favorite blanket. It was a very tender moment. That is what grandmothers do!

We returned to Brigham City for the funeral of my wife's father, William W. Smith. A young man I knew as a seminary student stood at the casket, deeply moved. I did not know that he knew my father-in-law. He said:

“One summer I worked for him on the farm. Brother Smith talked to me about going on a mission. My family could not possibly support a missionary. Brother Smith told me to pray about it and said, ‘If you decide to go on a mission, I will pay for your mission,’ and he did.”

Neither my wife nor her mother knew that. It was one of those things that grandfathers do.

We have 10 children. One unsettled Sunday morning when our family was young, my wife was in sacrament meeting. As usual, I was away on Sunday. Our children took up much of a row.

Sister Walker, a lovely, gray-haired grandmother who raised 12 children, quietly moved from several rows back and slid into the row among our restless children. After the meeting, my wife thanked her for the help.

Sister Walker said, “You have your hands full, don't you?” My wife nodded. Sister Walker then patted her on the hand and said, “Your hands full now; your heart full later!” How prophetic was her quiet comment. That is what grandmothers do!

We presided over the New England Mission. One of our missionaries married and had five children. He went away to get a larger car for his family and never returned. His body was later found under an overpass; his car had been stolen.

I called his stake president to offer help to the family. He had already offered.

The grandfather said, “We know what our duty is. We won’t need any help from the Church. We know what our duty is.” That is what grandfathers do!

### **The elderly—a priceless resource**

It is my purpose to speak to you about and to speak to grandparents—the grandpas and the grandmas—and to other elderly members who have no children of their own but who stand in as grandparents.

The scriptures tell us, “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding” (Job 12:12).

Once in a stake meeting, I noticed a larger than usual number of older members, most of them widows. I mentioned to the stake president how impressive they were.

The president replied, “Yes, but they are not active in the Church,” meaning they did not serve as leaders or teachers. He spoke as though they were a burden.

I repeated his words, “Not active in the Church?” and asked, “Are they active in the gospel?” He did not quite understand the difference at first.

Like many of us, he concentrated so much on what people *do* that he overlooked what they *are*—a priceless resource of experience, wisdom, and inspiration.

### **Youth should draw close to the elderly**

We face an ominous challenge. Populations worldwide are declining. The birthrate in most countries is falling and life expectancy increasing. Families are smaller—deliberately limited. In some countries, in just a few years there will be more grandparents than there are children. The aging of the population has far-reaching consequences economically, socially, and spiritually. It will affect the growth of the Church.

We must teach our youth to draw close to the elderly grandpas and grandmas.

The First Presidency recently instructed young women who are approaching womanhood to join the mothers and grandmothers in Relief Society (see First Presidency letter, 19 Mar. 2003).

Some young women draw away. They would rather be with those their own age.

Young women, do not be so very foolish as to miss this association with the older sisters. They will bring more worth into your life than much of the activity you enjoy so much.

Leaders, teach the girls to draw close to their mothers and grandmothers and to the older women in the Relief Society. They will then have an association similar to what the young men have in the priesthood quorums.

### **The Restoration ties generations together**

All the attention given to our youth—all the programs, all we do for them—will be incomplete unless we teach them the purpose of the Restoration. The keys of the priesthood were restored and the sealing authority revealed and temples built to tie the generations together. From ancient times through all the revelations runs that eternal, golden thread, “Turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6).

### **Use the resource of the elderly**

Bishop, do you realize that some problems you worry about so much with the youth, and with others, could be solved if they would stay close to their fathers and mothers and to their grandparents, to the older folks?

If you are burdened with overmuch counseling, there are older sisters, grandmas in the ward, who can influence young married women and act as a grandmother to them. And there are older grandfathers for the young men. Older people have a

steadiness, a serenity that comes from experience. Learn to use that resource.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “The way to get along in any important matter is to gather unto yourselves wise men [and women], experienced and aged men [and women], to assist in council in all times of trouble” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 299).

We try to gather young people, and we miss getting the generations together. There is so much that older members can do. If you see older members as inactive in the Church, ask yourself, “Are they active in the gospel?”

### **Prayers of parents and grandparents**

Do not overlook the great sustaining power in the prayers of the parents and the grandparents. Remember, the “fervent prayer of a righteous man [or woman] avail-eth much” (James 5:16).

Alma the Younger was a rebel. He was struck down by an angel who told him, “Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith” (Mosiah 27:14).

### **Blessings of caring for the elderly**

My wife and I have seen our grandparents and then our parents leave us. Some experiences that we first thought to be burdens or trouble have long since been reclassified as blessings.

My wife’s father died in our home. He needed constant care. Nurses taught our children how to care for our bedridden grandpa. What they learned is of great

worth to them and to us. How grateful we are to have had him close to us.

We were repaid a thousand times over by the influence he had on our children. That was a great experience for our children, one I learned as a boy when Grandpa Packer died in our home.

Value the old folks for what they *are*, not just what they can *do*.

### **Pattern in the Church’s presiding councils**

Have you ever wondered why the Lord organized the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles so the senior leadership of the Church will always be older men? This pattern of seniority values wisdom and experience over youth and physical vigor.

The average age of the Presidency and the Twelve at the present time is 77 years old. We are not very nimble. We may be past our prime. Nevertheless, the Lord ordered it to be this way.

A conference or two ago, Joseph Wirthlin said he was going to challenge the members of the Twelve to a race. I thought once, “Well, I’ll accept the challenge.” Then I thought it would be safer to race against 96-year-old Brother David Haight. I thought that over and decided that David might trip me with his cane, and I would lose the race. So I gave it up!

When the Presidency and the Twelve meet together, we combine 1,161 years of life with an astonishing variety of experiences. We have 430 years, cumulatively, as General Authorities of the Church. Almost anything we talk about, one or more of us has been there, done that—including military action!

### **Seek help and advice from the elderly**

We live in troubled times. In the lifetime of our youth, the troubles will never be less and will certainly be more. Old folks offer a sure knowledge that things can be endured.



Our children have married and left home to seek their fortune. One family drove away with an old car and their little children. My wife was in tears. I consoled her, saying, "The Church is where they are going. There will be a grandma there to answer her questions about cooking or nursing and a grandpa to teach him practical things."

An adopted grandma can be found in Relief Society. And a grandpa will be found in the quorums of the priesthood. But not all of the grandpas and grandmas are in the Church.

One son bought a small home in a distant state. He showed me bricks on a corner of the foundation that were eroding away. He asked what he should do.

I did not know, but I asked, "Is there an older couple that lives close to you?"

"Yes," he said, "across the street and down a few houses is a retired couple."

"Why don't you ask him to come over and look at that. He knows your climate."

That was done, and he got the advice of an older man who had seen problems like that and many others. That is what *adopted* grandpas can do.

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

The Apostle Paul taught that "aged women" must teach young women and "aged men" must exhort young men, "shewing thyself a pattern of good works" (see Titus 2:1-7).

### **Do not withdraw during the golden years**

We are old now, and in due time we will be summoned beyond the veil. We do not resist that. We try to teach the practical things we have learned over the years to those who are younger—to our family and to others.

We cannot *do* what we once did, but we have become more than ever we were

before. Life's lessons, some of them very painful, qualify us to counsel, to correct, and even to warn our youth.

In your golden years there is so much to *do* and so much to *be*. Do not withdraw into a retirement from life, into amusement. That, for some, would be useless, even selfish. You may have served a mission and been released and consider yourself as having completed your service in the Church, but you are never released from being active in the *gospel*. "If," the Lord said, "ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (D&C 4:3).

You may at last, when old and feeble, learn that the greatest mission of all is to strengthen your own family and the families of others, to seal the generations.

### **Warm others by the fire of your faith**

Now, I am teaching a true principle. I am teaching doctrine. It is written that "the principle [agrees] precisely with the doctrine which is commanded you in the revelation" (D&C 128:7).

In the hymn "How Firm a Foundation," which was published in 1835 in the first Latter-day Saint hymnbook, we find these words:

E'en down to old age, all my people  
shall prove  
My sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable  
love;  
And then, when gray hair shall their  
temples adorn, . . .  
Like lambs shall they still in my bosom  
be borne.  
[Hymns, no. 85]

Keep the fire of your testimony of the restored gospel and your witness of our Redeemer burning so brightly that our children can warm their hands by the fire of your faith. That is what grandfathers and grandmothers are to do! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### A prayer for the children

At the close of His first day teaching among the Nephite faithful, the resurrected Jesus turned His attention to a special audience which often stands just below the level of our gaze, sometimes nearly out of sight. The sacred record says:

“He commanded that their little children should be brought [forward]. . . .

“And . . . when they had knelt upon the ground, . . . he himself also knelt . . . ; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, . . . so great and marvelous [were the] things . . . [He did] speak unto the Father. . . .

“ . . . When Jesus had made an end of praying . . . , he arose . . . and . . . wept, . . . and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and [again] prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again; . . . [saying] unto the multitude, . . . Behold your little ones.”

We cannot know exactly what the Savior was feeling in such a poignant moment, but we do know that He was “troubled” and that He “groaned within himself” over the destructive influences always swirling around the innocent.<sup>1</sup> We know He felt a great need to pray for and bless the children.

In such times as we are in, whether the threats be global or local or in individual lives, I too pray for the children. Some days it seems that a sea of temptation and transgression inundates them—simply washes over them before they can successfully withstand it, before they should have to face it. And often at least some of the forces at work seem beyond our personal control.

Well, some of them may be beyond our control, but I testify with faith in the living God that they are not beyond His.

He lives, and priesthood power is at work on both sides of the veil. We are not alone, and we do not tremble as if abandoned. In doing our part, we can live the gospel and defend its principles. We can declare to others the sure Way, the saving Truth, the joyful Life.<sup>2</sup> We can personally repent in any way we need to repent, and when we have done all, we can pray. In all these ways we can bless one another and especially those who need our protection the most—the children. As parents we can hold life together the way it is always held together—with love and faith, passed on to the next generation, one child at a time.

### The price of cynicism and skepticism

In offering such a prayer for the young, may I address a rather specific aspect of their safety? In this I speak carefully and lovingly to any of the adults of the Church, parents or otherwise, who may be given to cynicism or skepticism, who in matters of whole-souled devotion always seem to hang back a little, who at the Church’s doctrinal campsite always like to pitch their tents out on the periphery of religious faith. To all such—whom we do love and wish were more comfortable camping nearer to us—I say, please be aware that the full price to be paid for such a stance does not always come due in your lifetime. No, sadly, some elements of this can be a kind of profligate national debt, with payments coming out of your children’s and grandchildren’s pockets in far more expensive ways than you ever intended it to be.

In this Church there is an enormous amount of room—and scriptural commandment—for studying and learning, for comparing and considering, for discussion and awaiting further revelation. We all learn “line upon line, precept upon precept,”<sup>3</sup> with the goal being authentic reli-

gious faith informing genuine Christlike living. In this there is no place for coercion or manipulation, no place for intimidation or hypocrisy. But no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents' devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles who, now as in earlier days, lead that Church according to "the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . and the power of God unto salvation."<sup>4</sup> In such basic matters of faith, prophets do not apologize for requesting unity, indeed conformity, in the eloquent sense that the Prophet Joseph Smith used that latter word.<sup>5</sup> In any case, as Elder Neal Maxwell once said to me in a hallway conversation, "There didn't seem to be any problem with conformity the day the Red Sea opened."

### **Conveying our convictions to our children**

Parents simply cannot flirt with skepticism or cynicism, then be surprised when their children expand that flirtation into full-blown romance. If in matters of faith and belief children are at risk of being swept downstream by this intellectual current or that cultural rapid, we as their parents must be more certain than ever to hold to anchored, unmistakable moorings clearly recognizable to those of our own household. It won't help anyone if we go over the edge with them, explaining through the roar of the falls all the way down that we really did know the Church was true and that the keys of the priesthood really were lodged there but we just didn't want to stifle anyone's freedom to think otherwise. No, we can hardly expect the children to get to shore safely if the parents don't seem to know where to anchor their own boat. Isaiah once used a variation on such imagery when he said of unbelievers, "[Their] tacklings are loosed;

they could not . . . strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail."<sup>6</sup>

I think some parents may not understand that even when they feel secure in their own minds regarding matters of personal testimony, they can nevertheless make that faith too difficult for their children to detect. We can be reasonably active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints, but if we do not live lives of gospel integrity and convey to our children powerful, heartfelt convictions regarding the truthfulness of the Restoration and the divine guidance of the Church from the First Vision to this very hour, then those children may, to our regret but not surprise, turn out *not* to be visibly active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints or sometimes anything close to it.

### **If parents stray, children may stray farther**

Not long ago Sister Holland and I met a fine young man who came in contact with us after he had been roaming around through the occult and sorting through a variety of Eastern religions, all in an attempt to find religious faith. His father, he admitted, believed in nothing whatsoever. But his grandfather, he said, was actually a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "But he didn't do much with it," the young man said. "He was always pretty cynical about the Church." From a grandfather who is cynical to a son who is agnostic to a grandson who is now looking desperately for what God had already once given his family! What a classic example of the warning Elder Richard L. Evans once gave. Said he:

"Sometimes some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity or take perhaps a so called liberal view of basic and fundamental things—thinking that a little laxness or indulgence won't matter—or they may fail to teach or to attend Church, or may voice critical views. Some parents . . . seem to

feel that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their family's future. *But*," he observed, "*if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent's example.*"<sup>7</sup>

To lead a child (or anyone else!), even inadvertently, away from faithfulness, away from loyalty and bedrock belief simply because we want to be clever or independent is license no parent nor any other person has ever been given. In matters of religion, a skeptical mind is not a higher manifestation of virtue than is a believing heart, and analytical deconstruction in the field of, say, literary fiction can be just plain old-fashioned destruction when transferred to families yearning for faith at home. And such a deviation from the true course can be deceptively slow and subtle in its impact. As one observer said, "[If you raise the temperature of my] bath water . . . only 1 degree every 10 minutes, how [will I] know when to scream?"<sup>8</sup>

### **Live the gospel conspicuously**

When erecting their sacred tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai, the ancient children of Israel were commanded to make firm their supporting cords and strengthen the stakes which held them.<sup>9</sup> The reason? Storms arise in life—regularly. So fix it; fasten it; then fix and fasten it again. Even then we know that some children will make choices that break their parents' hearts. Moms and dads can do everything right and yet have children who stray. Moral agency still obtains. But even in such painful hours it will be comforting for you to know that your children knew of your abiding faith in Christ, in His true Church, in the keys of the priesthood, and in those who hold them. It will be comforting then for you to know that if your children choose to leave the straight and narrow way, they leave it very conscious that their parents were firmly in it. Furthermore, they will be

much more likely to return to that path when they come to themselves<sup>10</sup> and recall the loving example and gentle teachings you offered them there.

Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can. Keep the covenants your children know you have made. Give priesthood blessings. And bear your testimony!<sup>11</sup> Don't just assume your children will somehow get the drift of your beliefs on their own. The prophet Nephi said near the end of his life that they had written their record of Christ and preserved their convictions regarding His gospel in order "to *persuade* our children . . . that our children may *know* . . . [and believe] the right way."<sup>12</sup>

### **What do children know from watching us?**

Nephi-like, might we ask ourselves what our children know? From us? Personally? Do our children know that we love the scriptures? Do they see us reading them and marking them and clinging to them in daily life? Have our children ever unexpectedly opened a closed door and found us on our knees in prayer? Have they heard us not only pray *with* them but also pray *for* them out of nothing more than sheer parental love? Do our children know we believe in fasting as something more than an obligatory first-Sunday-of-the-month hardship? Do they know that we have fasted for them and for their future on days about which they knew nothing? Do they know we love being in the temple, not least because it provides a bond to them that neither death nor the legions of hell can break? Do they know we love and sustain local and general leaders, imperfect as they are, for their willingness to accept callings they did not seek in order to preserve a standard of righteousness they did not create? Do those children know that we love God with all our heart and that we long to see the face—and fall at the feet—of His Only Begotten Son? I pray that they know this.

### The holder of the bow

Brothers and sisters, our children take their flight into the future with our thrust and with our aim. And even as we anxiously watch that arrow in flight and know all the evils that can deflect its course after it has left our hand, nevertheless we take courage in remembering that the most important mortal factor in determining that arrow's destination will be the stability, strength, and unwavering certainty of the holder of the bow.<sup>13</sup>

Carl Sandburg once said, "A baby is God's opinion that life should go on."<sup>14</sup> For that baby's future as well as your own, be strong. Be believing. Keep loving and keep testifying. Keep praying. Those prayers will be heard and answered in the most unexpected hour. God will send aid to no one more readily than He will send it to a child—and to the parent of a child.

"And [Jesus] said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And . . . they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending . . . as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them."<sup>15</sup>

May it always be so, I earnestly pray—for the children—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 17:11, 14–16, 18, 21–23.
2. See John 14:6.
3. 2 Nephi 28:30.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:13.
6. Isaiah 33:23.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1964, 135–36; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1964, 1102; italics added.
8. Marshall McLuhan, quoted in John Leo, "The Proper Place for Commercials," *U.S. News and World Report*, 30 Oct. 1989, 71.
9. See Isaiah 54:2; 3 Nephi 22:2.
10. See Luke 15:17.
11. See Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 37 for a defining statement on the parental power of human testimony.
12. 2 Nephi 25:23, 26, 28; italics added.
13. I am indebted to Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* for the suggestion of this metaphor.
14. In *The Columbia World of Quotations* (1996), no. 48047.
15. 3 Nephi 17:23–24.

## Elder Spencer V. Jones

### Encounter with a skunk

Every decision we make, good or bad, carries an accompanying consequence.

I grew up in what some of you might call a boring farming community: Virden, New Mexico, population 135. One summer night when I was a boy, my cousins, some friends, and I were looking for ways to create some excitement. Someone suggested we play a harmless prank on a neighbor. My conscience whispered it was

wrong, but I didn't have the courage to resist the enthusiastic response of the group.

After performing our mischievous act, we sprinted down the dark country road to make our escape, laughing and congratulating ourselves as we ran. Suddenly, one of the group stumbled, crying out, "Oh no, I kicked a cat!" Almost instantly we felt a very fine mist settle over us. It carried a horrible odor. What my friend thought was a cat was actually a skunk. It had sprayed us in self-defense.

Very few odors are as nauseating as skunk spray, and we smelled terrible.

Dejectedly we went home in search of a little parental comfort for our pitiful plight. As we stepped inside the kitchen door, Mom took one sniff and shooed us out into the yard. We were cast out of our home. Then she launched the cleansing process. She burned our clothes. Then, it seemed that every home remedy or concoction in the community was volunteered in our behalf. Among them, we endured a variety of baths: first tomato juice, then cow's milk, and even harsh homemade lye soap. But the stench remained. Even my dad's powerful aftershave lotion could not overpower the stench. For days we were condemned to eat outside under a tree, sleep outdoors in a tent, and ride in the back of the pickup truck.

After a while, naively thinking the smell was gone, we tried to approach some normal-smelling girls. They would not allow us within yards, shattering our fragile teenage egos!

### **Consequences of sin cannot be hidden**

Now, I must admit that being sprayed by a skunk is not a common consequence of sin. Most consequences are not as immediate or dramatic. But sooner or later, for all sin, a consequence will be paid.

At times, consequences of sin may appear to be very subtle to the sinner. We may even convince ourselves, as we did before approaching the girls, that no one will be able to detect our sins and that they are well concealed. But always to our Heavenly Father and often to spiritually sensitive leaders, parents, and friends, our sins are glaringly apparent.

While attending a youth fireside with Elder Richard G. Scott, I noticed five youths scattered among the congregation whose countenances or body language almost screamed that something was spiritually amiss in their lives. After the meeting, when I mentioned the five youths to El-

der Scott, he simply replied, "There were eight."

Isaiah prophesied, "Their countenance doth witness against them, and doth declare their sin to be even as Sodom, and they cannot hide it" (2 Nephi 13:9; see also Isaiah 3:9).

God has declared, "He that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out" (D&C 42:28). Just as my cousins and I were "cast out" of our earthly home as a consequence of our prank, we will be cast out of our Heavenly Father's home if we do not repent.

"When we undertake to cover our sins," as I tried to do with my dad's aftershave lotion, "the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved" (D&C 121:37). We lose our spiritual gifts. The Lord has declared, "He that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received" (D&C 1:33).

### **Being cleansed from the stench of sin**

Each one of us has the Light of Christ, or a conscience. It constantly prompts us to choose good. Good choices yield good consequences. On the other hand, delaying repentance and continuing to commit sin is like continuing to kick the skunk. The stench will become stronger with each sin, alienating us further and further from God and those we love. Soon we could become like Laman and Lemuel, who, after continually making bad choices, became "past feeling" and could no longer feel the "still small voice" (1 Nephi 17:45).

If I had responded to my conscience when it first whispered that the prank was wrong, I would have avoided the whole stinking ordeal.

Through Nephi, the Savior taught that "no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever" (1 Nephi 10:21).

But our loving Heavenly Father, with a foreknowledge of our frailties, and know-

ing that you and I would all sin and become unclean, provided a cleansing process from sin that—unlike tomato juice, milk, and lye soap—actually does work.

He sent a Savior, His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins (see Alma 22:14).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as the Savior demonstrated perfect obedience, His anguish caused Him, “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18). Then He allowed Himself to be “lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Nephi 11:33).

“He suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. . . . And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:11, 13).

The Savior has indicated how to know “if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). Then comes the miraculous promise: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

If the Spirit is pricking your heart to correct something in your life, know this: your soul is precious. Heavenly Father wants you to be part of His eternal family.

I lovingly plead, “Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance” (Alma 34:33). Start the process now. Remove the stench of sin with the remedy of repentance. Then, through the Atonement, the Savior can wash you clean. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder D. Rex Gerratt and Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder D. Rex Gerratt

### Follow the instructions

Some years ago while I was serving as a ward clerk, the ward supplies for the new year arrived on my doorstep. Among the numerous boxes, one box addressed to the ward clerk caught my attention. Taped to the box was a tag with bold type: “If all else fails—Please! Follow instructions.”

I did not consider this generic, and I was sure that someone at Church headquarters knew me personally.

Although humorous at the time, the image of this little tag has permanently attached its message to my mind: “If all else fails—Please! Follow instructions.”

Every person experiences many challenges in this mortal life. Each has per-

sonal agency to make choices that affect his or her progress. Good choices bring promised blessings, and bad choices always bring undesired consequences.

Life is uncertain. Our time is short. It is precious. This is the time “to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32). There is not time to waste in personal experimentation or involvement with those things that have been proven harmful to our bodies and our souls.

None of us are perfect, and we all need help. But we are not left alone if we are teachable, with hearts to feel and ears to hear.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

### **How to receive instructions from the Lord**

How do we receive instruction?

First, we must have a sincere desire.

Second, we must have faith—to believe the Lord knows us, that He loves us, and that He will give us answers to our prayers.

As Joseph Smith was reading the Bible, he read in James 1:5:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”

Joseph followed instructions and received an answer to his prayer. We will also receive answers to our prayers.

During my lifetime I have been a farmer and a father of a large family. Even though personal and family prayer have always been a daily part of our lives, on occasion I have felt an overwhelming need to go into the field at night or kneel by the haystack, look up into the heavens, and speak aloud to my Father in Heaven. I have always felt His warmth and knew then, as I know now, that He is listening to me and will answer my prayers in His wisdom for my best good.

To all, wherever you are—to you who need hope, to you who need comfort, to you who are unhappy, to you who need direction and need to feel a purpose in your lives—my dear friends, I encourage you, I urge you to bow your head or drop to your knees! In your own words, thank your Heavenly Father for His Son’s atoning sacrifice for you and for all the blessings He has given you. Tears will moisten your eyes, and the warmth of the Spirit will come into your heart.

Then talk to the Lord, asking for comfort, direction, and understanding. As you

open your mind and heart to feel the Spirit, the Lord in His own time and in His own way will give you the instructions which will bless your life.

### **Instructions in the scriptures**

The scriptures also contain instructions of ancient and modern prophets. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

In this dispensation the Lord has given us the comforting counsel to “be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart . . . that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy” (D&C 98:14).

Following instructions requires hard work, commitment, and enduring to the end.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

“And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you” (D&C 98:22).

“If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

### **Instructions from the living prophet**

As in times past, we receive instructions from the Lord’s living prophet. I testify to you that I know President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord’s prophet today. He gives to us inspired counsel for our time.

In the October 2001 general conference he said:



“Now, today, we are faced with particular problems, serious and consuming and difficult and of great concern to us. Surely we have need for the Lord. . . .

“Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness. God has made it clear that if we will not forsake Him, He will not forsake us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 90).

### Hearken to the counsel

After receiving instructions, we need to be obedient and hearken to the counsel we receive. We need to listen to and follow our appointed leaders.

On one occasion the Savior looked upon the multitude as sheep having no shepherd (see Matthew 9:36). Every member in this Church has shepherds. We call

them quorum leaders, bishops, and stake presidents.

The Lord admonishes us to search the scriptures and to follow the commandments.

He has promised that all His words shall be fulfilled, “whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

The Lord declared that “whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:4).

“If all else fails—Please! Follow instructions.”

May we do this, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder F. Burton Howard

### Eternal marriage

A number of years ago my wife and I went to a garden wedding reception. Earlier that day we had been to the temple, where two young people we knew had been married for time and all eternity. They were much in love. The circumstances of their meeting had been almost miraculous. Many tears of happiness were shed. We stood in the reception line at the end of a perfect day. Ahead of us was a close friend of the family. As he approached the couple, he stopped and in a beautiful, clear tenor voice sang to them the stirring words from the book of Ruth:

“Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die” (Ruth 1:16–17).

We were deeply touched and felt reassured about their prospects for happi-

ness—this in part, I suppose, because my wife and I have had these same words on the wall of our home for many years.

Sadly, the significance of these beautiful words is subsiding. Far too many marriages today end in divorce. Selfishness, sin, and personal convenience often prevail over covenants and commitment.

### The culminating element of God’s plan

Eternal marriage is a principle which was established before the foundation of the world and was instituted on this earth before death came into it. Adam and Eve were given to each other by God in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. The scripture says:

“In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

“Male and female created he them; and *blessed* them” (Genesis 5:1–2; italics added).

The prophets have uniformly taught that the consummate and culminating element of God's great plan for the blessing of His children is eternal marriage. President Ezra Taft Benson stated, "Faithfulness to the marriage covenant brings the fullest joy here and glorious rewards hereafter" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 533–34). President Howard W. Hunter described celestial marriage as "the crowning gospel ordinance" and clarified that "while it may take somewhat longer [for some,] perhaps even beyond this mortal life," it would not be denied to any worthy individual (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1997], 132, 140). President Gordon B. Hinckley has called eternal marriage a wonderful thing (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71) and a "gift, precious beyond all others" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 23).

However, notwithstanding the grandeur and glory of the gift, it is not free. In fact, it is conditional, and having been given, it may be withdrawn if we do not keep the conditions of the covenant which accompanies it. Section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that "in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man [that means a woman too] must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]" (D&C 131:1–2).

### **Our obligations in the marriage covenant**

A covenant is a sacred promise. We promise to do some things, and God binds Himself to do others. To those who keep the covenant of marriage, God promises the fulness of His glory, eternal lives, eternal increase, exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and a fulness of joy. We all know that, but sometimes we don't give much thought to what we have to do to receive these blessings. The scriptures seem to say

clearly that at least three obligations are inherent in this covenant.

#### *Continue to grow and improve*

First, an eternal marriage is eternal. *Eternal* implies continuing growth and improvement. It means that man and wife will honestly try to perfect themselves. It means that the marriage relationship is not to be frivolously discarded at the first sign of disagreement or when times get hard. It signifies that love will grow stronger with time and that it extends beyond the grave. It means that each partner will be blessed with the company of the other partner forever and that problems and differences might as well be resolved because they are not going to go away. *Eternal* signifies repentance, forgiveness, long-suffering, patience, hope, charity, love, and humility. All of these things are involved in anything that is eternal, and surely we must learn and practice them if we intend to claim an eternal marriage.

#### *Invite God into the marriage; be equal, true*

Second, an eternal marriage is ordained of God. This means that the parties to the marriage covenant agree to invite God into their marriage, to pray together, to keep the commandments, to keep wants and passions within certain limits that the prophets have outlined. It means to be equal companions and to be just as true and pure outside the home as inside the home. That is part of what *ordained of God* means.

#### *Bear and teach children; sustain each other*

Third, eternal marriage is a kind of partnership with God. He promises a continuation of lives to those who are sealed together in the temple. There is a oneness with the Creator implied in the commandment given to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth. There is an obliga-

tion to teach children the gospel, for they are His children too. Thus we have family home evening and scripture study, gospel conversations, and service to others. There would seem to be an obligation to support and sustain each other in callings and roles that each is given to perform. How can we claim to be one with God if we cannot sustain one another when the wife is called to serve in the Primary or the husband in the bishopric?

### **Abuse and sin violate the covenant**

So the covenant of marriage implies at least these things and probably others. I may miss the mark, but I don't think by far, when I say that those who verbally or physically abuse their wives or husbands, or those who degrade or demean or exercise unrighteous dominion in a marriage, are not keeping the covenant. Nor are those who neglect the commandments or who fail to sustain their leaders. Even those who merely decline callings, neglect neighbors, or moderately adopt worldly ways are at risk. If we are not keeping our part of the covenant, we have no promise.

### **Be committed to making marriage work**

Most of all, I think eternal marriage cannot be achieved without a commitment to make it work. Most of what I know about this I have learned from my companion. We have been married for almost 47 years now. From the beginning she knew what kind of marriage she wanted.

### *Silverware exemplifies a vision of marriage*

We started as poor college students, but her vision for our marriage was exemplified by a set of silverware. As is common today, when we married she registered with a local department store. Instead of listing all the pots and pans and appliances we needed and hoped to receive, she chose another course. She asked for silverware.

She chose a pattern and the number of place settings and listed knives, forks, and spoons on the wedding registry and nothing else. No towels, no toasters, no television—just knives, forks, and spoons.

The wedding came and went. Our friends and our parents' friends gave gifts. We departed for a brief honeymoon and decided to open the presents when we returned. When we did so, we were shocked. There was not a single knife or fork in the lot. We joked about it and went on with our lives.

Two children came along while we were in law school. We had no money to spare. But when my wife worked as a part-time election judge or when someone gave her a few dollars for her birthday, she would quietly set it aside, and when she had enough she would go to town to buy a fork or a spoon. It took us several years to accumulate enough pieces to use them.

### *Protecting the silverware from tarnish*

When we finally had service for four, we began to invite some of our friends for dinner. Before they came, we would have a little discussion in the kitchen. Which utensils would we use, the battered and mismatched stainless or the special silverware? In those early days I would often vote for the stainless. It was easier. You could just throw it in the dishwasher after the meal, and it took care of itself.

The silver, on the other hand, was a lot of work. My wife had it hidden away under the bed where it could not be found easily by a burglar. She had insisted that I buy a tarnish-free cloth to wrap it in. Each piece was in a separate pocket, and it was no easy task to assemble all the pieces. When the silver was used, it had to be hand washed and dried so that it would not spot, and put back in the pockets so it would not tarnish, and wrapped up and carefully hidden again so it would not get stolen. If any tarnish was discovered, I was

sent to buy silver polish, and together we carefully rubbed the stains away.

### *Caring for the silverware*

Over the years we added to the set, and I watched with amazement how she cared for the silver. My wife was never one to get angry easily. However, I remember the day when one of our children somehow got hold of one of the silver forks and wanted to use it to dig up the backyard. That attempt was met with a fiery glare and a warning not to even think about it—ever!

I noticed that the silverware never went to the many ward dinners she cooked or never accompanied the many meals she made and sent to others who were sick or needy. It never went on picnics and never went camping. In fact it never went anywhere; and, as time went by, it didn't even come to the table very often. Some of our friends were weighed in the balance, found wanting, and didn't even know it. They got the stainless when they came to dinner.

The time came when we were called to go on a mission. I arrived home one day and was told that I had to rent a safe-deposit box for the silver. She didn't want to take it with us. She didn't want to leave it behind. And she didn't want to lose it.

### *How to treat what you want to last forever*

For years I thought she was a little bit eccentric, and then one day I realized that she had known for a long time something that I was just beginning to understand. If you want something to last forever, you treat it differently. You shield it and protect it. You never abuse it. You don't expose it to the elements. You don't make it common or ordinary. If it ever becomes tarnished, you lovingly polish it until it gleams like new. It becomes special because you have made it so, and it grows more beautiful and precious as time goes by.

Eternal marriage is just like that. We need to treat it just that way. I pray that we may see it for the priceless gift that it is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### **Give thanks in all things**

In one of the times of spiritual and temporal adversity recorded in the Book of Mormon, when the people of God were “suffering all manner of afflictions,” the Lord commanded them “to give thanks in all things” (Mosiah 26:38, 39). I wish to apply that teaching to our time.

The children of God have always been commanded to give thanks. There are examples throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Apostle Paul wrote, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). The prophet Alma taught, “When thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God”

(Alma 37:37). And in modern revelation the Lord declared that “he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold” (D&C 78:19).

### **Gratitude for the Savior, revealed truths**

We have so much for which to give thanks. First and foremost, we are thankful for our Savior Jesus Christ. Under the plan of the Father, He created the world. Through His prophets, He revealed the plan of salvation with its accompanying commandments and ordinances. He came into mortality to teach and show us the way. He suffered and paid the price for

our sins if we would repent. He gave up His life, and He conquered death and rose from the grave that we all will live again. He is the Light and Life of the World. As King Benjamin taught, if we “should render all the thanks and praise which [our] whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created [us], and has kept and preserved [us], and . . . should serve him with all [our] whole souls yet [we] would be unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:20–21).

We give thanks for the revealed truths that provide a standard against which to measure all things. As the Bible teaches, the Lord gave us apostles and prophets “for the perfecting of the saints” (see Ephesians 4:11–12). We use the revealed truth they give us, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

Those who view every calamity and measure every new assertion or discovery against the standard of revealed truth need not be “tossed to and fro” but can be steady and at peace. God is in His heavens, and His promises are sure. “Be not troubled,” He has said to us concerning the destructions that will precede the end of the world, “for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled” (D&C 45:35). What an anchor to the soul in these troubled times!

We give thanks for commandments. They are directions away from pitfalls, and they are invitations to blessings. Commandments mark the path and show us the way to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

### **Testimonies of gratitude for the gospel**

In the past eight months in the Philippines, I have heard many testimonies of the blessings of the gospel. Speaking at

the dedication of his ward chapel, a Filipino bishop expressed his gratitude for the gospel message that came into his life about 10 years ago. He described how it rescued him from a life of selfishness, excess, and abusive practices and made him a good husband and father. He testified of the blessings that had come to him from paying his tithing.

Speaking at a leadership meeting, a counselor in a stake presidency who is a lawyer and community leader said, “I can declare to the whole world without mental reservation that the greatest thing that ever happened in my life is my becoming a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It . . . made a great difference in my life and that of my family, even if I feel there is more that I should learn and apply in my life. The Church is indeed a marvelous work and a wonder.”

You do not have to travel to the Philippines to experience such testimonies. They are evident wherever the gospel message is received and lived. But Sister Oaks and I are profoundly grateful for our opportunity to live and serve in the Philippines, where we have met thousands of wonderful members in new surroundings and seen the gospel in a new light.

### **The process of establishing the Church**

In the developing world we learn the importance of establishing the Church—not just teaching and baptizing, but retaining the new members by loving, by calling and ordaining, and by nourishing with the good word of God. We have learned the importance of challenging members to abandon cultural traditions that are contrary to gospel commandments and covenants and to live so that they and their posterity “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; . . . built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19–20).

People who do this become part of the worldwide gospel culture of commandments and covenants and ordinances and blessings. Such people experience “a mighty change” in their hearts, “that [they] have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). The image of God is “engraven upon [their] countenances” (Alma 5:19). Such followers of Christ are found in every land where the gospel and the Church have been established. We have many of them in the Philippines, and we are working to encourage more of them. We do this by growing from our centers of strength, concentrating our teaching where there are sufficiently large groups of committed members to provide the friendship, the teachings, the role models, and the needed assistance to the struggling newly born members who are just learning what the gospel asks of us and gives to us.

### **Be grateful even for afflictions**

The revelations, for which we are grateful, show that we should even give thanks for our afflictions because they turn our hearts to God and give us opportunities to prepare for what God would have us become. The Lord taught the prophet Moroni, “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble,” and then promised that “if they humble themselves . . . and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27). In the midst of the persecutions the Latter-day Saints were suffering in Missouri, the Lord gave a similar teaching and promise: “Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks; . . . and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good” (D&C 98:1, 3). And to Joseph Smith in the afflictions of Liberty Jail, the Lord said, “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience,

and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7). Brigham Young understood. Said he:

“There is not a single condition of life [or] one hour’s experience but what is beneficial to all those who make it their study, and aim to improve upon the experience they gain” (*Deseret News Weekly*, 9 July 1862, 1).

As someone has said, there is a big difference between 20 years’ experience and one year’s experience repeated 20 times. If we understand the Lord’s teachings and promises, we will learn and grow from our adversities.

Many of the inspired teachings of our modern prophets are compiled in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, our course of study for Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society. The timeless doctrines and principles included in these books are fountains of divine wisdom and guidance. Wise teachers in wards and branches will not substitute their own subjects and wisdom but focus on these inspired teachings and their application to current circumstances and challenges.

For example, in the current volume we read these words of President John Taylor on the subject of gratitude for suffering: “We have learned many things through suffering. We call it suffering. I call it a school of experience. . . . I have never looked at these things in any other light than trials for the purpose of purifying the Saints of God that they may be, as the scriptures say, as gold that has been seven times purified by the fire” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* [2001], 203).

Pioneers like President John Taylor, who witnessed the murder of their prophet and experienced prolonged persecution and incredible hardships for their faith, praised God and thanked Him. Through their challenges and the courageous and inspired actions they took to meet them, they grew in faith and in spiritual stature. Through their afflictions they became

what God desired them to become, and they laid the foundation of the great work that blesses our lives today.

Like the pioneers, we should thank God for our adversities and pray for guidance in meeting them. Through that attitude and through our faith and obedience, we will realize the promises God has given us. It is all part of the plan.

### **Strength is forged in adversity**

I love the musical and motion picture *Fiddler on the Roof*. There a wonderful Jewish father sings “If I Were a Rich Man.” His memorable prayer concludes with this pleading question:

Lord, who made the lion and the lamb,  
You decreed I should be what I am;  
Would it spoil some vast eternal plan,  
If I were a wealthy man?  
[Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick (1964)]

Yes, Tevye, it might. Let us give thanks for what we are and for the circumstances God has given us for our personal journey through mortality.

In ancient times the prophet Lehi taught this truth to his son Jacob:

“In thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren.

“Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2).

My mother loved that scripture and lived its principle. The greatest affliction of her life was the death of her husband, our father, after only 11 years of marriage. This changed her life and imposed great hardships as she proceeded to earn a living and raise her three little children alone. Nevertheless, I often heard her say that the Lord consecrated that affliction for her gain because her husband’s death compelled her to develop her talents and serve and become something that she could never have become without that seeming tragedy. Our

mother was a spiritual giant, strong and fully worthy of the loving tribute her three children inscribed on her headstone: “Her Faith Strengthened All.”

The blessings of adversity extend to others. I know it was a blessing to be raised by a widowed mother whose children had to learn how to work, early and hard. I know that relative poverty and hard work are not greater adversities than affluence and abundant free time. I also know that strength is forged in adversity and that faith is developed in a setting where we cannot see ahead.

### **Adversity can further the work of God**

When we give thanks in all things, we see hardships and adversities in the context of the purpose of life. We are sent here to be tested. There must be opposition in *all* things. We are meant to learn and grow through that opposition, through meeting our challenges, and through teaching others to do the same. Our beloved colleague Elder Neal A. Maxwell has given us a noble example of this. His courage, his submissive attitude in accepting his affliction with cancer, and his stalwart continued service have ministered comfort to thousands and taught eternal principles to millions. His example shows that the Lord will not only consecrate our afflictions for our gain, but He will use them to bless the lives of countless others.

Jesus taught this lesson when He and His disciples met a man who was born blind. “Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” the disciples asked. “Neither,” Jesus answered. The man was born blind “that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:2, 3).

If we see life through the lens of spirituality, we can see many examples of the works of God being furthered through the adversities of His children. I often visit the American War Memorial in Manila. To me, that is a sacred place. It is the burial

place of over 17,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen who lost their lives in World War II battles in the Pacific. The memorial also honors over 36,000 other servicemen who also lost their lives but whose bodies were never recovered. As I walk past the beautiful walls where are inscribed their names and the state of their origin, I see many that I suppose were faithful Latter-day Saints.

Reflecting on the wartime deaths of so many worthy and wonderful members and how much suffering this has caused their loved ones, I have thought of President Joseph F. Smith's great vision recorded in the 138th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. He saw "an innumerable company" of righteous spirits "who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality" (D&C 138:12). They were organized and appointed as messengers, "clothed with power and authority, and commissioned . . . to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, . . . and thus was the gospel preached to the dead" (D&C 138:30). Reflecting on this revelation and remembering the millions who have fallen in war, I rejoice in the Lord's plan, in which the adversity of the deaths of many righteous individuals is turned into the blessing of righteous messengers to preach the gospel to their countless comrades-in-arms.

When we understand this principle, that God offers us opportunities for blessings and blesses us through our own adversities and the adversities of others, we can understand why He has commanded us again and again to "thank the Lord thy God in all things" (D&C 59:7).

I pray that we will be blessed to understand the truth and purpose of the doctrines and commandments I have described and that we will be faithful enough and strong enough to give thanks in all things. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer and Creator, for whom we

give thanks, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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### **President Faust**

The choir has sung "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir; the combined choir from Brigham Young University; and the Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the stakes in Bluffdale, Riverton, and Herriman, Utah; and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church health unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to the local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "God Bless Our Prophet Dear." The benediction will then be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.



## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Gratitude for conference

Well, my beloved brethren and sisters, it's all over but the work. How grateful we all ought to feel for this wonderful conference. We have met together in peace without disturbance of any kind. We have reflected much on the wonderful blessings of the Lord. Our appreciation for the tremendous blessings which we have in the gospel has been greatly strengthened. As we have heard the testimonies of the speakers, our own witness of the truth has been rekindled into a bright and burning flame. I hope that everyone who has participated in this great conference has been touched for good, that each of us is a better man or woman for our experience together these past two days. I speak for myself when I say that I feel closer to the Lord. I hope this has been your experience. I have a strengthened desire to obey His commandments, to live His teachings, and to commune with Him in prayer, thereby preserving a relationship with Him who is my Father and my God.

And so, as we conclude this great gathering of Latter-day Saints, I offer a plea that each of us will seek to live closer to the Lord and to commune with Him more frequently and with increased faith.

### Let us be a prayerful people

Fathers and mothers, pray over your children. Pray that they may be shielded from the evils of the world. Pray that they may grow in faith and knowledge. Pray that they may be directed toward lives that will be profitable and good. Husbands, pray for your wives. Express unto the Lord your gratitude for them and plead with Him in their behalf. Wives, pray for your husbands. Many of them walk a very difficult road with countless problems and great perplexities. Plead with the Almighty that

they may be guided, blessed, protected, and inspired in their righteous endeavors.

Pray for peace in the earth, that the Almighty, who governs the universe, will stretch forth His hand and let His Spirit brood upon the people, that the nations may not rage one against another.

Pray for the weather. We have floods in one area and drought in another. I am satisfied that if enough prayers ascend to heaven for moisture upon the land, the Lord will answer those prayers for the sake of the righteous.

Way back in 1969 I was in South America. I flew from Argentina to Santiago, Chile. The Andes mountains were dry. There was no snow. The grass was burned. Chile was in the midst of a devastating drought. The people pleaded for help in bringing moisture.

We dedicated two new buildings on that visit. In each of those dedicatory services we pleaded with the Lord for rain upon the land. I have the testimony of many who were in those meetings that the heavens were opened and the rains fell with such abundance that the people asked the Lord to shut them off.

Pray for wisdom and understanding as you walk the difficult paths of your lives. If you are determined to do foolish and imprudent things, I think the Lord will not prevent you. But if you seek His wisdom and follow the counsel of the impressions that come to you, I am confident that you will be blessed.

Let us be a prayerful people. Let us bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1).

### Love and serve the Lord

May the blessings of heaven deservedly rest upon you. In the words of Deuteronomy, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear

the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Be assured, my dear brothers and sisters, that "He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps" (Felix Mendelssohn, *Elijah*).

For the blessings of heaven to rest upon you I humbly pray as I express to you my love for each of you. Thank you

for your great kindness to me and your great faithfulness and energy in moving forward the work of the Almighty, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "God Bless Our Prophet Dear."

Elder John H. Groberg offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Bluffdale, Riverton, and Herriman, Utah. Thomas Waldron directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

ENGLISH



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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-third  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 4 and 5, 2003**



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# Report of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, 2003. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 4, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live worldwide over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander,

Charles Didier, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Merrill J. Bateman

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church Web site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise” and will now favor us with “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Elder Hammond. It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **The growth and impact of this work**

My beloved brethren and sisters throughout the world, we send greetings in the name of our Redeemer. We send our love and our blessing. I commend you most warmly on what you are doing to move forward the work of the Lord.

Now and again I quietly reflect on the growth and impact of this work. I reflect on that meeting with a few present in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse on the 6th of April 1830. Here the Church was organized, and here began the long march which has brought it to its present stature.

Our people have passed through oppression and persecution; they have suffered drivings and every imaginable evil. And out of all of that has come something which today is glorious to behold.

### **Responsibility to preach the gospel**

In the opening of this work the Lord declared:

“Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

“For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. . . .

“And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

“And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them” (D&C 1:1–2, 4–5).

There can be no doubt concerning our responsibility to the peoples of the earth. There can be no doubt that we are moving forward in pursuing that responsibility.

### **A strong worldwide church**

As I speak to you today, most members of the Church, regardless of where you live, can hear me. It is a miracle. Who in the earlier days could have dreamed of this season of opportunity in which we live?

We now have strong congregations in every state of the United States and in every province of Canada. We have such in every state of Mexico, in every nation of Central America, and throughout the nations of South America. We have strong congregations in Australia and New Zealand and the isles of the Pacific. We are

well established in the nations of the Orient. We are in every nation of Western Europe and in much of Eastern Europe, and we are firmly established in Africa.

### **Tremendous missionary program**

We are being recognized for the tremendous virtues of our programs and the vast good which they do. A California newspaper recently commented:

“The white shirts, backpacks and bicycles give them away, even before you spot the Book of Mormon.

“They’re stereotyped, for good reason.

“These armies of young men—missionaries in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—are strictly regimented while serving missions around the globe.

“For two years, they spend 60 hours a week doing ecclesiastical work, praying, studying, and telling others about the Gospel that drove them to leave families, friends and the comfort of home behind.

“Contact with their loved ones is limited to letters and two calls a year.

“They live frugally, in private homes and apartments with companion missionaries, rising at 6 a.m. to study and pray for guidance in the work they will do until long after the sun sets. . . .

“This life, they say, is a sacrifice—and the most ‘fun’ they can imagine” (Pricilla Nordyke Roden, “Answering the Call,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, 26 Aug. 2003, p. B1).

That might have been written of our missionaries in the more than 120 nations in which they are found serving.

What a miracle it is that we should have some 60,000 of them, most of them young, giving of their time and their testimonies to the world.

I recently met with a group of missionaries who were to be released the next day to return home. They were from various nations across the earth, from Mongolia to Madagascar. They were clean and bright

and enthusiastic. They bespoke love for the Church, for their mission president, for their companions. What a marvelous thing is this unique and tremendous program of the Church.

Likewise other programs.

### **Wonderful humanitarian programs**

We recently were applauded in the public press for giving three million dollars to vaccinate children against measles in Africa. This money did not come from tithing. It came from contributions of the faithful to the humanitarian work of the Church. We have joined the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization in an effort to immunize 200 million children and prevent 1.2 million deaths from measles over the next five years. Our contribution alone will provide vaccine for three million children.

What a marvelous and wonderful thing that is. And so it is with each of our humanitarian programs.

### **Perpetual Education Fund report**

One more item.

In March 2001 we announced that the Church was establishing a plan to assist our returned missionaries and other young adults in gaining education and training leading to better employment opportunities in countries with less abundance and fewer opportunities.

We invited those who wished to help in this plan to contribute to a fund called the Perpetual Education Fund, patterned after the 19th-century Perpetual Emigration Fund. I offer a brief report on what is happening with that plan.

Because of your generous contributions, we have been able to keep current

with the growing need for loans. To date the Church has granted about 10,000 loans to young men and women in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other areas of the Church. These young people have committed to repay their loans so that others may enjoy the same opportunities they are experiencing.

Many have graduated and are experiencing the benefits of their training. To date, about 600 young men and women have completed their training. The majority of these have found good employment. Many more will graduate and enter the workforce in their own communities in the months ahead. They will make their mark in the world, rear families, and serve the Church. Many are already achieving these objectives.

For example, Patrick was the first Perpetual Education Fund student to complete school in Jamaica. His basic training in management earned him a well-paying job at the national airport, with a promising future. Repayment of his loan began immediately.

Flavia, a sister from a poorer part of South America, found little opportunity and means for training and regular employment until help came through the PEF to receive training in operating computers. With the help of LDS Employment Services, she found work in a good company after completing her training. She reports: "Today I am responsible for the financial consulting area of one of the largest hospitals in Recife using [a sophisticated] computer system. I was among the crew that implemented this financial system in the company."

These examples could be multiplied. We are happy to report that the plan is working well and gradually expanding as we gain experience. Early reports of loan repayments are encouraging. Again, we thank you for your generosity, interest, and prayers in behalf of the Perpetual Education Fund.

### **The sun never sets on the Lord's work**

It was said that at one time the sun never set on the British Empire. That empire has now been diminished. But it is true that the sun never sets on this work of the Lord as it is touching the lives of people across the earth.

And this is only the beginning. We have scarcely scratched the surface. We are engaged in a work for the souls of men and women everywhere. Our work knows no boundaries. Under the providence of the Lord it will continue. Those nations now closed to us will someday be open. That is my faith. That is my belief. That is my testimony.

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see Daniel 2:31–45; D&C 65:2).

To the Latter-day Saints everywhere, as we gather in this great conference, I say, may God bless you. Keep the faith; be true to your covenants. Walk in the light of the gospel. Build the kingdom of God in the earth.

The Church is in wonderful condition and can and will improve. It will grow and strengthen.

### **Ordinary people, an extraordinary work**

We are ordinary people who are engaged in an extraordinary undertaking. We are men who hold the priesthood of the living God. Those who have gone before have accomplished wonders. It is our opportunity and our challenge to continue in this great undertaking, the future of which we can scarcely imagine.

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for your faith and faithfulness. Thank you for the love you carry for this, the work of the Almighty. We live in the world. We work in the world. But we must rise above the world as we pursue the work of the Lord and seek to build His kingdom in the

earth. Let us now join together in a great world conference of men and women who are indeed brothers and sisters as children of God.

During the next two days we shall hear from many of our number, not one of whom has been told what to speak about, but each one of whom has pleaded with the Lord to be able to say something that will help, inspire, and lift all who hear.

May the blessings of heaven attend you. May you be faithful and true to the great and glorious cause which you have embraced is my humble prayer, in the name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Greeting from Elder Haight**

Now we have a special treat. I would like to ask Brother David B. Haight to come to the pulpit. Here is a grand old warrior. He is 97 years of age. He has lived longer than any other Apostle in the history of this dispensation. He recently became ill and has had a little difficulty. But he wanted to come this morning and just wave to you with a feeling of gratitude and appreciation for you and the great love which he feels for you. And to him, dear friend, we say, God bless you and heal you. We love you; we sustain you; we pray for you. May heaven's blessings rest upon you, dear Brother Haight. Thank you.

Elder Haight: Thank you.

President Hinckley: Do you want to wave to these people?

Elder Haight: Yes, I must. I am waving. Thank you, thank you. Nice to be with you.

President Hinckley: Thank you.

Elder Haight: Thank you.

President Hinckley: We will excuse him now. He will be watching on television. What a great soldier he has been in the army of the Lord. Thank you so much, Brother Haight.

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The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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### President Monson

Thank you, President Hinckley, for your inspiring remarks. Thank you, El-

der David B. Haight, for that sweet and sincere greeting. The whole church loves you.

The choir has sung “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Sheldon F. Child and Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

## Elder Sheldon F. Child

### Build testimonies on a sure foundation

Several years ago a severe storm hit the area in which we were living. It began with a torrential downpour, followed by a devastating easterly wind. When the storm was over, damages were assessed. Power lines were down, property had been damaged, and many of the beautiful trees that grew in the area had been uprooted. A few days later I was talking to a friend who had lost several trees in his yard. The trees on one side of his home were standing straight and tall. They had weathered the storm well, while the trees that were in what I considered the prime spot on his property had not been able to withstand the heavy winds. He pointed out that the trees that survived the storm were planted on firm ground; their roots had to sink deep into the soil to receive nourishment. The trees he had lost were planted near a small stream, where nourishment was readily available. The roots were shallow. They were not anchored deeply enough to protect them from the storm.

Our testimonies, like those trees, must be built on a sure foundation and deeply rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that when the winds and rains come into our lives, as they surely will, we will be strong enough to weather the storms that rage about us. Helaman counseled his sons:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Re-

deemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob, in his encounter with Sherem the anti-Christ, asked this question:

“Deniest thou the Christ who shall come? And he said: If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be.

“And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

“And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

“And this is not all . . . ; it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

### Sources of truth for building testimony

Jacob points out three sources of truth—the scriptures, the prophets, and the Holy Ghost—that testify of Christ.

They will help us build “upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The scriptures*

The Savior Himself said, “Search the scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of me.”<sup>4</sup> When the Lord directed Lehi to take his family and flee into the wilderness, He knew they would need a strong foundation upon which to build in the new land. So important were the scriptures that in order to obtain the records, the voice of the Spirit directed Nephi to slay Laban, saying, “It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.”<sup>5</sup>

About this same time in history, the Lord led another group of people out of Jerusalem to the promised land. Many generations later, King Mosiah discovered their descendants. They were known as the people of Zarahemla. Their spiritual condition was poor. In Omni we read, “Their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator.”<sup>6</sup> Without scriptures, not only nations perish, but families and individuals dwindle in unbelief. Daily scripture study helps us anchor our faith in Christ. The scriptures truly testify of Him.

### *The prophets*

Several years ago I was assigned to reorganize a stake presidency. At the Sunday session of the conference, the wife of the newly called stake president related this story. She stated that she had been raised in a good Christian home. Her parents gathered their family together every day to read and study the Bible. As they read about the prophets of old, she asked her parents why there were no prophets on the earth today. They didn’t have an answer that satisfied her, nor did her teachers or her religious leaders.

One day, as a university student, she noticed two young men wearing white shirts and ties. She could read the name “Jesus Christ” on the black name tags they wore. She spoke to them and asked if they were ministers. “Yes, we are! We are missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

“Then may I ask you a question?” she said. “Does the Lord love the people today as much as He loved the people of olden times?”

“Yes, He does!” was their reply.

“Then why do we not have prophets on the earth today?”

Can you imagine the excitement of two young missionaries being asked a question like that? They said, “We do. We do have prophets on the earth today. Can we tell you about them?”

Our message to the world is the same: We do have prophets on the earth today. This very afternoon we will raise our hands to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley, his counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are special witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ. In the document “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” they state:

“We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. . . . He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, if God loves us enough to send us prophets, then we need to love Him enough to follow them. Following the prophets will help protect us against the storms of life and lead us to Christ.

### *The Holy Ghost*

When Christ met with His Apostles in the upper room prior to His Crucifixion, He said: “If ye love me, keep my com-

mandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”<sup>8</sup>

When hands are laid upon our heads after baptism, we are confirmed members of His Church and then given the gift of the Holy Ghost. If we live righteously and remain worthy, we are promised His constant companionship; He will guide our lives, teach us truths, and testify to us that Jesus is the Christ. As covenant members of the Lord’s Church, we promise to serve Him and keep His commandments “that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us].”<sup>9</sup>

### **Pouring out of the Spirit in West Africa**

In West Africa, where we are currently serving, we feel His Spirit being poured out in rich abundance upon the faithful Saints. In 1989 a storm hit Ghana—not a storm of wind or rain but a storm of persecution, slander, and misunderstandings. It was a trying time; the Church was new there. All our non-African missionaries were required to leave the country. Our meetinghouses were locked and guarded so they could not be used by the members. The Saints could not gather together, so they worshiped as families in their own homes. Some members were arrested and even imprisoned.

This period of time is referred to as “the freeze.” Members had little contact or support from the outside Church, but they were not left on their own to weather the storm. They had the scriptures and the

words of the prophets; they put their trust and faith in the Lord, and He poured out His Spirit upon them. One member of the Church said, “We had the Spirit of the Lord with us; we could feel Him guiding and directing us. We drew closer to one another, and we drew nearer to the Savior.”

For 18 months the Saints fasted and prayed for the day when the freeze would end. In November of 1990 the ban was lifted. The worst of the storm had passed, but it had taken its toll. There were those who had fallen away. Their roots had been shallow and their foundation weak. The foundation of the Church in Ghana today is built on the faith of those who weathered the storm. They were deeply rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the scriptures, the living prophets, and the Holy Ghost all testify of Christ. They will help us build on “a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>10</sup> Of this I humbly testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Helaman 5:12.
2. Jacob 7:9–12.
3. Helaman 5:12.
4. John 5:39.
5. 1 Nephi 4:13.
6. Omni 1:17.
7. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.
8. John 14:15–16.
9. Mosiah 18:10.
10. Helaman 5:12.

## **Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen**

### **Do not wash dirty linen in public**

While driving through a small town in Mexico, a man ran over and killed a dog that darted in front of him. From that day on he was known in the village as *mata-*

*perros*. No consideration or thought was given to the origin of the name; he was simply the “dog killer.” For those who came along later, not knowing the circumstance, their minds conjured up a terrible image of what he had done.



Reputations built on rumor or reality or established by nickname can be virtually impossible to overcome. The adage “Do not wash your dirty linen in public” is wise counsel. It is not necessary, appropriate, or healthy to expose our private or family mistakes and sins for public scrutiny. The more widely a sin is known, the more difficult the repentance or change.

This is not to say that sin should be covered, although that is the natural impulse of anyone who commits a sin. Rather than repent, we want to hide any mistakes or sins committed. But as Cain discovered when he killed Abel, he could not hide his sins from the Lord,<sup>1</sup> for all things are present before Him.<sup>2</sup> He knows of every disobedient act we commit, but—different from the general public—He, with His knowledge of our sins, gives the specific promise that He will remember them no more if we repent.<sup>3</sup>

### Process for washing dirty linen

Washing dirty linen and repentance are intrinsically linked. Sin brings an uncleanliness before the Lord that must be reconciled. There is, however, a time and a place for confession and asking forgiveness. The scope of those parameters depends on the nature and the magnitude of the sin. Where there has been a public offense or a violation of public trust, the responsibility would be to air that wrongdoing in public and ask forgiveness. The span of our responsibility in repentance is to the Lord, His servants, and those we have offended.

There is a parallel between our garments being washed clean through the blood of the Lamb and how we wash our own dirty linen. It is through His atoning sacrifice that our garments will be cleansed. The scriptural reference to garments encompasses our whole being. The need for cleansing comes as we become soiled through sin. The judgment and forgiving

are the Savior’s prerogative, for only He can forgive and wash away our sins.<sup>4</sup>

When King Benjamin gave his great sermon in the land of Zarahemla,<sup>5</sup> the Saints changed their hearts,<sup>6</sup> and there was peace and prosperity throughout the land. Time went by, and Alma was called to preside over the Church. Caught up in their prosperity, some of the members of the Church fell into sin. Alma’s heart was troubled when they were brought before him. Not knowing how to handle the problem, he took them before King Mosiah, but the king remanded them to Alma’s judgment.

Fearing to do wrong in the sight of God, Alma poured out his whole soul to God and pleaded with Him for answers as to how to handle the transgressors. Because of Alma’s great love for his fellowman and his fervent desire to do God’s will, the Lord blessed him mightily, even with a promise of eternal life. Then the Lord explained to him why his pleading for understanding in judgment was so important, saying: “This is *my* Church. It is *my* name through which they will be saved. It is through *my* sacrifice. It is *I* who will judge.”<sup>7</sup>

How often do we forget who has the right to judge? Forgiveness of sin depends on Him, not on us. So the next time we are tempted to hang dirty linen in public, let us remember:

First, go to the Lord.

Second, go to the one we have offended.

Third, if necessary, go to our judge in Israel.

And fourth, then put it away.

### Do not expose others’ faults

Another side of exposing dirty linen is the carnal, insatiable appetite that some have to expose the faults of others. The Lord challenged Job as he was chafing under his burden: “Wilt thou condemn me,

that thou mayest be righteous?"<sup>8</sup> This can happen even in the family when one, supposing he is protecting his *own* good name, exposes in elaborate detail the faults and mistakes of his siblings, his children, or his parents in a form of self-justification designed to alleviate his personal pain.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the prodigal was reclaimed by a faithful father who spoke of his son's worth, not of his faults.

Whenever we tell of others' sins or mistakes, we are in effect passing judgment on them. I heard a man tell his son that an individual would never work for him again because he felt the individual had charged him unfairly. The boy responded, "I'm surprised to hear you say that, Dad, for you have taught us differently."

The father was judging without basis. What should he have done? If he had questions about the charges for the work, he should have discussed them with the man, resolved their differences, and laid it to rest without grouching to others. The Savior taught: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."<sup>9</sup>

When the scribes and the Pharisees brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus, He stooped and wrote with His finger in the sand so others might not see or hear. Then He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." When her accusers had all squirmed away in their sins, He said to the woman, "Go, and sin no more."<sup>10</sup>

### **Do not judge others; forgive and forget**

What should we do when we have knowledge of others' problems?

1. Don't judge. Leave judgment to the Lord, the perfect judge. Let us not examine or explore others' sins but look to

their divinity. It is not ours to delve into others' problems but rather to perceive the breadth of their goodness.

2. We must forgive. Although we may have been personally wounded, the Lord said, "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."<sup>11</sup>

3. Forget. A relentless memory can canker the most resilient spirit. Leave it alone; lay it down; put it away.

If the wave of temptation to reveal others' sins comes over you, don't tell your neighbor or even your best friend. Go to your bishop. Leave the burden with him. If it is required, report it to the civil or criminal authorities and then leave it alone. I believe that to receive the precious promise that Alma received requires the same spirit and action he took regarding his, and others', dirty linen.

### **Empathize rather than judge**

But what if we are right and they are wrong? Shouldn't we make our position public so others will not judge us to have made the mistake? The Lord has been clear in His instruction regarding this dilemma. It is not our prerogative to judge. The mote is not ours to measure, for the beam in our own eye obstructs our capacity to see. There is no pancake so thin it has only one side.

Empathy is required here, the gift to feel what others feel and to understand what others are experiencing. Empathy is the natural outgrowth of charity. It stimulates and enhances our capacity to serve. Empathy is not sympathy but understanding and caring. It is the basis of true friendship. Empathy leads to respect and opens the door to teaching and learning. The Sioux Indians understand this great principle as they pray, "Great Spirit, help me to never judge another until I have walked for two weeks in his moccasins."

## Garments cleansed through repentance

So what should we do with dirty linen? The process begins with repentance. The Savior stands at the door and knocks; He is ready to receive us immediately.<sup>12</sup> Our responsibility is to do the work of repentance. We must abandon our sins so the cleansing can begin. The promise of the Lord is that He will cleanse our garments with His blood.<sup>13</sup> He gave His life and suffered for all our sins. He can redeem us from our personal fall. Through the Atonement, the Savior, giving Himself as the ransom for our sins, authorizes the Holy Ghost to cleanse us in a baptism of fire. As the Holy Ghost dwells in us, His purifying presence burns out the filthiness of sin. As soon as the commitment is made, the cleansing process begins.

## Focus on the Savior to be cleansed

Our commitment to the Lord begins with our focus on Him. We were recently in a stake conference in Nauvoo, Illinois. The choir music was exceptional. The director, who is a professional musician and teaches at a local university, was a master at captivating the choir and congregation. Every movement of his body was intrinsically linked to the music. We wanted to sing exactly as he was leading. All eyes were on him. I thought of the Savior. He has challenged us to be as He is. If we would give Him the rapt attention we were giving Brother Nelson, we would quickly be transformed into the Savior's image.

The transformation as we were singing was momentary. We were where we needed to be, and all had a great desire to follow. If we find ourselves in the places we should be, with the fervent desire to follow the Lord, He will touch our lives and cleanse us that we may live in His presence permanently. There was no coercion by the director to get us to sing, just connection. Real repentance comes with

that connection to the Savior. Let us consider our personal prayers and everyday thoughts. We all have work to do to make the connection the Lord requires.

I asked Brother Nelson how he could draw so much out of us. He humbly replied, "Because their hearts are pure."

"What else?" I asked.

He answered, "It is through the Spirit. That is the only way we can communicate at that level."

So where should our focus be? "And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things."<sup>14</sup> That can happen if we take responsibility for our dirty linen through repentance and make sure it is clean.

May we enjoy the Savior's promise through Moroni to "arise . . . and put on thy beautiful garments. . . . Come unto Christ . . . and love God with all your might, mind and strength, . . . that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ . . . through the shedding of [His] blood . . . , which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot."<sup>15</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Genesis 4:9–10; Moses 5:34–35.
2. See Moses 1:6.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
4. See Alma 5:21–27; Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
5. See Mosiah 2–5.
6. See Mosiah 5:2.
7. See Mosiah 26:10–24.
8. Job 40:8.
9. Matthew 7:1–2.
10. John 8:7, 11.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
12. See Revelation 3:20.
13. See Revelation 7:14.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.
15. Moroni 10:31–33.

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. Following

her remarks, the choir will sing “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.” Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Sister Anne C. Pingree

### African Saints seek temple recommends

I will never forget a sauna-hot day in the lush rain forest of southeastern Nigeria. My husband and I had traveled to one of the most remote locations in our mission so he could conduct temple recommend interviews with members in the Ikot Eyo district. Some in this growing district had been Church members less than two years. All the members lived 3,000 miles away from the nearest temple in Johannesburg, South Africa. None had received their temple endowment.

These members knew the appointed day each month we would come to their district, but even we didn't know the exact hour we would arrive; nor could we call, for telephones were rare in that part of West Africa. So these committed African Saints gathered early in the morning to wait all day if necessary for their temple recommend interviews. When we arrived, I noticed among those waiting in the searing heat were two Relief Society sisters dressed in bold-patterned wrappers, white blouses, and the traditional African headties.

Many hours later, after all the interviews were completed, as my husband and I drove back along that sandy jungle trail, we were stunned when we saw these two sisters still walking. We realized they had trekked from their village—a distance of 18 miles round trip—just to obtain a tem-

ple recommend they knew they would never have the privilege of using.

### Recommends are symbols of faith

These Nigerian Saints believed the counsel of President Howard W. Hunter: “It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.”<sup>1</sup> In her hand, carefully wrapped in a clean handkerchief, each sister carried her precious temple recommend. I carry their examples of faith carefully wrapped in my heart.

These two covenant Relief Society sisters embody the meaning of Alma's teaching “concerning faith—faith is *not* to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye *hope* for things which are *not seen*, which are *true*.”<sup>2</sup>

Faith is the most personal reflection of adoration for—and devotion to—our Heavenly Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Anchored by this first and all-important principle of the gospel, we look to our Savior, knowing “Jesus [is] the author and finisher of our faith.”<sup>3</sup>

### Ancestors' legacy of faith

My great-great-aunt Laura Clark Phelps was the first member of the Clark family who joined the Church. She was a

woman who uniquely demonstrated a faith in the Lord that stands fast, nothing wavering.<sup>4</sup>

Laura's legacy teaches much about the doctrine of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>5</sup> She received her patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. In it she was counseled to be faithful and she would have an inheritance in Zion. She was further told to "call upon God in faith, and if thou wilt thou shall have all of the desires of thine heart."<sup>6</sup>

Laura and her husband knew the Prophet Joseph Smith. On one occasion the Prophet and his brother Hyrum came running to their farm outside Far West, Missouri, where Laura hid them behind the clothes curtain. She calmly faced the mob leaders who rushed in shortly afterward in search of the Prophet.

Laura experienced the joys and privations of the early Church members in this dispensation. Her faith deepened as she was driven from her homes and separated from her husband on various occasions. As an efficient midwife, she worked and traveled day and night in all kinds of weather to help provide for her family. This overexertion and exposure took their toll. She died at the young age of 34, leaving behind her husband and five children. She did not live to see her children, her grandchildren, or her great-grandchildren following her in faith. She did not experience the blessings of receiving her own temple endowment in this earth life, blessings I believe she would have cherished.

Laura's faithful life bears witness of this verse from Hebrews: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."<sup>7</sup> Faith lived in Laura, and Laura lived her faith.

I love my great-great-aunt Laura and carry her example in my heart. She, like

those Relief Society sisters in Nigeria, reminds me "all things are possible to [them] that [believe]."<sup>8</sup>

### **Faith to see the promises that are afar off**

Faith, the spiritual ability to be persuaded of promises that are seen "afar off" but that may not be attained in this life, is a sure measure of those who truly believe. Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed this truth in these words: "Faith in its full and pure form requires an unshakable assurance and . . . absolute confidence that [God] will hear our pleas and grant our petitions" in His own due time.<sup>9</sup> Believing that, we too can "stand fast in the faith" today and tomorrow.<sup>10</sup>

It matters not where we live or what our individual circumstances may be. Each day our righteous living can demonstrate a faith in Jesus Christ that sees beyond mortal heartaches, disappointments, and unfulfilled promises. It is a glorious thing to possess a faith that enables us to look forward to that day "when all that was promised the Saints will be given."<sup>11</sup>

As they walked with faith in every footstep along that sandy jungle trail in West Africa, those valiant Nigerian sisters could not have imagined that the walls of a holy temple of God would one day rise in their own nation. They could not have imagined that the inspired words of another prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley, would bring the promised blessings they hoped for and had seen "afar off." They only knew that the Lord restored His gospel in these times, that a testimony of that gospel burned in their hearts, that faith lit their way in life. Then they acted on a prophet's counsel to be worthy and to carry a temple recommend.

### **Miracle of a temple in Nigeria**

My husband and I tenderly recalled these sisters and so many other West African Saints on that remarkable day in

April 2000 when President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “We announce at this conference that we hope to build a house of the Lord in Aba, Nigeria.”<sup>12</sup> Brothers and sisters, I testify that sometimes “miracles . . . confirm . . . faith.”<sup>13</sup> The temples of Africa are a magnificent representation of miracles wrought by the faith of so many Saints in the small villages and large cities spread across that vast continent.

I am deeply grateful that I have seen the faith that brought two pioneers in Africa many miles to a temple recommend interview. I rejoice that the temple in progress in Nigeria will bring these women, their families, and thousands more the opportunity to use their recommends as both a symbol and embodiment of their faith.

### See afar off with spiritual vision

Sometimes those blessings in our lives that we have yet to receive lie beyond the scope of mortal eyes. I testify that it is always faith that allows us to see “afar off” with spiritual vision all that God intends for His children.

Just as surely as the sisters knew—who walked along that sandy jungle trail—I know that God lives. He loves each of us on every continent and desires to bless us one by one. I know that our faith in Jesus

Christ can sustain us each day as we “do all things that lie in our power,” knowing with the “utmost assurance”<sup>14</sup> that those promises we may see “afar off” will one day bring all the blessings we hope for. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5.
2. Alma 32:21; italics added.
3. Hebrews 12:2.
4. See 1 Corinthians 16:13; James 1:6.
5. Hebrews 11:1.
6. Morris Calvin Phelps, *Life History of Laura Clark* (Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.), microfilm, 3.
7. Hebrews 11:13.
8. Mark 9:23.
9. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 187.
10. 1 Corinthians 16:13.
11. “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 111; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 88.
13. Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

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The choir sang “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Television shows attack values, families

The fall of the year is when television airs its season premieres and introduces its new shows. A friend told me that there are 37 new TV series being inaugurated this fall. As he has read the reviews, he has found few if any of them he would want his children to watch. Most of the sitcoms, dramas, and reality shows contain immorality, violence, and subtle ridicule of traditional values and traditional families. Each

year the new shows seem to get worse, pushing the envelope of what the public will accept. What comes out of Hollywood, off the Internet, and in much of today’s music creates a web of decadence that can trap our children and endanger all of us.

### We must respond to threats against family

Church leaders have the responsibility to speak out on moral issues and to counsel individuals and families. The family is

the basic unit of society; it is the basic unit of eternity. Thus, when forces threaten the family, Church leaders must respond.

The family is at the heart of Heavenly Father's plan because we are all part of His family and because mortality is our opportunity to form our own families and to assume the role of parents. It is within our families that we learn unconditional love, which can come to us and draw us very close to God's love. It is within families that values are taught and character is built. Father and mother are callings from which we will never be released, and there is no more important stewardship than the responsibility we have for God's spirit children who come into our families.

Within this context of the preeminent importance of families and the threats families face today, it is not surprising that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used strong words in the proclamation to the world on families: "We warn that individuals . . . who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."<sup>1</sup> One such prophet was Malachi, who admonished parents to turn their hearts to their children and children to their parents, lest the whole earth be cursed (see Malachi 4:6).

To these warnings, ancient as the Old Testament and current as the proclamation on the family, I add my own voice of warning, specifically concerning today's media and the powerful negative effect it can have on families and on family life.

### **Make wise media choices**

Because of its sheer size, media today presents vast and sharply contrasting options. Opposite from its harmful and permissive side, media offers much that is positive and productive. Television offers history channels, discovery channels, edu-

cation channels. One can still find movies and TV comedies and dramas that entertain and uplift and accurately depict the consequences of right and wrong. The Internet can be a fabulous tool of information and communication, and there is an unlimited supply of good music in the world. Thus our biggest challenge is to choose wisely what we listen to and what we watch.

As the prophet Lehi said, because of Christ and His Atonement, we are "free forever, knowing good from evil," able to act for ourselves rather than be acted upon, "free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:26–27).

### **Our lives may mirror our media choices**

The choices we make in media can be symbolic of the choices we make in life. Choosing the trendy, the titillating, the tawdry in the TV programs or movies we watch can cause us to end up, if we're not careful, choosing the same things in the lives we live.

If we do not make good choices, the media can devastate our families and pull our children away from the narrow gospel path. In the virtual reality and the perceived reality of large and small screens, family-destructive viewpoints and behavior are regularly portrayed as pleasurable, as stylish, as exciting, and as normal. Often the media's most devastating attacks on family are not direct or frontal or openly immoral. Intelligent evil is too cunning for that, knowing that most people still profess belief in family and in traditional values. Rather, the attacks are subtle and *amoral*—issues of right and wrong don't even come up. Immorality and sexual innuendo are everywhere, causing some to believe that because everyone is doing it, it must be all right. This pernicious evil is not out in the street somewhere; it is coming right into our homes, right into the heart of our families.

To be strong and happy, families need to be nourished by the truths depicted in the thirteenth article of faith—by a belief “in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men.” Gratefully, there are many like-minded men and women of all cultures and faiths who also seek that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”

### **Oppose offensive, destructive media**

But we live in the “perilous times” to which the Apostle Paul referred when he warned about our day as one when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, . . . false accusers, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

Conspiring men and women, intent on gain rather than goodness, “stir up the people” to “all manner of . . . wickedness” (Alma 11:20), preventing the noble uses to which the media could be employed.

The new morality preached from the media’s pulpit is nothing more than the old immorality. It attacks religion. It undermines the family. It turns virtue into vice and vice into virtue. It assaults the senses and batters the soul with messages and images that are neither virtuous, nor lovely, nor of good report, nor praiseworthy.

The time has come when members of the Church need to speak out and join with the many other concerned people in opposition to the offensive, destructive, and mean-spirited media influence that is sweeping over the earth.

### **Negative effects of bad media**

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the percentage of television prime-time shows with sexual content jumped from 67 percent in 1998 to 75 percent in

the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> Media with this kind of content has many negative effects. It fosters a callous attitude toward women, who are often portrayed as objects of abuse and not as precious daughters of God who are essential to His eternal plan. The long-cherished values of abstinence from intimate relationships before marriage and complete fidelity between husband and wife after marriage are denigrated and derided. Children and youth are confused and misled by the deviant behavior they see demonstrated by so-called stars they admire and want to emulate. In the moral confusion created by the media, enduring values are being abandoned.

We see a rapid increase in cyberporn, involving sexual addiction over the Internet. Some become so addicted to viewing Internet pornography and participating in dangerous online chat rooms that they ignore their marriage covenants and family obligations and often put their employment at risk. Many run afoul of the law. Others develop a tolerance to their perverted behavior, taking ever more risks to feed their immoral addiction. Marriages crumble and relationships fail as addicts often lose everything of real, eternal value.

According to one social observer: “Television . . . has replaced the family, the school, and the church—in that order—as the principal [instrument] for socialization and transmission of values. . . . Greed, debauchery, violence, unlimited self-gratification, absence of moral restraint . . . are the daily fare glamorously dished up to our children.”<sup>3</sup>

We must be concerned with the violent and sexually charged lyrics of much of today’s popular music and the relatively new “art form” of the music video. According to industry observers, 40 percent of the music video audience is under the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> One study reports that approximately three-fourths of all the music videos that tell a story utilize sexual imagery, and nearly half involve violence.<sup>5</sup> And the fashion trends spawned in their



images are about as far away from being “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” as you can get. Ours surely is a time when men “call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20).

### **Family is the main target**

Let me say again that the family is the main target of evil’s attack and must therefore be the main point of our protection and defense. As I said once before, when you stop and think about it from a diabolically tactical point of view, fighting the family makes sense to Satan. When he wants to disrupt the work of the Lord, he doesn’t poison the world’s peanut butter supply, thus bringing the Church’s missionary system to its collective knees. He doesn’t send a plague of laryngitis to afflict the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He doesn’t legislate against green Jell-O and casseroles. When evil wants to strike out and disrupt the essence of God’s work, it attacks the family. It does so by attempting to disregard the law of chastity, to confuse gender, to desensitize violence, to make crude and blasphemous language the norm, and to make immoral and deviant behavior seem like the rule rather than the exception.

### **Join others in raising voices against evil**

We need to remember Edmund Burke’s statement: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”<sup>6</sup> We need to raise our voices with other concerned citizens throughout the world in opposition to current trends. We need to tell the sponsors of offensive media that we have had enough. We need to support programs and products that are positive and uplifting. Joining together with neighbors and friends who share our concerns, we can send a clear message to those responsible. The Internet Web sites and their local affiliates will have their addresses. Letters

and e-mails have more effect than most people realize, especially those like one sent by a Relief Society sister that stated, “I represent a group of over a hundred women that meets every week and often talks about the harm your program is doing to our children.”

### **Do not support inappropriate media**

Of course the most basic way to protest negative-impact media is simply not to watch it, see it, read it, or play it. We should teach our family members to follow the First Presidency’s counsel to young people. From the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, their instruction regarding entertainment and the media is very clear:

“Do not attend, view, or participate in entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Do not participate in entertainment that in any way presents immorality or violent behavior as acceptable. . . .

“Have the courage to walk out of a movie or video party, turn off a computer or television, change a radio station, or put down a magazine if what is being presented does not meet Heavenly Father’s standards. Do these things even if others do not.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, refuse to be used. Refuse to be manipulated. Refuse to support those programs that violate traditional family values. We may be a small voice to begin with; nevertheless, let us speak out and encourage a more uplifting, inspiring, and acceptable media.

### **How to minimize media’s negative effects**

Besides making our voices heard, let me conclude with seven things that every parent can do to minimize the negative effects media can have on our families:

1. We need to hold family councils and decide what our media standards are going to be.

2. We need to spend enough quality time with our children that we are consistently the main influence in their lives, not the media or any peer group.

3. We need to make good media choices ourselves and set good examples for our children.

4. We need to limit the amount of time our children watch TV or play video games or use the Internet each day. Virtual reality must not become their reality.

5. We need to use Internet filters and TV programming locks to prevent our children from “chancing upon” things they should not see.

6. We need to have TVs and computers in a much-used common room in the home, not in a bedroom or a private place.

7. We need to take time to watch appropriate media with our children and discuss with them how to make choices that will uplift and build rather than degrade and destroy.

May God bless us with courage and wisdom in doing what each one of us can to help turn the tide in the media away from darkness toward truth and light. And may God bless our families to be strong and true to the principles of the gospel is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Dale Kunkel and others, *Sex on TV 2003: A Biennial Report to the Kaiser Family Foundation* (2003), 40.

3. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Weak Ramparts of the Permissive West,” in Nathan P. Gardels, ed., *At Century’s End: Great Minds Reflect on Our Times* (1995), 53.

4. See National Institute on Media and the Family, “Fact Sheet,” Internet, [http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_mtv.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_mtv.shtml).

5. See Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, “Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock ‘n’ Roll,” *Journal of Communication*, winter 1986, 79–93.

6. Attributed in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed. (1980), ix.

7. *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), 17, 19.

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The choir sang “A Child’s Prayer.”

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#### President Monson

The choir has just sung that beautiful number “A Child’s Prayer.”

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” We are truly grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

### President James E. Faust

#### “Help thou mine unbelief”

This morning I would like to bear a humble testimony to those who have personal struggles and doubts concerning the divine mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many of us are

at times like the father who asked the Savior to heal his child with the “dumb spirit.” The father of the child cried out, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”<sup>1</sup> To all those with lingering doubts and questions, there are ways to help your unbelief. In the

process of accepting and rejecting information in the search for light, truth, and knowledge, almost everyone has—at one time or another—some private questions. That is part of the learning process.

Sustaining faith can be the ultimate comfort in life. All of us must find our own testimonies.

### **Developing a testimony of Joseph Smith**

A testimony begins with the acceptance by faith of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, the head of this Church; and the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. The gospel as restored by Joseph Smith is either true or it is not. To receive all of the promised blessings, we must accept the gospel in faith and in full. However, this certain faith does not usually come all at once. We learn spiritually line upon line and precept upon precept.

Joseph Hamstead, a lecturer at London University, had talked about the Church and its youth and family programs to fellow lecturers at that great university. One of them said, “I like all of this, what is being done for families, and so forth. If you could take out that bit about an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, I could belong to your church.” Brother Hamstead replied, “Ah, but if you take away the angel appearing to the Prophet Joseph, then I couldn’t belong to the Church because that is its foundation.”<sup>2</sup>

Like the professor at London University, many people see the sheer wonder of this Church and are persuaded that it has great merit and substance. They appreciate what the Church can do for its believers. However, they lack the spiritual confirmation that Joseph Smith actually saw in vision the Father and the Son and that an angel delivered to Joseph Smith the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Coming to know God is the principal spiritual gift that can come to any man or woman. Joseph Smith re-

ceived this knowledge of God firsthand. Many years later, still pondering the impact of that and other happenings in his life, Joseph himself said: “I don’t blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself.”<sup>3</sup>

No one was with the boy Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove in Palmyra, New York, when God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared. Yet even those who do not believe it happened may find it difficult to explain away. Too much has happened since it occurred to deny that it ever took place.

For those of you who, like the biblical father, say, “I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” you can receive a confirmation by following the direction in the Book of Mormon, which challenges us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ,” regarding the truth that can come only by faith in Christ and by revelation. However, there are two indispensable elements. One must “ask with a *sincere heart*, with *real intent*,” and then God “will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Witnesses confirm Prophet’s testimony**

Strong evidence besides the Book of Mormon corroborates the claims of Joseph Smith. To begin with, the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses, who handled the plates and saw the engravings, testified that the Book of Mormon was translated by the power of God. Members of Joseph Smith’s family, who knew him best, also accepted and believed his message. Among the believers were his parents, his brothers and his sisters, and his uncle John Smith. His older brother Hyrum proved his complete faith in Joseph’s work by giving his life along with Joseph. These reliable witnesses all confirm the Prophet’s testimony.

### Testimonies of Joseph's closest associates

His closest associates were absolute in their belief in Joseph Smith's divine mission. Two of them, Willard Richards and John Taylor, were with Joseph and Hyrum when they were killed. Joseph asked Willard Richards if he would be willing to go with them. Willard unequivocally said:

"Brother Joseph you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free."<sup>5</sup>

John Taylor testified, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."<sup>6</sup> The pragmatic Brigham Young said, "I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained, and to whom he gave keys and power to build up the Kingdom of God on earth and sustain it."<sup>7</sup> In my opinion, these strong, intelligent men could not have been deceived.

### Sealing power also a witness

It is also very persuasive to me that no other religion claims to have the keys to bind family relationships eternally. President Hinckley said, "Every temple, be it large or small, old or new, is an expression of our testimony that life beyond the grave is as real and certain as is mortality."<sup>8</sup> Those who cherish their family have a compelling reason to claim the transcendent blessing of being sealed for eternity in the temples of God. For all grandparents, parents, husbands, wives, children, and grandchildren, this sealing power and authority is a crowning principle, a pinnacle in the restoration "of all things"<sup>9</sup> through

the Prophet Joseph Smith. Sealings bind forever. This blessing can be extended to those now living and also vicariously for those who have died, thus binding families for eternity.<sup>10</sup>

### Strength of Church is another evidence

Another powerful evidence of the divinity of this holy work is the remarkable growth and strength of this Church worldwide. It is a unique institution. Nothing quite compares to it. As Gamaliel reasoned when Peter and the early Apostles were testifying of the divinity of Jesus Christ, "If this . . . work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."<sup>11</sup>

This all being true, however, every person must have a spiritual confirmation by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is more powerful than all the senses combined. To those who say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," may I suggest that "you look forward with an eye of faith."<sup>12</sup> To those who do this, the Lord has promised, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart."<sup>13</sup>

### Flickering faith and apostasy

Some reasons people give when the fire of their faith flickers and dies include human frailties and the imperfections of others; something in the history of the Church they cannot understand; changes in procedures resulting from growth and continuous revelation; indifference; or transgression.

At one time the Lord said that He was "well pleased" with Joseph Wakefield.<sup>14</sup> He was stalwart and faithful and taught hundreds about the prophetic work of Joseph Smith. But from 1833 to 1834 he was influenced by some dissidents in Kirtland. He was once in the home of Joseph Smith. Joseph came out of the room where

he had been translating the word of God and immediately began to play with some children. “This convinced [Brother Wakefield] that [Joseph] was not a man of God and that [therefore] the work was false.”<sup>15</sup> In due course, Joseph Wakefield apostatized, was excommunicated, and became a persecutor of the Church and the Saints.

### **Conversion of an inactive member**

One inactive member was jolted into the realization that she was not truly converted to the Church when her son went on a mission. Comparing herself to others whose impressive conversion stories she had heard, she asked herself, “Why are these people converted so powerfully, and I, with my pioneer heritage, remain unconverted?” She began to read the Book of Mormon even though she doubted its worth and found it boring. Then a friend challenged her. She said, “You say you believe in prayer. Well, why don’t you pray about it?”

This she did, and after she prayed she began to read the Book of Mormon again. It was no longer boring. The more she read, the more fascinated she became with it and thought, “Joseph Smith couldn’t have written that—these words were from God!” She finished reading it and wondered how God would tell her that it was true. She said:

“A power strong, beautiful, and joyful moved completely through my body. . . . I knew that Jesus Christ was resurrected, . . . that Joseph Smith was a prophet who saw God and Jesus Christ. I knew that he miraculously translated ancient records with God’s guidance. I knew that Joseph Smith received revelations from God.”

It changed her life because now she too was a convert!<sup>16</sup>

### **Do not let offenses weaken your faith**

For those whose faith has faded, the reasons may be real to them, but these

reasons do not change the reality of what Joseph Smith restored. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”<sup>17</sup> One cannot successfully attack true principles or doctrine, because they are eternal. The revelations that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith are still correct! It is a mistake to let distractions, slights, or offenses pull down our own house of faith.

We can have a certain testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet commissioned to restore the Church in our day and time without having a complete understanding of all gospel principles. But when you pick up a stick, you pick up both ends. And so it is with the gospel. As members of the Church, we need to accept all of it. Even limited spiritual assurance of some of the aspects of the gospel is a blessing, and in time the other elements of which you are uncertain can come through faith and obedience.

### **Indebted to Joseph Smith**

The gap between what is popular and what is righteous is widening. As prophesied by Isaiah, many today “call evil good, and good evil.”<sup>18</sup> Revelations from the prophets of God are not like offerings at the cafeteria, some to be selected and others disregarded. We are greatly indebted to the Prophet Joseph Smith for the many great revelations which came through him. He was without peer in restoring spiritual knowledge.<sup>19</sup> There has been a fulfillment of the revelation given to Joseph Smith in March 1839:

“The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.”<sup>20</sup>

## Strengthen faith by exercising it

To those who believe but wish their belief to be strengthened, I urge you to walk in faith and trust in God. Spiritual knowledge always requires an exercise of faith. We acquire a testimony of the principles of the gospel by obediently trying to live them. Said the Savior, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”<sup>21</sup>

A testimony of the efficacy of prayer comes through humble and sincere prayer. A testimony of tithing comes by paying tithing. Do not let private doubts separate you from the divine source of knowledge. Prayerfully go forward, humbly seeking eternal light, and your unbelief will be dispelled. I testify that if you continue in the purposeful process of searching for and accepting spiritual light, truth, and knowledge, it will surely come. By going forward in faith, you will find that your faith will increase. Like a good seed, if it is not cast out by your unbelief, it will swell within your breast.<sup>22</sup>

## Testimony is a spiritual energizer

I believe that every person’s individual testimony of Jesus as the Christ comes as a spiritual gift. No one can successfully dispute or challenge it because it is so personal a gift to the one to whom it has been given. It will be as an ever-recharging spiritual energizer to keep our spiritual light running to show us the way to eternal happiness. But I testify that it can be more—much, much more. By covenanting with “God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he

shall command us, all the remainder of our days,” our “hearts are changed through faith on [Christ’s] name.” Thus we may be “born of him and . . . become his sons and his daughters.”<sup>23</sup> I have a certain knowledge of this, which I declare in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Mark 9:17, 24.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. *History of the Church*, 6:317.
4. Moroni 10:4–5; italics added.
5. *History of the Church*, 6:616.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 458.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 91; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 74.
9. Acts 3:21.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:15–16.
11. Acts 5:38–39.
12. Alma 5:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 50:37.
15. George A. Smith, *Deseret News*, 20 Jan. 1858, 364.
16. See Grace Jorgensen, “Every Member a Convert,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1980, 70–71.
17. *History of the Church*, 6:366.
18. Isaiah 5:20.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1–2.
21. John 7:17.
22. See Alma 32:28.
23. Mosiah 5:5, 7.

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The choir sang “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area. James C. Kasen directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area, under the direction of James C. Kasen, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Count Your Blessings." The invocation will then be offered by Elder D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Count Your Blessings."

Elder D. Lee Tobler offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Be Thou Humble," after which President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "Be Thou Humble."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### **President James E. Faust**

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas

Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B.

Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

With gratitude for their service as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, and Cree-L Kofford and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We extend an honorable release to Elders Duane B. Gerrard, J. Kent Jolley, and D. Lee Tobler as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Henry F. Acebedo, Blair S. Bennett, Craig A. Bullock, Raimondo Castellani, Christopher N. Chukwurah, Lawrence R. Fuller, Rubén G. Gápiz, Harvey L. Gardner, Francisco G. Giménez, John A. Grincer, Shih An Liang, Emmanuel O. Opare Sr., Alain A. Petion, Claudio D. Signorelli, R. Lloyd Smith, Tomás Valdés, Chung Hei (Patrick) Wong. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Glenn L. Pace and Spencer J. Condie as counselors in the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please signify by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain José A. Castro, William K. Jackson, Paul V. Johnson, and Jay L. Sitterud as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Lynn G. Robbins and Donald L. Hallstrom as counselors in the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

## **President Boyd K. Packer**

### **The source of our high standards**

It is my purpose to explain to the youth and young adults, and to their parents, why we hold so rigidly to high standards of moral conduct; why we avoid addictive drugs and tea, coffee, alcohol,

and tobacco; why we teach standards of modesty in dress, grooming, and speech.<sup>1</sup> You need to know where our standards came from and why we cannot loosen up and follow what the world does.

You have agency—"moral agency."<sup>2</sup> You are free to choose your standards.



You will understand better if I speak of scripture and doctrine rather than about behavior.

### **Standards revealed in the Restoration**

The church you belong to, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the restored Church.<sup>3</sup> When you know what *restored* means, you will understand why standards of conduct are as they are.

Following the Crucifixion of Christ, an apostasy occurred. Leaders began to “teach for doctrines the commandments of men.”<sup>4</sup> They lost the keys of authority and closed themselves off from the channels of revelation. That lost authority could not just be repossessed. It had to be restored by those who held the keys of authority anciently.<sup>5</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a remodeled version of another church. It is not an adjustment or a correction or a protest against any other church. They have their “form of godliness”<sup>6</sup> and their goodness and value.

John the Baptist returned through the veil to confer the Aaronic Priesthood, “which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>7</sup> A companion ordinance—confirmation and the conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost—required a greater authority.<sup>8</sup>

Soon thereafter, Peter, James, and John, Apostle companions of the Lord, restored the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood<sup>9</sup>—“the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.”<sup>10</sup>

The Restoration did not come all at once. In a series of visitations, other prophets came to restore the keys of the priesthood.<sup>11</sup>

With the authority restored, the organization was revealed. Apostles were ordained, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Presidency were organized as they had been anciently.<sup>12</sup> The

ordinances were revealed and authority given to perform them.

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ was translated and published. In it is “the fulness of [the] everlasting gospel.”<sup>13</sup>

Other revelations were published—the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. From those books of scripture, we learned why the earth was created and who created it.<sup>14</sup> There was opened to the early leaders of the Church the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the *standards* He requires of His disciples.

### **Standards part of the plan of happiness**

We learned about the plan of redemption—“the great plan of happiness.”<sup>15</sup> We came to earth to be tested and to gain experience, with a promise that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>16</sup>

Before we came into mortal life, we lived as spirit children of our Father in Heaven.<sup>17</sup> “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each [of you] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, [you have] a divine nature and destiny. Gender [male and female] is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”<sup>18</sup>

The great plan of happiness enables family relationships to last beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants, available only in the temple, make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally. Marriage, the family, and the home are the foundation of the Church.<sup>19</sup> Nothing is more important to the Church and to civilization itself than the family!

For some, all is not complete in mortal life, for marriage and a family of their own have passed them by. But the great plan of happiness and the laws which govern it continue after death. Watched over

by a kind and loving Heavenly Father, they will not, in the eternal pattern of things, be denied blessings necessary for their exaltation, including marriage and family. And it will be sweeter still because of the waiting and the longing.

### **Standards of morality**

We learned from the revelations that we do not have to tell you young people what is right and what is wrong with regard to morality and marriage. The prophet Lehi taught his youthful children that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”<sup>20</sup>

Because the power to create a mortal body is essential to our happiness and exaltation, the Lord has decreed severe penalties for the immoral use of that power to beget life.<sup>21</sup>

Satan knows that if he can corrupt the process of mating and cause men and women to degrade it in immoral acts, he will, to that degree, for them disrupt the plan of happiness.

### **Be on guard; pray for strength**

Paul taught, “God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”<sup>22</sup>

I do not wish to offend the delicate feelings of you wonderful young people, but in your world awash with iniquity, you must be on guard.

There are words we would rather not say. They describe things we would rather not think about. But you are inescapably exposed to temptations in connection with fornication, adultery, pornography, prostitution, perversion, lust, abuse, the unnatural, and all that grows from them. Only with difficulty can you escape the degrading profanity and wicked, joking humor that accompanies them. It is all paraded before you in unworthy entertainment—

music, print, drama, film, television, and, of course, the Internet.

Remember the First Vision, when young Joseph knelt in the grove. Immediately thick darkness gathered around him. He was seized by the power of the enemy, an actual being from the unseen world. He did what every one of you can do. He called upon God, and the evil power left him.<sup>23</sup>

There is great power in prayer. As a son or a daughter of God, you can, as Joseph did, pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ for strength.<sup>24</sup>

Satan, with his angels, will try to capture your thoughts and control what you do. If he can, he will corrupt anything that is good.<sup>25</sup> To him the Internet is just that—a net to ensnare you into a wicked addiction with pornography. Unhappiness will follow.<sup>26</sup>

### **We cannot yield to changing standards**

Some work through political, social, and legal channels to redefine morality and marriage into something unrestrained, unnatural, and forbidden. But they never can change the design which has governed human life and happiness from the beginning. The deceiver preys on some passion or tendency or weakness. He convinces them that the condition cannot be changed and recruits them for activities for which they never would volunteer.

But sooner or later that spark of divinity in each of them will ignite. They can assert their agency as sons and daughters created in the image of God<sup>27</sup> and renounce the destroyer. That which they had been led to believe could not be changed, will be changed, and they will feel the power of the redemption of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Their burden will be lifted and the pain healed up.<sup>29</sup> That is what the Atonement of Christ is all about.

They can claim their inheritance as children of heavenly parents and, despite

the tortured, agonizing test of mortal life, know that they are not lost.

In the Church, one is not condemned for tendencies or temptations. One is held accountable for transgression.<sup>30</sup> If you do not act on unworthy persuasions, you will neither be condemned nor be subject to Church discipline.

We do not set the standards, but we are commanded to teach them and maintain them. The standard remains abstinence before marriage and total fidelity in marriage. However out of step we may seem, however much the standards are belittled, however much others yield, we will not yield; we cannot yield. Obedience to the moral standard and observance of the Word of Wisdom will remain as requirements for ordination to the priesthood, for a mission, and for a temple recommend.

### **Let the Holy Ghost guide you**

You had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost. There will be whisperings of approval or warning when you have decisions to make.<sup>31</sup> The Holy Ghost can guide you away from evil and bring you back if you have wandered and lost your path. Never forget that you are sons and daughters of God. Satan cannot forever imprison you. You always hold the key of repentance to unlock the prison door.

### **Millions stand with you**

If you, our youth, feel alone, remember there are millions of you in the Church now. Tens of thousands of you at this moment serve missions. You are a visible example, a testimony of the Restoration, even to those who will not listen to your message. Wherever you are—in school, at work or play, or in the military—you are never alone.

Now, words can be used as weapons against you. If they throw the word *diversity* at you, grab hold of it and say, “I am already diverse, and I intend to stay di-

verse.” If the word is *tolerance*, grab that one too, saying, “I expect you to be tolerant of my lifestyle—obedience, integrity, abstinence, repentance.” If the word is *choice*, tell them you choose good, old-fashioned morality. You choose to be a worthy husband or wife, a worthy parent.

The whole Church may stand alone in defense of these standards. But we are not the first. Moroni, the last of his people, said: “I even remain alone. . . . I fulfil the commandment of my father.”<sup>32</sup> Do not be afraid.<sup>33</sup>

When I was young and very new in my calling, I was sent east to meet with powerful, prominent officials who were blocking our work. As I left for the airport, I stopped to see President Harold B. Lee and asked, “Do you have any parting counsel?”

“Yes,” he said, “just remember this isn’t 1830, and there aren’t just six of us.”

That erased fear. I pled our cause. The problem was resolved.

Society is on a course that has caused the destruction of civilizations and is now ripening in iniquity. Civilization itself is at stake. You, our wonderful youth, are an example to untold millions of good people worldwide.

I think of the joy and happiness that await you in this life and the work you are to do, and I cannot be discouraged.

### **The standard of truth has been erected**

Peter, the Apostle who stood next to the Lord, said of you, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”<sup>34</sup>

Remember this great prophecy: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; . . . the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited

every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”<sup>35</sup>

### True to the faith

When we were young, we often used to sing these words:

Shall the youth of Zion falter  
In defending truth and right?  
While the enemy assaileth,  
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!  
True to the faith that our parents have  
cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs  
have perished,  
To God's command, Soul, heart, and  
hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.  
While we know the pow'rs of darkness  
Seek to thwart the work of God,  
Shall the children of the promise  
Cease to grasp the iron rod? No! . . .  
We will work out our salvation;  
We will cleave unto the truth;  
We will watch and pray and labor  
With the fervent zeal of youth. Yes! . . .  
We will strive to be found worthy  
Of the kingdom of our Lord,  
With the faithful ones redeemed  
Who have loved and kept his word. Yes!  
True to the faith that our parents have  
cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs  
have perished,  
To God's command, Soul, heart, and  
hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.<sup>36</sup>

God bless you millions of youth in our Church who worthily follow the patterns of the gospel and have within you a deep testimony—the testimony that all of us share and bear. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001).
2. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also Matthew 15:9.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:41; 33:15.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:9; 20:1–2; 107:22, 29.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.
14. See Moses 1:30–39.
15. Alma 42:8; see also 2 Nephi 11:5; Alma 12:25; 17:16; 34:9; 41:2; 42:5, 11–13, 15, 31; Doctrine and Covenants 101:22; Moses 6:62.
16. Articles of Faith 1:3.
17. See Numbers 16:22; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 12:9.
18. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
19. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
20. 2 Nephi 2:5.
21. See Jacob 3:12; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 104:8–9.
22. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
23. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16.
24. See James 4:7.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:22; see also Luke 22:3; 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27; 3 Nephi 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 50:3.
26. See Alma 41:10.
27. See Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27; 6:9; Abraham 4:26–27.
28. See 2 Nephi 2:1–6.
29. See Alma 7:11–12.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78; Articles of Faith 1:2.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3; 9:7–9.

32. Mormon 8:3.

33. See 2 Timothy 1:7; Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.

34. 1 Peter 2:9.

35. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.

36. "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### How to gain a testimony

As Church leaders we are often asked, "How do I receive a testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ?"

Gaining a testimony and becoming converted begins with study and prayer, then living the gospel with patience and persistence and inviting and waiting upon the Spirit. The life of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration are excellent examples of this process. As you listen to my message today of the events of the Restoration, look for the steps that lead to testimony: desiring to know the truth, pondering in our hearts, then feeling and obediently following the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

### The Great Apostasy leads to confusion

Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. He came into a family that prayed and studied the Bible. In his youth he became interested in religion and discovered a "great confusion" over the doctrines of Christ, with "priest contending against priest, and convert against convert."<sup>1</sup>

This confusion was not unique to his community. It began centuries earlier in what has been called the Great Apostasy. The day of Christ "shall not come," said the Apostle Paul, "except there come a falling away first."<sup>2</sup>

A few decades after Christ's Resurrection, His Apostles were killed, His teachings were corrupted, and the priesthood was taken from the earth. But Paul, seeing our day, prophesied "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [God would]

gather together in one all things in Christ."<sup>3</sup> He would restore Christ's true Church to the earth once more.

Over the centuries, the world was prepared for that restoration. The Bible was translated and published. A new land was discovered. The spirit of reformation swept through the Christian world, and a nation was founded on the principles of freedom.

### Joseph prays to find the true church

Joseph Smith was born in that nation and, at the age of 14, found himself caught in a "tumult of [religious] opinions." Often he asked himself, "If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?"<sup>4</sup>

Joseph turned to the Bible for answers. "If any of you lack wisdom," he read in the Epistle of James, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."<sup>5</sup>

Following James's direction, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and prayed. As he called upon God, "a pillar of light . . . descended," brighter than the noonday sun, and "two Personages" appeared. "One of them spake . . . , calling [Joseph] by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>6</sup>

God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, conversed with Joseph. They answered his question. They taught him that the true Church of Christ had been lost from the earth. Joseph learned that these members of the Godhead were separate and distinct beings. They knew him by name, and They were willing to answer his

prayers. The heavens were opened, the night of apostasy was over, and the light of the gospel began to shine forth.

### **Like Joseph, we must search and pray**

Like Joseph, many of us find ourselves seeking the light of truth. Just as the world was prepared for the Restoration, each of us is prepared to receive the light of the gospel in our own lives. Sometimes that preparation comes through a change in our circumstances—through meeting a new friend, moving to a new community, a change of employment, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, illness, misfortune, and even tragedy.

During these times of transition, we seek answers to the important questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here on earth? And where are we going after we die? Joseph was not born with this knowledge, and neither were we. We must find it.

Like Joseph, we must search the scriptures and pray. For many, this means overcoming feelings of doubt and unworthiness, being humble, and learning to exercise faith.

### **Joseph's example of spiritual maturation**

During the three years following his First Vision, Joseph felt very humble. Often, he said, "I . . . felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections."<sup>7</sup> But he did not lose faith or forget the power of prayer.

#### *Prayer in bringing forth the Book of Mormon*

On September 21, 1823, at the age of 17, Joseph knelt to ask "for forgiveness of [his] sins and follies, and [to receive] a manifestation . . . of [his] state and standing before [God]."<sup>8</sup> As he prayed, a light once again appeared, increasing "until the room was lighter than at noonday."<sup>9</sup> In that light there stood a personage dressed in a robe of "exquisite whiteness."<sup>10</sup> He

called Joseph by name and introduced himself as Moroni. He said "that God had a work for [Joseph] to do"<sup>11</sup> and told him of an ancient record written on gold plates, which, when translated, became the Book of Mormon. The book contained a record of the fulness of the gospel, as taught to Moroni's ancestors by Jesus Christ. Joseph was directed to obtain that record, buried near his family's home in a hill which is now called Cumorah.

The next day, Joseph found the plates, but the time had not yet arrived to bring them forth. Moroni instructed Joseph to meet him there that same day each year for the next four years.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph obeyed. Each year he went to the hill, where Moroni gave him instruction concerning the restoration of Christ's Church.<sup>13</sup> Much like the Savior's childhood described in the New Testament, Joseph "increased in wisdom and stature"<sup>14</sup> and "waxed strong in spirit."<sup>15</sup>

So it is for us. Some newly baptized members become discouraged about their wisdom and stature in the gospel—about what they do not know. They forget the obedient effort, gospel tutoring, and spiritual maturation that were part of Joseph's early experiences. Those who are longtime members should also remember that regular spiritual instruction and learning are required if we are to wax strong in the Spirit.

After four years of continued obedience, Joseph received the plates on September 22, 1827, at the age of 21. He also received an ancient instrument for translating them, called the Urim and Thummim. Using this sacred interpreter, along with the Holy Ghost, Joseph began the work of translation in December of that year.<sup>16</sup> In time he was joined by a schoolteacher named Oliver Cowdery, who acted as his scribe.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Prayer leads to restoration of the priesthood*

At the age of 23, Joseph was translating the plates when he and Oliver came

upon a passage about baptism for the remission of sins. Like new investigators, they wanted to know more. Joseph knew what to do.

On May 15, 1829, the two men went into the woods to inquire of the Lord. While they were praying, John the Baptist appeared “in a cloud of light.”<sup>18</sup> He was the one who had baptized the Savior in life. He held the priesthood keys necessary to perform that ordinance by the authority of God.

As Joseph and Oliver knelt before John, he laid his hands on their heads and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon them.<sup>19</sup> From that point on, Joseph and Oliver possessed the authority to baptize and confer that priesthood on others.

Today all who want to know whether they should be baptized are invited to follow Joseph and Oliver’s example and pray. And all who are prepared and worthy for baptism may receive it from one whose authority has been passed unbroken from the hands of John the Baptist in this dispensation.

In late May or early June 1829, the Melchizedek, or higher, Priesthood was conferred on Joseph and Oliver by the Apostles Peter, James, and John.

The translation of the Book of Mormon was also completed that June, and the book was published less than a year later, on March 26, 1830.

#### *Prayer leads to visions, restoration of keys*

Twelve days after the Book of Mormon was published, on April 6, the Church was formally organized at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York. As prophesied by Paul, the ancient Church of Christ was once again established on the earth.<sup>20</sup>

But the work of the Restoration was not over. As in times of old, members of the Church were instructed to build a temple, which was dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio, on March 27, 1836. One week later,

on April 3, a meeting was held there. Following a solemn and silent prayer, Joseph and Oliver saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing before them. He who had said, “Foxes have holes, and the birds . . . have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,”<sup>21</sup> had come to His holy house. Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared there and committed the keys of the kingdom, the saving ordinances, to Joseph.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Pattern of prayer in the Restoration**

Brothers and sisters, can we see the pattern? Every major event of the Restoration—the First Vision, the appearance of Moroni and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and the appearance of Jesus Christ following the dedication of His holy temple—was preceded by prayer.

Since that time, 116 temples have been dedicated. I have attended a number of these sacred meetings. Dedicatory prayers have been offered. The Holy Ghost has been present in abundance. During these times, among many others, I have felt the undeniable witness of the Spirit of God, like a fire burning in my heart, that the restored gospel is true.

How did I learn these things? Nephi gives a clear and compelling account of the process, which includes desiring, believing, having faith, pondering, and then following the Spirit. Let’s hear it as related by Nephi:

“For it came to pass after I had *desired* to know the things that my father had seen [in a vision of the tree of life], and *believing* that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat *pondering* in mine heart I was *caught away in the Spirit* of the Lord, yea, . . . and *the Spirit [spoke] unto me.*”<sup>23</sup>

Once we receive a witness of the Spirit, our testimony is strengthened through study, prayer, and living the gospel. Our

growing testimony brings us increased faith in Jesus Christ and His plan of happiness. We are motivated to repent and obey the commandments, which, with a mighty change of heart, leads to our conversion. And our conversion brings divine forgiveness, healing, joy, and the desire to bear our witness to others.

### **How to begin the process**

Now you may wonder, how does one begin this process? May I suggest accepting the invitation extended by Moroni in the Book of Mormon: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>24</sup> For some, this happens quickly. For others, it happens gradually over the years.

We are able to receive this spiritual manifestation because the Holy Ghost is “a personage of Spirit” who can “dwell in us.”<sup>25</sup> His mission is to witness of the Father and the Son, convey Their will to us, and teach us “all things what [we] should do.”<sup>26</sup> People everywhere may feel the influence of the Holy Ghost from time to time in their lives. But only those who have been baptized and confirmed can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by one in authority, which makes His constant companionship possible.

Retaining that companionship requires an earnest effort by Church members. If we are not obedient to the laws, principles, and ordinances of the gospel, the Holy Ghost will withdraw. He cannot be with us if we are angry in our hearts, contentious with our companions, or critical of the Lord’s anointed. He departs whenever we are rebellious, are immoral,

dress or act immodestly, are unclean or profane in mind or body, are slothful in priesthood callings and duties, or commit other sins, for “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples.”<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, we must continually repent, partake of the sacrament, be worthy of a temple recommend, and serve the Lord with all our “heart, might, mind and strength.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Strengthen testimony by sharing it**

With the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we feel a love for God and all His children. This love casts out fear and fills us with the desire to open our mouths. There is no greater gift we can give others than to bear our testimony to them. There is no greater joy we can have than to bring even one soul unto Christ.<sup>29</sup> And there is no greater way to strengthen our own testimony than to share our witness of Him with the world. As we do, our families will be strengthened. Our wards, stakes, and communities will be filled with peace and love, and ultimately the earth will be prepared for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is His Church on the earth today. I know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and Gordon B. Hinckley is his successor, the prophet and President of the Church today.

I exhort you, I pray for you—if you do not know these things for yourself, follow the example of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration. Turn to the scriptures. Kneel in prayer. Ask in faith. Listen to the Holy Ghost. Learn that your name and needs are known by our Heavenly Father, just as Joseph’s were. Live the gospel with patience and persistence. And in the name of Jesus Christ, I promise, “If ye will . . . ask [Heavenly Father] in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence



in keeping [the Lord's] commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you."<sup>30</sup>

Jesus Christ lives. This is His work. Of this I bear my special witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:6.
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
3. Ephesians 1:10.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
5. James 1:5; see Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:29.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:29.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:30.
10. Joseph Smith—History 1:31.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
12. See Joseph Smith—History 1:52–53.
13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:54.
14. Luke 2:52.
15. Luke 2:40.
16. See Joseph Smith—History 1:59, 62.
17. See Joseph Smith—History 1:66–67.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:68.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69.
20. See Ephesians 1:10.
21. Matthew 8:20.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
23. 1 Nephi 11:1–2; italics added.
24. Moroni 10:4–5.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
26. 2 Nephi 32:5.
27. Helaman 4:24.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:15.
30. 1 Nephi 15:11.

## Elder Shirley D. Christensen

### United in our love for God

As I look out over this vast congregation, in my mind's eye I see not only those present in the Conference Center but those of you who are participating in this conference in meetinghouses and homes throughout the world. Although you may be near or far away, you are so vital to the work of the Lord and the establishment of the Church where you live.

We are united in our love for God, our Eternal Father. We honor His name and that of His Only Begotten Son, the Savior of the world, even Jesus Christ. In this conference there will be communicated to us—through the power of the Holy Ghost—feelings that will increase our faith in the Father and the Son and our love for the principles of the restored gospel. In turn, those feelings will draw us nearer to Them as we feel Their presence in our lives and desire with all our hearts to know Their will and to become like Them.

### Prophets are called of God

My message and testimony to you is that prophets and apostles stand at the head of this work today as it goes forth to all the world. They have been called of God by revelation. They are indeed prophets, seers, and revelators. The Lord loves them, and as members of the Church, we honor them and look to them as servants of the living God. The clarion call of the prophets is as clear today as it ever was in the past, and the testimony of the prophets will continue to the very moment that the Lord Jesus Christ returns to reign in glory.

We live in wonderful but perilous times. Throughout the earth, the fabric of nations and the collective world appears to be deteriorating. We see discord and enmity between leaders and nations, conflicts between communities, and contention within families. The solution to the ills of the world is found in understanding the doctrines and teachings of the Lord Jesus

Christ and the application of those principles in the lives of every human being. Divine doctrines and teachings have been taught with clarity by prophets, both ancient and modern, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost. As we hear those truths, they are communicated to our hearts and minds by that same Spirit.

As we consider the role of prophets, it is vital to understand that, first, prophets are called of God and He testifies to the world of their calling. The ancient book of Abraham describes an event that occurred in the premortal existence as God looked over the spirits He had created:

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:23).

Of Samuel, the Old Testament prophet, the scriptures record: “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3:19–20).

The Book of Mormon quotes the Savior in ancient America when He emphasized the value of Isaiah’s Old Testament prophecies:

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.

“For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; . . .

“And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. . . .

“ . . . Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things” (3 Nephi 23:1–3, 5).

## Prophets teach and testify of Christ

Second, the role of prophets is to teach of Christ and testify of His divinity and His mission. Adam, the first prophet, with his wife, Eve, heard the voice of the Lord and initiated the pattern for the dispensations that would follow. Of that momentous event it is recorded:

“Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

“And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

“And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:10–12).

Helaman, an ancient American prophet, taught his sons Nephi and Lehi:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

Perhaps the most powerful testimony of the Savior in this dispensation was given in 1832 by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the

testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created” (D&C 76:22–24).

### **Prophets’ words are recorded and taught**

The third characteristic of prophets is that their teachings are recorded and are taught by succeeding prophets and teachers to the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord said to the Old Testament prophet Moses, “Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Exodus 24:12).

The Lord’s living prophets today have given an equally compelling testimony when in 1995 they testified to the world of the sacred nature of marriage and the family:

“We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . .

“We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan. . . .

“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Later they also gave their personal witness, as the Lord’s Apostles, to the mission of Jesus Christ:

“We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world. . . .

“We testify that He will someday return to earth. . . . He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

At their very core, the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are intended to convey to the soul of every sincere person who will ask of God in faith a personal testimony of our Lord and Savior and of the role of the prophets from the dawn of time to this very moment. I testify that the succession of prophets has continued from Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation, to Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord’s prophet today. Of that I bear my witness and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy will then address us. Following Elder Zwick, we shall hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Let Us All Press On.”

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## Elder W. Craig Zwick

### We are in the hands of God

In the eyes and hearts of many people in the world today, there is evidence of doubt, fear, and hopelessness. Much of the insecurity in the world has filtered into our homes and personal lives. No matter what our age or circumstance, we all have a need to know that we have power in the present and hope in the future. Listen to the words of Mormon:

“Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power?” (Mormon 5:23).

Hands are one of the symbolically expressive parts of the body. In Hebrew, *yad*, the most common word for *hand*, is also used metaphorically to mean power, strength, and might (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* [1978], 205). Thus, hands signify power and strength.

The extended hand of our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, strengthens, lifts, and inspires people all across the world.

To be in the hands of God would suggest that we are not only under His watchful care but also that we are guarded and protected by His wondrous power.

Throughout the scriptures, reference is made to the hand of the Lord. His divine assistance is evidenced over and over again. His powerful hands created worlds, and yet they were gentle enough to bless the little children.

Consider John’s words describing the resurrected and glorified Savior: “And when I saw him, . . . he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:17–18). When He lays His hand upon us, we, like John, can be alive in Him.

### Healing of a newborn son

Twenty-four years ago, our tiny newborn son struggled for his life in the inten-

sive care unit of a hospital. His lungs were not fully developed because of his premature birth, and he desperately fought for each breath of air. He was so small but with so much will to live. As young and inexperienced parents, my courageous and ever faithful wife, Jan, and I prayed that the Lord’s hand would reach out and somehow help our baby boy continue to breathe.

As I put my trembling hand through the small opening into the isolette, I felt so inadequate and powerless. I took hold of the tiny but perfect hand of our newborn son, and there was a powerful spiritual connection never to be forgotten. Two fingers from each of my hands covered his tiny head as I administered to him.

Our desire for him was pure, but we knew that his earthly experience rested in the Lord’s hands and not in ours or in the medical team who cared for him. I then humbly realized that my quivering hands held power and authority well beyond my own. My fingers on his head symbolized the placing of God’s hands and power upon our son.

Following that blessing, in a moment of emotional peace, my eternal companion and I looked at each other across the isolette, feeling the spirit of renewed hope and comfort born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the personal effect of His Atonement. It was a powerful witness of His love for an infant son who had just left His presence. We were then better prepared to accept His will for our son. We truly felt we had placed our hands in the hands of the Savior. It was as if the Savior’s own hands provided the critical respiratory aid, allowing our son to breathe and gain sustenance. With each breath and with each incremental bit of progress, we expressed prayerful thanks. Today our healthy son and his indebted parents continue to be so grateful for the Savior’s willing hands.

## The Lord will lift us in times of trouble

Among the supernal promises of coming forth in the morning of the First Resurrection and inheriting “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers” are the additional promises of “all heights and depths” (D&C 132:19). The great plan of happiness includes a proverbial roller coaster of challenging times along with the most joyful times. Yes, we all have our moments of difficulty and heartbreak. Occasionally they are so difficult for us that we just want to give up. There are times when our steps are unsteady, when we feel discouraged and even reach out in desperation.

Elder Holland reminds us that the “symbol of the cup that cannot pass is a cup that comes in our life as well as in [the Savior’s]. It is in a much lesser way, to a much lesser degree, but it comes often enough to teach us that we have to obey” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Trusting Jesus* [2003], 42).

Every one of us needs to know that we can go on in the strength of the Lord. We can put our hand in His, and we will feel His sustaining presence lift us to heights unattainable alone.

When a stricken father brought his terribly afflicted son to Jesus, Mark records that “Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose” (Mark 9:27).

## How we learn to trust in the Lord

We must trust in the Lord. If we give ourselves freely to Him, our burdens will be lifted and our hearts will be consoled.

Elder Scott has recently counseled: “Trust in God . . . no matter how challenging the circumstance. . . . Your peace of mind, your assurance of answers to vexing problems, your ultimate joy depend upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ” (Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 79, 80; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 76, 78).

How do we learn to trust? How do we learn to extend our hand and connect to the comfort provided by the Lord?

Clear instruction came from the Lord to Joseph Smith: “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me. . . . Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you” (D&C 19:23, 38).

Here are four keys:

- Learn
- Listen
- Seek the Spirit
- Pray always

The Lord will provide sustenance and support if we are willing to open the door and receive His hand of divine assistance.

President Thomas S. Monson reminds us of the Savior’s willing hand of rescue: “Adored is the hand that saves—even the hand of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . . . With that hand he knocks upon the door of our understanding” (“Hands,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 5).

## Story of children trusting their parents

Recently our daughter and son-in-law were preparing to enjoy an evening together. They were rushing around trying to get ready and give the babysitter some last-minute instructions. They didn’t really notice the sad countenance of one of the children and the tears in the eyes of another until they were at the door, ready to leave. They realized that their children were apprehensive about their mommy and daddy being away from them. So their parents gathered their four precious children around them. Their daddy asked them to put their hands out in front of them. All eight tiny hands were extended. Mom and Dad then kissed each hand and told them that when they missed them or they were frightened or needed to feel their love, they could put their little hands up to their cheeks and they would be able to feel Mommy’s and Daddy’s presence anytime. They were so happy, and when

our daughter and son-in-law left, they saw four little children standing at the window with smiles on their faces and hands on their cheeks.

They trusted their parents. They knew they were loved.

Just as little children trust, each of us must have that same childlike, unreserved trust. We must all remember that we are sons and daughters of God and that He loves us very much. If we truly understand who we are, we will have an unfailing source of hope and comfort.

We can never complete “the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1) without placing our hand in the Lord’s.

### **Blind runner guided by a friend’s hand**

Several years ago our only daughter decided to compete in a marathon. She trained and worked very hard, along with some of her friends. The race was difficult, and there were times when she wanted to quit. But she kept going, just concentrating on one step at a time. As she was approaching the middle part of the course, she heard someone behind her shout out, “Blind man on your left.”

She turned her head only to see a blind man overtake her, holding the hand of another man. They were both running the race. As they passed, she could see how tightly the blind man held the hand of his friend.

Overcome with her own physical pain, she was lifted as she watched these two men run hand in hand. He who could see was motivated by his blind friend, and the blind man depended upon the connection he had to his friend’s hand. Our daughter

knew the blind man could never finish the race alone. She was inspired by the trust of the blind man and the devoted love of his friend.

### **The Savior extends His hand to us**

In like manner, the Savior stretches forth His hand to each of us so we don’t have to run alone. “To those [of us] who [occasionally] stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen” (*Trusting Jesus*, 43). As we advance toward the finish line, He will be there to save us; and for all this He gave His life.

Imagine the wounds in His hands. His weathered hands, yes, even His hands of torn flesh and physical sacrifice, give our own hands greater power and direction.

It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue.

If we will keep the commandments of God and walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.

Trust in His promise of eternal life, and allow peace and hope to distill upon you.

When we connect with the Author of Peace and with His perfect and redeeming love, then we can come to know the reality of the Lord’s promise: “I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying . . . , Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and living Savior. I testify that He lives and extends His loving hand to each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

I bring you greetings from the Philippines Area, with its 520,000 members in 80 stakes and 80 member districts and its 2,200 missionaries in 13 missions. We are

progressing against the challenges the Church encounters where it is not yet fully established.

In these developing areas, we rely heavily on senior missionary couples. I stress this because there are many within the sound of my voice who need to know how much their service is appreciated, and there are others we pray will decide to be available for this vital service.

### **People forsake old ways, follow the Lord**

My introduction is something said in my presence by one of these valiant missionaries. “As I look back on my life,” he said, “I can hardly imagine a barefoot surfer from Hawaii completing his third mission. But when I felt the warm embrace of the Savior, I wanted to serve Him, and I changed.” Yes he did! Stanley Y. Q. Ho told me that until he was 30 years old he did nothing but “hang around the beaches at Waikiki.” Then he found the gospel, he married a Latter-day Saint girl, and he changed. Since then he has fulfilled many callings, including bishop and stake president. Now, Elder Ho and his beloved Momi, who is responsible for so many of the changes in his life, have served three full-time missions.

For another example, I turn to the Gospel of Luke:

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully” (Luke 19:1–6).

Here the Gospel records that Jesus’ followers “murmured” because of His go-

ing to the house of a sinner (v. 7). But that did not matter to Jesus. His gospel is for all who will forsake their old ways and make the changes they need to be saved in the kingdom of God.

Now back to the account of the man who opened his house and his heart to the Lord:

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house. . . .

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (verses 8–10).

Zacchaeus of Jericho and Stanley of Hawaii stand for all of us. They are examples of what we pray will be experienced by all of us who decide to receive the Lord “joyfully” and follow where He leads.

### **Repent of practices contrary to the gospel**

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to change. “Repent” is its most frequent message, and repenting means giving up all of our practices—personal, family, ethnic, and national—that are contrary to the commandments of God. The purpose of the gospel is to transform common creatures into celestial citizens, and that requires change.

John the Baptist preached repentance. His listeners came from different groups, and he declared the changes each must make to “bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Publicans, soldiers, and ordinary people—each had traditions that had to yield to the process of repentance.

The teachings of Jesus also challenged the traditions of different groups. When the scribes and Pharisees complained that His disciples “transgress[ed] the tradition of the elders” by omitting the ritual washings, Jesus replied that the scribes and

Pharisees “transgress[ed] the commandment of God by [their] tradition” (Matthew 15:2–3). He described how they had “made the commandment of God of none effect by [their] tradition” (v. 6). “Hypocrites” is what He called those whose adherence to their traditions kept them from keeping the commandments of God (v. 7).

Again, in modern revelation the Lord declares that the “wicked one” takes the innocent children of God away from light and truth “through disobedience . . . and because of the tradition of their fathers” (D&C 93:39).

### **Give up traditions that conflict with gospel**

The traditions or culture or way of life of a people inevitably include some practices that must be changed by those who wish to qualify for God’s choicest blessings.

#### *Chastity*

Chastity is an example. “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” the Lord commanded from Sinai (Exodus 20:14) and repeated in modern revelation (D&C 42:24; see also D&C 59:6). “Flee fornication,” the New Testament commands (1 Corinthians 6:18; see also Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Always the prophets of God have condemned whoredoms. Yet these eternal commands have frequently been ignored, opposed, or mocked by powerful traditions in many lands. This is especially visible today, when the movies, magazines, and Internet communications of one nation are instantly shared with many others. Sexual relations out of wedlock are tolerated or advocated by many. So is the rapidly expanding culture of pornography. All who have belonged to these cultures of sin must repent and change if they are to become the people of God, for He has warned that “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19).

### *Church attendance and service*

Weekly attendance at church is another example of a commandment contrary to popular traditions. The Lord has commanded us to attend church and “offer up [our] sacraments” on His Sabbath day (see D&C 59:9). This requires more than passive attendance. We are commanded to participate in worship and in service, and that requires a wrenching change for many non-Christians and even for those Christians who have attended church only as irregular spectators.

#### *Word of Wisdom*

The Lord’s command that we abstain from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee (see D&C 89) also runs counter to the traditions of many. Long-standing addictions or habits are not easily broken, but God’s command is clear, and the promised blessings more than compensate for the challenges of change.

#### *Honesty*

Another example is honesty. Some cultures allow lying, stealing, and other dishonest practices. But dishonesty in any form—whether to appease, to save face, or to get gain—is in direct conflict with gospel commandments and culture. God is a God of truth, and God does not change. We are the ones who must change. And that will be a big change for all whose traditions accustom them to thinking that they can lie a little, cheat a little, or engage in deceit whenever it brings personal advantage and is not likely to be detected.

### *Movement in Church positions*

A less serious worldly tradition that conflicts with gospel culture is the idea of upward or downward movement in positions. In the world, we refer to the up or down of promotions or reductions. But there is no up or down in Church posi-



tions. We just move around. A bishop released by proper authority and called to teach in Primary does not move down. He moves forward as he accepts his release with gratitude and fulfills the duties of a new calling—even one far less visible.

I saw a memorable example of this a few months ago in the Philippines. I visited a ward in the Pasig stake, near Manila. There I met Augusto Lim, whom I had known in earlier years as a stake president, a mission president, a General Authority, and president of the Manila temple. Now I saw him serving humbly and gratefully in his ward bishopric, second counselor to a man much younger and much less experienced. From temple president to second counselor in a ward bishopric is a beautiful example of the gospel culture in action.

### **Contrasting the Lord's way, world's way**

In these examples I am not contrasting the culture or traditions of one part of the world with another. I am contrasting the Lord's way with the world's way—the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the culture or traditions of every nation or people. No group has a monopoly on virtue or an immunity from the commandment to change. Jesus and His Apostles did not attempt to make Gentiles into Jews (see Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:11–16; 3:1–29; 5:1–6; 6:15). They taught Gentiles and Jews, attempting to make each of them into followers of Christ.

Similarly, the present-day servants of the Lord do not attempt to make Filipinos or Asians or Africans into Americans. The Savior invites all to come unto Him (see 2 Nephi 26:33; D&C 43:20), and His servants seek to persuade all—including Americans—to become Latter-day Saints. We say to all, give up your traditions and cultural practices that are contrary to the commandments of God and the culture of His gospel, and join with His people in building the kingdom of God. If we cease to walk in darkness, the Apostle John

taught, “we walk in the light, . . . we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

### **The unique gospel culture**

There is a unique gospel culture, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This gospel way of life comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. It is given expression in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives. The principles stated in the family proclamation are a beautiful expression of our gospel culture.

Those who are baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ make covenants. In modern revelation the Lord declared, “When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men” (D&C 101:39). To perform our covenant duty as the salt of the earth, we must be different from those around us.

As Jesus taught: “I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men” (3 Nephi 12:13; see also Matthew 5:13; D&C 101:40).

This requires us to make some changes from our family culture, our ethnic culture, or our national culture. We must change all elements of our behavior that are in conflict with gospel commandments, covenants, and culture.

### **The doctrine of personal responsibility**

The gospel plan is based on individual responsibility. Our article of faith states the eternal truth “that men will be

punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2). This requirement of individual responsibility, which has many expressions in our doctrine, is in sharp contrast to Satan's plan to "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost" (Moses 4:1). The plan of the Father and the Savior is based on individual choice and individual effort.

The doctrine and practice of personal responsibility and personal effort collide with individual traditions and local cultures in many lands. We live in a world where there are large differences in income and material possessions and where there are many public and private efforts to narrow these differences. The followers of the Savior are commanded to give to the poor, and many do. But some gifts have promoted a culture of dependency, reducing their recipients' need for earthly food or shelter but impoverishing them in their eternal need for individual growth. The growth required by the gospel plan occurs only in a culture of individual effort and responsibility. It cannot occur in a culture of dependency. Whatever causes us to be dependent on someone else for decisions or resources we could provide for ourselves weakens us spiritually and retards our growth toward what the gospel plan intends us to be.

The gospel raises people out of poverty and dependency, but only when gospel culture, including the faithful payment of tithing even by the very poor, prevails over the traditions and cultures of dependency. That is the lesson to be learned from the children of Israel, who came out of hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt and followed a prophet into their own land and became a mighty people. That lesson can also be learned from the Mormon pioneers, who never used their persecutions or poverty as an excuse but went forward in faith, knowing that God would bless them when they kept His commandments, which He did.

### **Love others and help them change**

The changes we must make to become part of the gospel culture require prolonged and sometimes painful effort, and our differences must be visible. As the "salt of the earth," we are also the "light of the world," and our light must not be hidden (see Matthew 5:13–16). The Apostle John warned that this will cause the world to hate us (see 1 John 3:13). That is why those who have made the covenant to change have a sacred duty to love and help one another. That encouragement must be extended to every soul who struggles to come out of the culture of the world and into the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John concluded, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

No one shows love for their fellowmen more impressively than the noble men and women of this Church who leave comfortable homes and surroundings to serve as couple missionaries. They provide the most authentic and the most valuable assistance to those who are struggling to change. God bless our couple missionaries!

### **Repent and obey to show love for God**

Jesus commanded us to love one another, and we show that love by the way we serve one another. We are also commanded to love God, and we show that love by continually repenting and by keeping His commandments (see John 14:15). And repentance means more than giving up our sins. In its broadest meaning it requires *change*, giving up all our traditions that are contrary to the commandments of God. As we become full participants in the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we become "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

I testify that this is what our Lord and Savior would have us do so that we may

become what His gospel intends us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Ye Disconsolate.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene

in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave this session of the conference, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express also our thanks to the single adult choir from the Utah South Area for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon. Thank you, from each one of us to each one of you.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **The extraordinary potential of our youth**

Recently I watched over 20,000 young Latter-day Saint men and women listen to a spiritual message. They took notes and concentrated on the speaker, anxious to learn. There radiated from them an intense spirit of purity, righteousness, and devotion. No one had forced them to come. They wanted to be there.

Later I met with over 2,000 full-time missionaries preparing to serve. The room was charged with the Spirit. I asked them difficult questions. They responded extremely well, often citing supporting scriptures. As I shook missionaries' hands and looked into their eyes, I felt purity and a spirit of devotion. It was an inspiring experience. Each had set aside personal interests to accept a call to join what can become our greatest generation of missionaries.

I have had like experiences with youth across the earth. The faculty at our three universities note a significant increase in capacity and spiritual sensitivity of students. Something extraordinary is happening. Do you sense it? Truly, as obedience and morality decline in the world, the Lord is sending more exceptional spirits to

earth. As a body they excel the average capacity of their forebears. Their potential for personal growth and positive contribution is enormous.

As parents and leaders, how are you cultivating that potential? As a young man or woman of this generation, what are you doing to realize your extraordinary potential? Will you nurture it and rise to exceptional heights of accomplishment and happiness? How will you avoid Satan's efforts to undermine your potential through transgression? Only you can answer these critical questions.

### **Make choices to realize your full potential**

With all my capacity I encourage you to discover who you really are. I invite you to look beyond the daily routine of life. I urge you to discern through the Spirit your divinely given capacities. I exhort you to prayerfully make worthy choices that will lead you to realize your full potential.

I will share one sure way you can begin to accomplish such growth. I have seen valiant missionaries brave icy wind, resist torrential rains, slosh through slippery, muddy streets, and conquer fear. Often they bear a powerful testimony, only to be

rejected and roundly criticized. I have seen them struggle to communicate the truth in a new language. Sometimes the listener stares in puzzled silence. Then there dawns the shattering realization that the message is not understood. But I wouldn't change any of it, even if I could, because there are those golden moments of success that make all of the hardships worthwhile.

Such rewards come when the Spirit touches a heart for eternal good because someone like you was there. To share truth in difficult circumstances is to treasure it more. When you push against the boundaries of experience into the twilight of the unknown, the Lord will strengthen you. The beauty of your eternal soul will begin to unfold.

### **Prepare to be an exceptional missionary**

The challenges are greater now than ever. That is why the Lord needs more capable, better prepared missionaries. He needs those who are clean and pure so that they can be guided by the Spirit and can testify with converting power. Qualify to be one of those exceptional missionaries. It will not be easy. But when was anything really worthwhile easy?

The First Presidency has defined high standards of moral worthiness and the physical, mental, and emotional stability missionary service now demands. The standards are rigorous, but you can meet them. You will rejoice in the feelings of peace and confidence that come from living them. The standards were raised not to make it harder but because missionaries now serve in an environment where spiritual guidance is absolutely essential. Also, adjustments have been made in the presentation of the discussions. They are not now memorized; rather, the basic content is learned and given as guided by the Spirit. Personal worthiness is essential to do that (see "Statement on Missionary Work" attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002).

You are of a singular generation with exceptional potential. No wonder Satan wants to cripple that potential by tempting you to violate the laws of God. He knows that he has no power over a righteous individual. Yet he is a master at making sin appealing to the undecided.

### **Preparation at home and church**

Preparation for a mission and a meaningful life best begins in the home. As a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give a son or daughter is to consistently nurture a growing testimony of truth, patiently nurturing each child's spiritual capacity. Carefully explain the doctrines of the Church and the power they give when well lived. That foundation will equip a child to resist evil in the world. Encourage every son who is physically and emotionally able to prepare to serve worthily a full-time mission.

Bishops and stake presidents, work with priesthood and auxiliary leaders to strengthen the spiritual capacity of your youth. Do that by encouraging their participation in Church activities that fortify the teachings of parents.

As a young man, actively participate in your priesthood quorum. As a young woman, attend class activities and complete your Personal Progress goals. Both of you, be active in Sunday School discussions to retain what is taught. Take part in seminary and institute to gain vital understanding of truth. Don't just listen to pass a test. Incorporate what you study into your life.

### **Study the scriptures and gain a testimony**

Study the First Vision as recorded in Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. Learn of the subsequent events that brought the full restoration of truth, with the priesthood authority and ordinances essential to exaltation. Gain your own testimony of these things. Fix them in your mind and heart.

Try reading the Book of Mormon because you want to, not because you have to. Discover for yourself that it is true. As you read each page, ask, "Could any man have written this book, or did it come as Joseph Smith testified?" Apply the teachings you learn. They will fortify you against the evil of Satan. Follow Moroni's counsel. Sincerely ask God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, with real intent, if the teachings of the Book of Mormon are true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Ask with a desire to receive a confirmation personally, nothing doubting. There has to be an explanation of that book you can hold in your hand. I know you can receive a spiritual confirmation that the book is true. You will then know that Jesus Christ lives, that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church (see introduction to the Book of Mormon, especially the last paragraph). You will confirm that the Savior guides His Church through a living prophet. These truths will become a foundation for your productive life.

One may say, "I don't have all the blessings of an ideal family and full Church experience." Neither did I enjoy all those advantages, nor did some other members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Compensate by obtaining your own unwavering testimony of truth. Obtain a personal conviction that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to earth and that His doctrines are true. There are different paths to that treasured gift. They begin with your sincere desire to know. The flickering flame of faith can die if you do not nurture it. But that tiny flame can grow into a brilliant, unquenchable fire through sincere prayer and consistent study of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Such faith will be sustained as you apply the principles you learn.

Remain worthy. When you really understand who you are, it is not difficult to resist Satan's temptations. Then he can't

thwart the development of your true potential.

### **Serving a mission brings greatest growth**

As a young man, the greatest growth and strengthening experience you can have at this time, bar none, is serving a worthy full-time mission. While a mission is not for personal advantage, the Lord richly blesses those who valiantly serve. Be one of the army of remarkable, well-prepared, devoted missionaries who are qualifying to the high standards of worthiness. Join those who have chosen to serve the Lord, wherever called, however challenging it may be.

Missionary work is extremely demanding. If you have emotional challenges that can be stabilized to meet the rigors of a full-time mission, you can be called. It is vital that you continue to use your medication during your mission or until competent medical authority counsels otherwise. Recognize that emotional and physical challenges are alike. One needs to do all that is possible to improve the situation, then learn to live within the remaining bounds. God uses challenges that we may grow by conquering them.

Your physical or emotional circumstance may be such that you have been excused by the President of the Church from full-time missionary service (see "Statement on Missionary Work" attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002). For you there are other ways to render meaningful service compatible with your condition. Your bishop or stake president can help you identify such service where you live. It could be in a Church family history center, temple, welfare project, or employment center, or in a local hospital, care center, shelter, or elsewhere. There are many places where help is needed. You can live at home and contribute powerfully. Such a call can be for a few months or longer. Your stake president will come

to know where you should serve and for how long. He will then issue a formal call. Whatever your call may be, study the message of the Restoration with materials the full-time missionaries can provide. Then look for opportunities to share that message. As you conscientiously do that, you will be led to individuals who will be touched to learn more.

### **Be what the Lord expects you to be**

As I have spoken of missionary service, you may have thought, "That's not for me." I plead with you to prayerfully reconsider. All that I treasure most in life began to mature in the mission field. You can also earn such blessings.

If you have made bad choices, repent now. Remove any such barrier to your progress and happiness.

You are a precious young man or woman. Realize your full potential. Be the leader and example the Lord expects you to be. Young man, be a part of the greatest generation of missionaries. Worthy youth, prepare to receive the temple ordinances and to raise your eternal family. God loves you. I testify that as you seek His help, He will guide you to fulfill your worthy dreams, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Ye Disconsolate."

Elder Keith K. Hilbig offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training

Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The invocation will then be offered by Elder William R. Bradford, who received emeritus status this afternoon.

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The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

This magnificent choir will now sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." After the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker, after which we shall

hear from Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Faith of a little orphan boy

My dear brethren of the priesthood, though we are from many nations, we are, as Paul said, of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”<sup>1</sup> But the *strength* of the faith within each of us is developed individually, not as a group.

For example, think of the faith of a boy, about eight years of age, who was facing an emergency operation for acute appendicitis. As he lay on the operating table, he looked up at the surgeon and said, “Doctor, before you begin to operate, will you pray for me?”

The surgeon looked at the boy in amazement and said, “Why, I can’t pray for you.”

Then the little fellow said, “If you won’t pray for me, please wait while I pray for myself.” There on the operating table, the boy got on his knees, folded his hands, and began to pray. He said, “Heavenly Father, I am only a little orphan boy. I am awful sick, and these doctors are going to operate. Will you please help them that they will do it right? Heavenly Father, if you will make me well, I will be a good boy. Thank you for making me well.” He then lay on his back, looked up at the tear-filled eyes of the doctors and nurses, and said, “Now I am ready.”<sup>2</sup>

His physical recovery was complete, and his spiritual power was developing.

### Develop power in the priesthood

You brethren are older and have had the priesthood conferred upon you. Your priesthood quorums provide opportunities for friendship, service, and learning.

But the responsibility to develop power in the priesthood is personal. Only as an individual can you develop a firm faith in God and a passion for personal prayer. Only as an individual can you keep the commandments of God. Only as an individual can you repent. Only as an individual can you qualify for the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. And when your wife is sealed to you, her power and potential will increase yours.

I belong to a wonderful priesthood quorum. We enjoy a precious brotherhood. We pray together; we serve together. We teach, love, and sustain one another. The Twelve come from different backgrounds—business, education, law, and science. But not one was called to serve because of that background. In fact, all men called to positions of priesthood responsibility are chosen because of who they are and who they can become.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout life you will have a wide variety of duties and responsibilities. Many of these are temporary and will be relinquished upon your release. (You probably won’t object to your release from a call to pull weeds at the welfare farm.) But you never will be released from responsibilities related to your personal and family development.

When ordained to an office in the priesthood, you are granted authority. But power comes from exercising that authority in righteousness.

### Responsibility to the Lord

From the President of the Church to the newest deacon, we are responsible to the Lord. We are to be true and faithful

and live by every principle and doctrine that He has given to us. We cannot compromise a revelation or a commandment committed to our charge. He trusts us to “build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>

One day each of us will give an account to the Lord.<sup>5</sup> This awareness was evident in a serious conversation I had years ago with a dear friend facing the end of his mortal life. I asked him if he was ready to die. I’ll never forget his answer. With courage and conviction, he said, “My life is ready for inspection.”

When the Prophet Joseph Smith faced death, he said, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men.”<sup>6</sup>

Now is the time to prepare for your own ultimate interview. You might ask yourself, “Do I pay tithing with a willing heart? Do I obey the Word of Wisdom? Is my language free from obscenities and swearing? Am I morally righteous? Am I truly grateful for the Atonement, which makes my resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility? Do I honor temple covenants that seal loved ones to me forever?” If you can honestly say yes, you are developing power in the priesthood.

The gift of the Holy Ghost can add to that power. The scriptures tell of people who had received the Holy Ghost but did not know it.<sup>7</sup> Don’t let that happen to you. Cultivate that gift and qualify for this promise from God: “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Priesthood in this dispensation**

Priesthood authority has existed in many dispensations, such as those of Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Moses,

the meridian of time, the Jaredites, the Nephites, and others. All previous dispensations were limited in time, as each ended in apostasy. They were also limited to small segments of planet Earth. In contrast, our dispensation—the dispensation of the fullness of times—will not be limited in time or place. Globally, it will host a whole, complete, and perfect union, welding together dispensations, keys, powers, and glories from the days of Adam even to the present time.<sup>9</sup>

The Aaronic Priesthood was restored on May 15, 1829, by John the Baptist; the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored shortly thereafter by Peter, James, and John.<sup>10</sup> Other heavenly messengers conveyed specific keys of the priesthood. Moroni held keys of the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup> Moses brought keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes.<sup>12</sup> Elias conveyed keys of the restoration of all things,<sup>13</sup> including the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>14</sup> And Elijah conferred keys of the sealing authority.<sup>15</sup>

### **Priesthood keys**

You know something about keys. In your pocket there might be a key to your home or car. Priesthood keys, on the other hand, are intangible and invisible. They “switch on” the authority of the priesthood. Some keys even convey power to bind in heaven as well as on earth.<sup>16</sup>

Joseph Smith conferred priesthood keys upon all of the Twelve.<sup>17</sup> Those keys have been transferred to successive leaders. Today President Gordon B. Hinckley holds authority for every restored key held by “all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation.”<sup>18</sup>

With this doctrinal history in mind, it is clear that one cannot buy the priesthood. Scripture declares that “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”<sup>19</sup>



## **Magnify callings in the priesthood**

To bear the priesthood means you have a personal responsibility to magnify your calling. Let each opportunity to serve help to develop your power in the priesthood. In your personal grooming, follow the example of the living prophets. Doing so gives silent expression that you truly comprehend the importance of “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.”<sup>20</sup>

When you brethren have an opportunity to exercise the Melchizedek Priesthood, ponder what you are to do. When you lay hands upon the head of another, you are not offering a prayer, which of course requires no authority. You are authorized to set apart, to ordain, to bless, and to speak in the name of the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Remember His promises: “Whomsoever you bless I will bless,”<sup>22</sup> and “I will impart unto you of my Spirit, . . . and then shall ye know . . . all things . . . pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Objectives for Aaronic Priesthood holders**

To magnify your callings in the Aaronic Priesthood, you young men should shape your personal efforts toward five personal objectives to:

- Gain a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Be worthy of missionary service.
- Keep yourself morally clean and qualified to enter the holy temple.
- Pursue your personal education.
- Uphold Church standards and be worthy of your future companion.

How can you remember those five objectives? It's easy. Look at your hand. Let your pointer finger point to the scriptures. From them gain a better knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then live in accord with His teachings. Let your middle finger remind you to be worthy of missionary service. Let your ring finger re-

mind you of marriage, endowment, sealing, and blessings of the temple. Let your end finger remind you that pursuit of an education is a religious responsibility.<sup>24</sup> Let your thumb go up, reminding you to uphold the standards of the Church and to be worthy of your eternal companion. The realization of these five objectives will bless your lives.

## **Honor and care for your wife**

You bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood should qualify for the highest degree of celestial glory. “In order to obtain [it], a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”<sup>25</sup>

That covenant is honored when you honor your wife. A husband's foremost priority should be the care of his wife. Be true to her. Don't ever allow your eyes to gaze upon pornography or let your language be lewd. The very choices made by reason of agency limit one's agency in the future. You cannot exercise agency and escape accountability and responsibility for each choice.

## **Use the priesthood righteously**

Never forget that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven. . . . [This power] cannot be controlled nor handled [except] upon the principles of righteousness.”<sup>26</sup> If we abuse that power to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, to pursue vain ambition, or to control others in any degree of unrighteousness, we lose both the authority and the power of the priesthood.<sup>27</sup>

Brethren, serve with gentleness, long-suffering, kindness, meekness, love unfeigned, pure knowledge, and charity toward all.<sup>28</sup> Then the “doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon [your] soul as the dews from heaven.”<sup>29</sup>

Please know of our love and gratitude for each of you. We thank you for your faith, your service, and your sustaining strength. May you, your loved ones, and your posterity be blessed by your righteous pursuit of power in the priesthood.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. He directs His Church through His prophets and apostles. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ephesians 4:5.
2. See George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley (1948), 144–45.
3. See Matthew 20:16; 22:14; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14; Alma 13:3, 6, 9; 3 Nephi 12:1; Doctrine and Covenants 3:10; 52:1; 95:5; 121:34, 40–46.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
5. See Hebrews 13:17; Alma 5:18; 11:43; Doctrine and Covenants 72:13–16.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
7. See 3 Nephi 9:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
10. See Joseph Smith—History 1:72; Doctrine and Covenants 27:8, 12.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:6.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
15. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 337–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:13–16; 128:21.
16. See Matthew 16:19; 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 124:93; 127:7; 128:8, 10; 132:46.
17. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:154–56.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 112:31; see also 128:18.
19. Hebrews 5:4.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3; Alma 13:1.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:20, 38; 84:19–22, 26–27; 107:18–20; 124:39–46; 133:6.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13–14.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 131:2–3; second brackets are in the original.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
28. See 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

## Elder Monte J. Brough

I hold in my hand a copy of a Sunday School manual titled *Leaders of the Scriptures*, which was printed in 1947. The authors were Marion G. Merkley and Gordon B. Hinckley. Fifty-six years ago! This manual has been in my home for many years and is part of the motivation for this talk.

#### Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

One of the most significant events of the Restoration is that of the Aaronic Priesthood in May 1829. John the Baptist

appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Joseph recounts:

“While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>1</sup>

We have in this priesthood session of general conference tens of thousands of young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and who belong to deacons, teachers, and priests quorums all over the world. Each quorum is headed by a quorum presidency, including a president who holds keys to lead the individual priesthood quorum.

### **Youth can hold responsible positions**

Many of us may consider these youthful leaders to be too young to hold those important, responsible positions. Let us consider a few examples of what youth really can do.

#### *Jeremiah*

First, the prophet Jeremiah:

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

"But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. . . .

"Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."<sup>2</sup>

If the Lord desired, couldn't He also put words in the mouth of a 13-year-old deacons quorum president, who "holds the keys of the ministering of angels"?

#### *Timothy*

Another young man, Timothy, was a missionary companion to the Apostle Paul. The epistles from Paul to Timothy are tributes to the faith and testimony of this very young man. Let me read a few extracts from those epistles:

"Wherefore . . . stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. . . .

"[Christ] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling."<sup>3</sup>

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise."<sup>4</sup>

As with Timothy, wouldn't a 14-year-old teachers quorum president be entitled to a "gift of God" when he is set apart by the bishop? Isn't the calling of teachers quorum president also "an holy calling"? Can a 16-year-old priest be "wise"? The scriptures give us a resounding *yes!*

#### *Mormon*

One of the greatest examples of a very young man making a contribution of monumental significance is that of Mormon. Let's read just part of his account:

"And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

"And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe. . . .

"And behold, [one day] ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people."<sup>5</sup>

"And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies.

"[And so] it came to pass that in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites."<sup>6</sup>

What a chronology of events in such a young life! He began preparing for his prophetic calling at age 10, when he re-

ceived knowledge of the ancient sacred records. By appointment of the people of Nephi, he became the head of the Nephite armies at age 16.

### **Visits to an injured quorum member**

In June of the year I was 12 years old, I was injured in a horse accident while delivering newspapers in my old hometown of Randolph, Utah. I was placed in a wheelchair for six months, until I first walked on Christmas Day. I remember the members of my deacons quorum presidency coming to my home to visit me—Dale Rex, Doug McKinnon, and others who were 13-year-old leaders in the deacons quorum presidency. They seemed to understand their responsibility to me as a member of their quorum.

### **Failure to invite a young woman to church**

I recently was standing at the luggage retrieval at the Salt Lake City International Airport when a woman came to me and asked my name. I recognized her as a former South Rich High School classmate from years ago. She had changed since I had last seen her. You all know how you feel at the dreaded high school reunion. She had added some gray hair and a few wrinkles. (Of course, I hadn't changed.) It was obvious that she was meeting her missionary child, who was returning from a mission. It surprised me. While she was yet in school, her family, who were not members of the Church, had moved into our small community. Her name was Alice Gomez. She was about the same age as me and my friends. I remembered that she was friendly and always polite but that she never did attend any of our Church meetings.

I said to her, "Alice, tell me your story. You are obviously now an active member of the Church, but you never joined while we were going to school."

Her answer was condemning: "No one ever asked me!" Wow! Our quorum really dropped the ball on that one.

### **Jamaican quorum helps missionaries**

Recently reported to me was the story of a priests quorum in Jamaica that decided to help the missionaries with their work. So this quorum of young men went knocking on doors, trying to find appointments for the missionaries. They soon found more referrals than the missionaries could handle.

### **Kaysville quorum visits less-active boys**

Members of a priests quorum in Kaysville, Utah, decided they would not lose one member of their quorum. The whole quorum would go to a less-active member's home and have their Sunday lesson sitting around the less-active boy's bed. Soon that young man joined his quorum in taking the Sunday lesson to another home.

### **Rise up to quorum responsibilities**

As of the year 2003, there are more than 26,000 wards and branches in the Church, with approximately 78,000 deacons, teachers, and priests quorums. Talk about an army!

The contribution the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood could make to the work of converting, retaining, and activating other members of their quorums is enormous.

If 16-year-old Mormon could be the commanding officer of a large military army, and if Jeremiah as a child could have words put in his mouth by the Almighty God, and if Timothy could be wise as he was, then each young man within the sound of my voice can rise to the challenge of his quorum responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums are no less important than the responsibilities of elders quorums or high priests groups. Remember, they hold “the keys of the ministering of angels.” We need young men to stand up in their calling, knowing of their ordained right to act in the office to which they are appointed.

I testify that these Aaronic Priesthood quorums hold the holy priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69.
2. Jeremiah 1:4–7, 9.
3. 2 Timothy 1:6, 9.
4. 2 Timothy 3:15.
5. Mormon 1:1–2, 4.
6. Mormon 2:1–2.

## Elder Merrill J. Bateman

### Priesthood restored by divine messengers

One of the remarkable evidences of the Restoration is the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery regarding the manner in which the priesthood and its directing powers were returned to earth. In each case, priesthood and priesthood keys were restored by divine messengers who had held them in earlier times. John the Baptist brought back the Aaronic Priesthood with the keys of repentance and baptism.<sup>1</sup> Peter, James, and John restored not only the Melchizedek Priesthood but also “the keys of [the] kingdom.”<sup>2</sup> Moses and Elijah returned with the “gathering” and “sealing” keys.<sup>3</sup>

The events describing the return of the priesthood are remarkable in that they conform precisely with the biblical pattern of priesthood restoration in earlier dispensations. For example, consider the restoration and transfer of priesthood powers during the Savior’s time.

### Jesus gives keys to His Apostles

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus promised Peter “the keys of the kingdom,”<sup>4</sup> knowing that Jesus would soon leave and that priesthood keys were needed by the Apostles if they were to direct the work

after His ascension. In order for them to receive the keys, Matthew records that Jesus took “Peter, James, and John . . . up into an high mountain” where He “was transfigured before them” and Moses and Elias “appeared unto them.”<sup>5</sup> Shortly after this event, the Savior declared that the Apostles now had the keys to direct the ministry.<sup>6</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith states that “the Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him.”<sup>7</sup>

The pattern of priesthood restoration described by Matthew is the same pattern followed in our dispensation. Apostles and prophets designated by the Lord to hold keys in earlier dispensations returned them to earth as this dispensation began.

In contrast, 19th-century ministers in the Palmyra environs, not understanding the great apostasy that had taken place, believed in an entirely different process for priesthood reception. They believed that the power to preach came through an inner calling to a priesthood of believers. They did not understand the necessity of receiving the priesthood from a person in authority by the laying on of hands.<sup>8</sup> Also, they did not understand the purpose or necessity of priesthood keys.

## Priesthood keys

The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man. Priesthood keys are the right to direct the use of that power. The President of the Church holds the keys necessary for governing the entire Church. His counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also hold the keys of the kingdom and operate under the President's direction. Stake presidents, bishops, and temple, mission, and quorum presidents are given keys to guide the Church in their jurisdictions. Their counselors do not hold keys but "receive delegated authority by calling and assignment."<sup>9</sup>

Priesthood and priesthood keys open the door to the blessings of the Atonement. Through the power of the priesthood, people are baptized for the remission of sins, made possible by the Savior's great act of mercy. A man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may confer the Holy Ghost. Through the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, members are cleansed with fire, guided into truth, comforted, sanctified, and blessed in many ways as partakers of the fruits of the Atonement. The sealing authority may bind a man, a woman, and their children together forever, making possible exaltations in the world to come—again, a blessing from the Savior.

## Story of son and priesthood blessings

It is expected that worthy holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood will use the power delegated to them to bless others, starting with their own families. One of the great inheritances of the Restoration is that a father ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood has the right to bless his wife and children when prompted and when a blessing is desired by them.

Many years ago our family had an experience which left an indelible impres-

sion as to the importance and value and power of a father's blessing. The lessons learned may be of interest to you.

### *Son declines a blessing*

When our oldest children were ready to begin formal schooling, Sister Bateman and I decided that a father's blessing would be given to each child at the beginning of the school year. The family home evening preceding the start of school would be the occasion. The year our oldest son, Michael, entered the third grade holds special memories for us. During the preceding summer he had participated in Little League baseball. He loved the sport. When we gathered for family home evening just before the start of school, Michael announced that he did not need a blessing. He had completed his first season in Little League, and blessings were for younger children.

Sister Bateman and I were stunned. We encouraged him, suggesting that a blessing would help him with his schoolwork. It would be a protection to him. It would help him in his relations with his brothers, sisters, and friends. Our encouragement, along with some coaxing, failed. He was too old. Believing in the principle of agency, we were not about to force a blessing on an eight-year-old. All of the children except Michael received a blessing that year.

### *Struck by a car*

The school year proceeded normally. Michael and the other children did well in school, and the family enjoyed their associations together. Then the following May arrived, and it was time for Little League baseball to begin. Following the last day of school, Michael's coach called a team practice. Michael's anticipation could not have been greater. His dream was about to be realized. He was to be the starting catcher.

The baseball diamond was only a few blocks from our home. The boys and the coach walked to the baseball field, crossing a busy highway. Following the practice, the boys and coach started for home. Michael and a friend ran on ahead of the coach and the other boys. As the two boys approached the busy highway, Michael failed to look and darted in front of a car driven by a 16-year-old young man out for his first drive. Can you imagine the fear that must have struck the young man's heart? He slammed on the brakes and swerved in an attempt to miss the boy. Unfortunately, the side of the front fender and bumper hit Michael and threw him down the highway.

A short time later, Sister Bateman and I received a telephone call from the police. Michael, in critical condition, was in an ambulance on his way to the hospital. It was important that we hurry. Before leaving, I called a friend and asked him to meet us at the hospital and assist in giving a blessing. The 20-minute drive was the longest of our lives. We prayed fervently for the life of our son and to know the will of the Lord.

As we parked the car by the door of the emergency room, we saw a policeman exiting with a young man who was crying. The policeman recognized us and introduced the young man as the driver of the car. We knew enough of the story to put our arms around him and tell him that we knew it was not his fault.

#### *A priesthood blessing*

We then entered the hospital to find Michael. As we entered his room, the doctors and nurses were working feverishly, attending to his needs. My friend had arrived, and we asked if it would be possible to have two or three minutes alone with him. My priesthood brother anointed, and I sealed. As I laid my hands upon Michael's head, a feeling of comfort and peace came

over me, words flowed, and promises were made. He was then rushed to the operating room.

#### *Recovery*

For the next four weeks, Michael lay in a hospital bed with his head bandaged and his leg in traction. Each Wednesday his Little League teammates would visit him after the game and give him a report. Each Wednesday, tears would well up in Michael's eyes and run down his cheeks as the boys relived the game. After four weeks in traction, Michael was put in a body cast from his chest to his toes. On two or three occasions we took him to a game to watch his friends play. Another four weeks passed, and the body cast was replaced with a cast from his hip to his toes. Two days before school was to begin, the final cast was removed. As the family gathered the next night for school blessings, is there any wonder as to who wanted the first blessing? A nine-year-old boy, a little older and a lot wiser, was first in line.

#### *A tradition of priesthood blessings*

Over the years our children have come to understand that accidents are not always prevented by priesthood blessings, but they also know that more than one type of protection is available through the priesthood. Today our grandchildren are the recipients of priesthood blessings. The tradition is in the second and third generations. We believe that this practice, like the family, will prevail through the eternities.

I am so grateful that a 14-year-old boy, Joseph Smith, entered a grove of trees asking to know which church is right. I will be eternally grateful for the answer he received and the subsequent restoration of the priesthood and its keys through John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; and other holy messengers. May we use this great power to bless all of God's children,

beginning with our own families, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16.
4. Matthew 16:19.
5. Matthew 17:1–3.
6. See Matthew 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 7:7.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 158.
8. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *Christian Churches of America: Origins and Beliefs*, rev. ed. (1976, 1983), 54–55.

9. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 161.

#### President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren.

We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “Redeemer of Israel.” President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

## President James E. Faust

### Young orphan girl crossing the plains

My dear brethren of the priesthood of God all over the world, we extend to each of you our love and greetings wherever you are.

Picture with me a little six-year-old orphan girl traveling across the plains of America. Her name is Elsie Ann. Her mother died when she was two. Her father remarried, and so for a time she had a stepmother. Then her father died at Winter Quarters when she was five. Her stepmother remarried and moved away, leaving this little orphan behind with Peter and Selina Robison, who were related to her stepmother. Elsie Ann left Winter Quarters with the Robisons in July of 1849 to come west. As she watched Selina care for her 10-month-old baby girl, she no doubt ached for the love of her own mother. Sometimes she would even ask, “Where is my mother?”

My heart goes out to this little girl when I think of her facing her uncertain future with no blood relatives to comfort

and help her. Elsie Ann was my great-grandmother, and only recently did we find out who her mother really was. For years we thought Elsie Ann was Jane Robison’s daughter. Careful research discovered her true parentage, and after all these years Elsie Ann now has been sealed to her father, John Akerley, and her mother, Mary Moore.

My grandparents have had a great influence on my life. Even though they have been dead for many years, I still feel their confirming love. One grandfather, James Akerley Faust, died before I was born. I knew him only through the stories my grandmother and my parents told about him. However, I feel a strong kinship with him because I am in part what he was. Among other things, he was a cowboy, a rancher, and a postmaster in a small town in central Utah. On one occasion, Grandfather took a trip in the winter to Idaho, where he met an acquaintance who had fallen on hard times. It was cold, and Grandfather’s friend had no coat. Grandfather took off his coat and gave it to him.



### **A hunger to know our heritage**

This evening I encourage you young men to begin to unlock the knowledge of who you really are by learning more about your forebears. Alex Haley, the author of the book *Roots*, said:

“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage—to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.”<sup>1</sup>

We can have exciting experiences as we learn about our vibrant, dynamic ancestors. They were very real, living people with problems, hopes, and dreams like we have today.

In many ways each of us is the sum total of what our ancestors were. The virtues they had may be our virtues, their strengths our strengths, and in a way their challenges could be our challenges. Some of their traits may be our traits. I noticed a while ago that one of my great-grandsons, a toddler, seemed to have an interesting kind of a walk. My wife said, “He walks just like you do!” Now I wonder from whom I inherited this characteristic.

It is a joy to become acquainted with our forebears who died long ago. Each of us has a fascinating family history. Finding your ancestors can be one of the most interesting puzzles you young men can work on.

### **Learn about the phenomenon that is you**

Each of us has to begin this work somewhere, and it can be done by young or old. This summer 170 children of the Accra Ghana Lartebikorshie Stake worked on their four-generation family trees during a two-hour program, with more than 74 completing and displaying their trees.

As President Boyd K. Packer has said, “If you don’t know where to start, start with *yourself*. If you don’t know what records to get, and how to get them, start with what you have.”<sup>2</sup> You will learn about the phenomenon that is you. It can be more fascinating than any movie you might see or any computer game you might play. You will need to find out who your grandparents and great-grandparents were and what temple work has been done for them. If you don’t know how to get this information, ask people in your ward who do know how.

Ask living members of your family what they know about your extended family. Look at records that are close at hand, such as family Bibles, to find more details about your forebears. Then you can reach out to other sources such as vital records, church records, census records, and military records. If you have access to a computer, you can put your computer skills to work and log on to the Church’s FamilySearch.org Web site. Family history has become a sophisticated activity where computers provide immense resources for your search. You can easily access a vast collection of family history records using the Internet on your home computer or at your nearest family history center.

Family history centers are now available in 88 countries. They are part of an unequaled record-keeping system that helps preserve the heritage of families all over the world. In the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, patrons are constantly corresponding and submitting information about their family histories. One person wrote, “We are sending you five children in a separate envelope.”

### **A responsibility, not just a hobby**

The great work of providing the saving ordinances for our kindred dead is a vital part of the threefold mission of the

Church. We do this work for a purpose, which is to redeem our dead ancestors. Temple work is essential for both us and our kindred dead who are waiting for these saving ordinances to be done for them. It is essential because “we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.”<sup>3</sup> They need the saving ordinances, and we need to be sealed to them. For this reason it is important that we trace our family lines so that no one is left out.

Searching for our kindred dead isn’t just a hobby. It is a fundamental responsibility for all members of the Church. We believe that life continues after death and that all will be resurrected.<sup>4</sup> We believe that families may continue in the next life if they have kept the special covenants made in one of the sacred temples under the authority of God. We believe that our deceased ancestors can also be eternally united with their families when we make covenants in their behalf in the temples. Our deceased forebears may accept these covenants, if they choose to do so, in the spirit world.<sup>5</sup>

### **Forge a continuous chain with forefathers**

The great vicarious work for our kindred dead in our temples demonstrates both the justice and the fairness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the terrible dilemma which would face God’s children without temple work for our dead. Said he:

“One dies and is buried, having never heard the Gospel of reconciliation; to the other the message of salvation is sent, he hears and embraces it, and is made the heir of eternal life. Shall the one become the partaker of glory and the other be consigned to hopeless perdition? Is there no chance for his escape?”<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately our ancestors will have the opportunity to receive and accept the saving ordinances as we identify them and complete these sacred ordinances for

them by proxy. We do for them what they cannot do for themselves. It is a very satisfying experience.

In the great vision in the Kirtland Temple, Elijah the prophet appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and committed the keys of temple work and the sealing power into Joseph Smith’s hands.<sup>7</sup> This fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy that Elijah would be sent “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.”<sup>8</sup>

So what does this mean? To turn our hearts to our fathers is to search out the names of our deceased ancestors and to perform the saving ordinances in the temple for them. This will forge a continuous chain between us and our forefathers eventually all the way back to Father Adam and Mother Eve.

### **Young boy helps find an ancestor**

The heart of an 11-year-old boy was turned to his fathers during a family home evening when the children assembled personal books of remembrance. Young Jeff wanted to accompany his mother to the National Archives. She was afraid that he might disturb the other researchers there. But he persisted, and she relented and took him with her. Four hours into their research, he exclaimed, “Mama, I’ve found Grandpa!” Indeed, he had found his great-great-great-grandfather.<sup>9</sup> However, it doesn’t always work that way. In a letter to the Family History Department, someone wrote, “We lost our grandmother. Will you please send us a copy?”

The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that the celestial family organization will be “one that is *complete*,” that is, “an organization linked from father and mother and children of one generation, to the father and mother and children of the next generation, thus expanding and spreading out down to the end of time.”<sup>10</sup>

### Student experiences a miracle in research

In tracing our family names, we often find them spelled differently, depending on the source. This was the case of a university student in Provo, Utah, who caught the vision of this linking of generations. He was walking through the library one evening and remembered hearing someone in the Searing family tell about a town in New York State that had been named after an ancestor. So he decided to look up the town. He stumbled across a very old copy of a gazetteer of New York and read about a man named Simon Searing who helped settle Long Island in the mid-1600s. Could Simon be his ancestor? He had to know. He began research in earnest and traced his line back several generations. But still he needed to bridge the gap between the 1800s and the 1600s. Then a miracle occurred. He unexpectedly located a history of a *Syring* family. The families in the *Syring* book ended in the same generation he had reached in his own research. Not only was he able to connect many generations, but he also linked himself to the early settler Simon Searing.<sup>11</sup>

### “Ordinary” people have heroic lives

Some who are interested in family history try to enhance their own image by linking up with prominent people. In my own experience it has been quite different. I have been fascinated by learning of some of the unknown, ordinary people whose records tell of heroic lives. Arthur R. Bassett once said:

“Who among us wants to throw stones at their own ancestors? I, for one, am intrigued by their battles—their victories as well as their defeats. . . . I am fascinated by what may seem the most commonplace of lives, because I have come to realize the excitement that is concealed in the commonplace.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not likely that you will find any horse thieves in your ancestral line. But if

you do, it is important that their temple work be done because we believe in repentance for the dead also:

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

### Rewards of family history work

The process of finding our ancestors one by one can be challenging but also exciting and rewarding. We often feel spiritual guidance as we go to the sources that identify them. Because this is a very spiritual work, we can expect help from the other side of the veil. We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done. This is a Christlike service because we are doing something for them that they cannot do for themselves.

Many of you young men have already had a taste of temple work as you have participated in baptisms for the dead. When we go early to the temple, we often see young people dressed in white, ready to take part in this satisfying experience before going to school. You are to be commended for your dedication in performing this vital work. In so doing you have already felt the peace and serenity found within the walls of our temples.

I testify that God is a just God, and He will not give privileges to us and withhold them from our forebears. But we will need to do the baptisms, the endowments, and the sealings for them by proxy here on earth in order for us and them to be linked together for eternity “and have part in the first resurrection.”<sup>14</sup>

I further testify that the Lord directs and inspires President Hinckley as he leads us in this important work. May the peace that comes from faithful discharge of our

priesthood duties ever be with us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. "What *Roots* Means to Me," *Reader's Digest*, May 1977, 73–74.
2. "Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 15.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
4. See Acts 24:15; Alma 11:41–45.
5. See "Why Family History?" Internet, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).
6. *History of the Church*, 4:425–26.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–14, 16.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–15.
9. R. Scott Lloyd, "Hearts of the Children," *Church News*, 14 Sept. 1986, 16.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:175.
11. Bryan Searing, "The Link Made," *Church News*, 27 Oct. 1990, 16.
12. "The Relationship of Genealogy and History," in Proceedings of the 1980 World Conference on Records, 13 vols., Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2:4.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59.
14. Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 149.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Redeemer of Israel."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Priesthood—the perfect plan of service

My dear brethren, it is a humbling experience to stand before you this evening and to realize that beyond the imposing audience in this, the Conference Center, many hundreds of thousands of priesthood bearers are similarly assembled throughout the world.

While contemplating the responsibility to speak to you, I recalled a definition of priesthood authority declared by President Stephen L. Richards. Said he:

"The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.' This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.'" <sup>1</sup>

Whether we hold the office of a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood or that of an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, we are duty bound by the Lord's revelation found in the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 99: "Wherefore, now

let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."

### A great blessing to hold the priesthood

As our youngest son, Clark, was approaching his 12th birthday, he and I were leaving the Church Administration Building when President Harold B. Lee approached and greeted us. I mentioned that Clark would soon be 12, whereupon President Lee turned to him and asked, "What happens to you when you turn 12?"

This was one of those times when a father prays that a son will be inspired to give a proper response. Clark, without hesitation, said to President Lee, "I will be ordained a deacon!"

The answer was the one President Lee had sought. He then counseled our son, "Remember, it is a great blessing to hold the priesthood."

When I was a boy, I looked forward to passing the sacrament to the ward members. We deacons were trained as to our

duties. One of the men in our ward, Louis, suffered from palsy. His head and hands shook so violently that he could not, by himself, partake of the sacrament. Each deacon knew that his duty in serving Louis was to hold the bread to his lips so that he might partake and to similarly place the cup of water to his mouth with one hand, while steadying his head with the other, the tray being held by another deacon while doing so. Always Louis would say, "Thank you."

### **Experience as a newly called Apostle**

It was 40 years ago this conference time when President David O. McKay called me to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. At the first meeting of the Presidency and Twelve which I attended where the sacrament was served, President McKay announced, "Before we partake of the sacrament, I would like to ask our newest member of this body, Brother Monson, if he would instruct the First Presidency and Twelve on the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It was then that I gained a true understanding of the old adage: "When the time for decision arrives, the time for preparation is past." It was also the time to remember the counsel found in 1 Peter: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>2</sup>

I began my remarks by referring to a letter which I had received from one of the servicemen from our ward who was serving on the front lines in Korea during that sometimes forgotten war. The writer told how, amidst the shelling on Sunday morning, several in his platoon partook of the bread and then the water, both served from a helmet. Each remembered the significance of the blessing pronounced on the sacred emblems and his individual responsibility to keep the commandments of the Lord and to follow the Lord's example of service to others.

The memory of that particular experience with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve has not dimmed in the intervening 40 years.

To those who have been absent from home and family, whether in the military, on missions, or for other purposes, the holiday season brings forth a yearning—even a longing—to be together with loved ones. To hear the laughter of children, to witness the expression of love by parents, and to feel the embrace of brothers and sisters provide a preview of heaven and the eternal joy to be found there.

### **Nothing can take the place of the home**

One December evening, while waiting to board a plane en route to the United States, Sister Monson and I were standing in the stifling heat and humidity of Singapore, when over the airport loudspeaker system came a familiar, lilting melody, with Bing Crosby singing the words:

I'll be home for Christmas;  
You can plan on me.  
Please have snow and mistletoe  
And presents on the tree.  
Christmas Eve will find me  
Where the love-light gleams.  
I'll be home for Christmas  
If only in my dreams.<sup>3</sup>

The First Presidency has long emphasized the statement, "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."<sup>4</sup>

### **A father repents and rescues his son**

There are those families comprised of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters who have, through thoughtless comment, isolated themselves from one another. An account of how such a tragedy was narrowly averted occurred many years ago in the life of a young man who, for purposes of privacy, I shall call Jack.

Throughout Jack's life, he and his father had many serious arguments. One day when he was 17, they had a particularly violent one. Jack said to his father, "This is the straw that breaks the camel's back. I'm leaving home, and I shall never return." So saying, he went to the house and packed his bag. His mother begged him to stay; he was too angry to listen. He left her crying at the doorway.

Leaving the yard, he was about to pass through the gate when he heard his father call to him, "Jack, I know that a large share of the blame for your leaving rests with me. For this I am truly sorry. I want you to know that if you should ever wish to return home, you'll always be welcome. And I'll try to be a better father to you. I want you to know that I'll always love you."

Jack said nothing but went to the bus station and bought a ticket to a distant point. As he sat on the bus, watching the miles go by, he commenced to think about the words of his father. He began to realize how much love it had required for him to do what he had done. Dad had apologized. He had invited him back and left the words ringing in the summer air: "I love you."

It was then that Jack realized that the next move was up to him. He knew the only way he could ever find peace with himself was to demonstrate to his father the same kind of maturity, goodness, and love that Dad had shown toward him. Jack got off the bus. He bought a return ticket and went back.

He arrived shortly after midnight, entered the house, turned on the light. There in the rocking chair sat his father, his head in his hands. As he looked up and saw Jack, he arose from the chair and they rushed into each other's arms. Jack often said, "Those last years that I was home were among the happiest of my life."

We could say that here was a boy who overnight became a man. Here was a fa-

ther who, suppressing passion and bridling pride, rescued his son before he became one of that vast "lost battalion" resulting from fractured families and shattered homes. Love was the binding band, the healing balm. Love so often felt, so seldom expressed.

### **Reach out and rescue those who stray**

From Mount Sinai there thunders in our ears, "Honour thy father and thy mother."<sup>5</sup> And later from the Lord the injunction, "Live together in love."<sup>6</sup>

Brethren, ours is the responsibility, yes, even the solemn duty, to reach out to those who have slipped into inactivity or strayed from the family circle.

Recall with me the beautiful words of the Lord's revelation from section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"<sup>7</sup>

As presidencies of Aaronic Priesthood quorums, as advisers to these quorums, we can, with the Lord's help, reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility. Young men, with a smile on your face and determination in your heart, you can take, arm in arm, a less-active boy and together come to priesthood meeting and learn of the Lord and what He has prepared for you to do. You are entitled to His divine help, for He has promised you: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>8</sup>

Brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, you have the same sacred charge and obligation as pertains to your duties to other men and to their families. And you have the same promise of the Lord to attend your efforts.

As you succeed, you will be answering a mother's prayer, the tender though unexpressed feelings of children's hearts; and your names will forever be honored by those whom you reach out and help.

### **A prompting to reach out as a bishop**

Let me share with you a rather private but joyful example from my own experience.

As a bishop I worried about any members who were inactive, not attending, not serving. Such was my thought one day as I drove down the street where Ben and Emily Fullmer lived. Aches and pains of advancing years caused them to withdraw from activity to the shelter of their home—isolated, detached, shut out from the mainstream of daily life and association. Ben and Emily had not been in our sacrament meeting for many years. Ben, a former bishop, would sit constantly in his front room reading and memorizing the New Testament.

I was en route from my uptown sales office to our plant on Industrial Road. For some reason I had driven down First West, a street which I never had traveled before to reach the destination of our plant. Then I felt the unmistakable prompting to park my car and visit Ben and Emily, even though I was on my way to a meeting. I did not heed the impression at first but drove on for two more blocks; however, when the impression came again, I returned to their home.

It was a sunny weekday afternoon. I approached the door to their home and knocked. I heard the tiny fox terrier dog bark at my approach. Emily welcomed me in. Upon seeing me, she exclaimed, "All

day long I have waited for my phone to ring. It has been silent. I hoped the postman would deliver a letter. He brought only bills. Bishop, how did you know today is my birthday?"

I answered, "God knows, Emily, for He loves you."

In the quiet of their living room, I said to Ben and Emily, "I really don't know why I was directed here today, but I was. Our Heavenly Father knows. Let's kneel in prayer and ask Him why." This we did, and the answer came. As we arose from our knees, I said to Brother Fullmer, "Ben, would you come to priesthood meeting when we meet with all the priesthood and relate to our Aaronic Priesthood boys the story you once told me when I was a boy, how you and a group of boys were en route to the Jordan River to swim one Sunday, but you felt the Spirit direct you to attend Sunday School. And you did. One of the boys who failed to respond to that Spirit drowned that Sunday. Our boys would like to hear your testimony."

"I'll do it," he responded.

I then said to Sister Fullmer, "Emily, I know you have a beautiful voice. My mother has told me so. Our ward conference is a few weeks away, and our choir will sing. Would you join the choir and attend our ward conference and perhaps sing a solo?"

"What will the number be?" she inquired.

"I don't know," I said, "but I'd like you to sing it." (That's what drives choristers crazy, brethren.)

She sang. He spoke to the Aaronic Priesthood. Hearts were gladdened by the return to activity of Ben and Emily. They rarely missed a sacrament meeting from that day forward. The language of the Spirit had been spoken. It had been heard. It had been understood. Hearts were touched and souls saved. Ben and Emily Fullmer had come home.

## Bring him home

One of the longest-running musicals in history is *Les Misérables*. The story is set in the period of the French Revolution. The principal character in the musical is Jean Valjean. In his heartfelt concern for the young man Marius, who is going off to battle, he expresses in song a sincere prayer:

God on high,  
Hear my prayer;  
In my need  
You have always been there.

He is young,  
He's afraid;  
Let him rest,  
Heaven blessed.  
Bring him home. . . .

Bring him peace,  
Bring him joy.  
He is young;  
He is only a boy.

You can take,  
You can give;  
Let him be,  
Let him live.  
If I die, let me die,  
Let him live.  
Bring him home.<sup>9</sup>

Brethren, as we go forward as bearers of the priesthood of God, learning our duty and then reaching out to our brethren who stand in need of our help, let us look upward to our Heavenly Father, who is the Father of us all. We may not hear His voice, but we will remember His salutation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."<sup>10</sup>

And within our hearts we will recognize His unspoken plea: *Bring him home*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
2. 1 Peter 3:15.
3. Kim Gannon and Walter Kent, "I'll Be Home for Christmas," 1943.
4. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80; see also J. Reuben Clark Jr., meeting of general Church auxiliary executives, Mar. 29, 1940.
5. Exodus 20:12.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15–16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
9. Herbert Kretzmer, "Bring Him Home."
10. Matthew 25:21.

## President Hinckley

My dear brethren, we've had a wonderful meeting. We're grateful to all who participated in any way—to those who have spoken and touched our hearts, to this wonderful priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. I don't know where in all the world you'd get a group of young men such as these who have sung to us tonight. Thank you very much, Brother Branchley and those you've directed.

We remind all of you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. The Sunday morning session will follow immediately at 10:00 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to be careful, to obey traffic rules, and to use caution and courtesy in your driving.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah." The benediction will then be given by Elder H. Ross Workman of the Seventy.



## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The shepherds of Israel

Brethren, tonight I am going to do something a little unusual. I am going to repeat some elements of a talk which I gave 15 years ago in our general priesthood meeting. I am going to speak of and to the bishops of the Church, this wonderful body of men who are in a very real sense the shepherds of Israel.

Everyone who participates in this conference is accountable to a bishop or a branch president. Tremendous are the burdens which they carry, and I invite every member of the Church to do all that he or she can to lift the burden under which our bishops and branch presidents labor.

We must pray for them. They need help as they carry their heavy loads. We can be more supportive and less dependent upon them. We can assist them in every way possible. We can thank them for all that they do for us. We are wearing them out in a short time by the burdens which we impose upon them.

We have more than 18,000 bishops in the Church. Every one is a man who has been called by the spirit of prophecy and revelation and set apart and ordained by the laying on of hands. Every one of them holds the keys of the presidency of his ward. Each is a high priest, the presiding high priest of his ward. Each carries tremendous responsibilities of stewardship. Each stands as a father to his people.

None receives money for his service. No ward bishop is compensated by the Church for his work as a bishop.

### Requirements of a bishop

The requirements of a bishop today are as they were in the days of Paul, who wrote to Timothy:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of

good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

“Not given to wine, no striker [that is, not a bully or a violent person], . . . not a brawler, not covetous;

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

“(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:2–6).

In his letter to Titus, Paul adds that “a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; . . . holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:7, 9).

Those words aptly describe a bishop today in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### Men of integrity and moral strength

Let me now speak directly to the thousands of bishops who are in attendance tonight. Let me say first that I love you for your integrity and goodness. You must be men of integrity. You must stand as examples to the congregations over which you preside. You must stand on higher ground so that you can lift others. You must be absolutely honest, for you handle the funds of the Lord, the tithes of the people, the offerings that come of their fasting, and the contributions which they make from their own strained resources. How great is your trust as the keepers of the purse of the Lord!

Your goodness must be as an ensign to your people. Your morals must be impeccable. The wiles of the adversary may be held before you because he knows that if he can destroy you, he can injure an

entire ward. You must exercise wisdom in all of your relationships lest someone read into your observed actions some taint of moral sin. You cannot succumb to the temptation to read pornographic literature or even in the secrecy of your own chamber to view pornographic films. Your moral strength must be such that if ever you are called on to sit in judgment on the questionable morals of others, you may do so without personal compromise or embarrassment.

You cannot use your office as bishop to further your own business interests lest through some ensuing financial mishap accusation be placed against you by those who succumbed to your persuasiveness.

### **A common judge in Israel**

You cannot compromise your qualifications to sit as a common judge in Israel. It is a fearsome and awesome responsibility to stand as a judge of the people. You must be their judge in some instances as to worthiness to hold membership in the Church, worthiness to enter the house of the Lord, worthiness to be baptized, worthiness to receive the priesthood, worthiness to serve missions, worthiness to teach and to serve as officers in the organizations. You must be the judge of their eligibility in times of distress to receive help from the fast offerings of the people and commodities from the storehouse of the Lord. None for whom you are responsible must go hungry or without clothing or shelter though they be reluctant to ask. You must know something of the circumstances of all of the flock over whom you preside.

### **A strength in times of trouble**

You must be their counselor, their comforter, their anchor and strength in times of sorrow and trouble. You must be strong with that strength which comes from the Lord. You must be wise with

that wisdom which comes from the Lord. Your door must be open to hear their cries and your back strong to carry their burdens, your heart sensitive to judge their needs, your godly love broad enough and strong enough to encompass even the wrongdoer and the critic. You must be a man of patience, willing to listen and striving to understand. You are the only one to whom some can turn. You must be there when every other source has failed. Permit me to read you a few lines from a letter sent to a bishop.

“Dear Bishop:

“It has been almost two years since I desperately called you asking for help. At that time I was ready to kill myself. I had no one else to turn to—no money, no job, no friends. My house had been taken, and I had no place to live. The Church was my last hope.

“As you know, I had left the Church at the age of 17 and had broken just about every rule and commandment that there was in my search for happiness and fulfillment. Instead of happiness, my life was filled with misery, anguish, and despair. There was no hope or future for me. I even pleaded with God to let me die, to take me out of my misery. Not even He wanted me. I felt that He had rejected me too.

“That’s when I turned to you and the Church. . . .

“You listened with understanding, you counseled, you guided, you helped.

“I began to grow and develop in understanding and knowledge of the gospel. I found that I had to make certain basic changes in my life that were terribly difficult, but that within me I had the worth and strength to do so.

“I learned that as I lived the gospel and repented, I had no more fear. I was filled with an inner peace. The clouds of anguish and despair were gone. Because of the Atonement, my weaknesses and sins were forgiven through Jesus Christ and His love for me.

“He has blessed and strengthened me. He has opened pathways for me, given me direction, and kept me from harm. I have found that as I overcame each obstacle, my business began to grow, enabling my family to benefit and making me feel as though I had accomplished something.

“Bishop, you have given me understanding and support through these past two years. I never would have reached this point if not for your love and patience. Thank you for being what you are as the servant of the Lord to help me, His wandering child.”

### **A watchman on the tower**

Bishops, you stand as watchmen on the tower of the wards over which you preside. There are many teachers in each ward. But you must be the chief teacher among them. You must see that there is no false doctrine creeping in among the people. You must see that they grow in faith and testimony, in integrity and righteousness and a sense of service. You must see that their love for the Lord strengthens and manifests itself in greater love for one another.

You must be their confessor, privy to their deepest secrets, holding absolutely inviolate the confidences placed in you. Yours is a privileged communication that must be guarded and respected against all intruders. There may be temptations to tell. You cannot succumb.

Unless specifically mandated by legal requirement in cases of abuse, what is told to you in confidence must remain with you. The Church maintains a hotline which you should call concerning cases of abuse which may come to you.

### **The presiding high priest**

You as an individual preside over the Aaronic Priesthood of the ward. You are their leader, their teacher, their example, whether you wish to be or not. You are the

presiding high priest, the father to the ward family, to be called upon as arbiter in disagreements, as defender of the accused.

You preside in meetings where the doctrine is taught. You are accountable for the spiritual nature of those meetings and for the administration of the sacrament to the members, that all may be reminded of sacred covenants and obligations incumbent upon those who have taken upon them the name of the Lord.

You must stand as the strong friend of the widow and the orphan, the weak and the beleaguered, the attacked and the helpless.

The sound of your trumpet must be certain and unequivocal. In your ward you stand as the head of the army of the Lord, leading them on to victory in the conquest against sin, indifference, and apostasy.

### **Wisdom and strength beyond your own**

I know that the work is hard at times. There are never enough hours to get it done. The calls are numerous and frequent. You have other things to do. That is true. You must not rob your employer of the time and energy that are rightfully his. You must not rob your family of time which belongs to them. But as most of you have come to know, as you seek for divine guidance, you are blessed with wisdom beyond your own and strength and capacity you did not know you had. It is possible to budget your time so that you neglect neither your employer, your family, nor your flock.

### **The sweetest, most rewarding service**

God bless the good bishops of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You may on occasion be inclined to complain about the burdens of your office. But you also know the joys of your service. Heavy as the load may be, you know this is the sweetest, the most rewarding, the

most important thing you have ever done outside the walls of your own home.

I thank the Lord for you. I thank the Lord for the good bishops in this Church throughout the world. I pray for you—all 18,000 of you. I plead with you to be strong. I plead with you to be true. I plead with you to be uncompromising in your own lives and in the goals you set for others. Though your days be long and wearisome, may your rest be sweet and in your hearts may you know that peace which comes alone from God to those who serve Him.

I bear testimony of the strength and goodness of the bishops of this Church. I pay tribute to counselors who help them and to all who serve under their direction in response to the calls they make.

We do not expect the impossible from you. We ask that you do the very best you can. Delegate to others every aspect of the work that you legitimately can. And then leave matters in the hands of the Lord.

Someday you will be released. It will be a time of sadness for you. But there will be comfort as your people thank you. Nor will they ever forget you. They will remember you and speak with appreciation through years to come, for among all Church officers you are nearest to them. You have been called, ordained, and set apart as shepherds to the flock. You have been endowed with discernment, judgment, and love to bless their lives. In the process, you will bless your own.

I bear testimony of the divine nature of your calling and of the magnificent way in which you fulfill it. May you, your counselors, your wives, and your children be blessed as you serve the children of the Lord, I humbly pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder H. Ross Workman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 5, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" to begin the session. President Faust then made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this fourth general session of the 173rd Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating via radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are making the proceedings of this conference available to many areas across the world.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" and will now favor us with "Sabbath Day." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Angel Abrea, who yesterday received emeritus status.

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The choir sang “Sabbath Day.”  
Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing “I Feel My Savior’s Love.” We shall then hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### The bridge builder

Many years ago I read a book entitled *The Way to the Western Sea*, by David S. Lavender. It provides a fascinating account of the epic journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark as they led their famed expedition across the North American continent to discover an overland route to the Pacific Ocean.

Their trek was a nightmare of back-breaking toil, deep gorges which had to be crossed, and extensive travel by foot, carrying with them their supply-laden boats to find the next stream on which to make their way.

As I read of their experiences, I frequently mused, “If only there were modern bridges to span the gorges of the raging waters.” There came to my mind thoughts of magnificent bridges of our time which accomplish this task with ease: the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco fame; the sturdy Sydney, Australia, Harbour Bridge; and others in many lands.

In reality, we are all travelers—even explorers of mortality. We do not have the benefit of previous personal experience. We must pass over steep precipices and turbulent waters in our own journey here on earth.

Perhaps such a somber thought inspired the poet Will Allen Dromgoole’s classic poem titled “The Bridge Builder.”

An old man, going a lone highway,  
Came at the evening, cold and gray,  
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,  
Through which was flowing a sullen  
tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight  
dim;

The sullen stream had no fears for  
him;

But he turned when safe on the other  
side

And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,  
“You are wasting strength with build-  
ing here;

Your journey will end with the ending  
day;

You never again must pass this way;

You have crossed the chasm, deep and  
wide—

Why build you the bridge at the even-  
tide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head:

“Good friend, in the path I have  
come,” he said,

“There followeth after me today

A youth whose feet must pass this way.

This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall  
be.

He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building the bridge  
for him.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Savior is the supreme bridge builder

The message of that poem has prompted my thinking and comforted my soul, for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was the supreme architect and builder of bridges for you, for me, for all mankind. He has built the bridges over which we must cross if we are to reach our heavenly home.

The Savior's mission was foretold. Matthew recorded, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."<sup>2</sup>

There followed the miracle of His birth and the gathering of the shepherds who came with haste to that stable, to that mother, to that child. Even the Wise Men, journeying from the East, followed that star and bestowed their precious gifts upon the young child.

The scripture records that Jesus "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him"<sup>3</sup> and that He "went about doing good."<sup>4</sup>

What personal bridges did He build and cross here in mortality, showing us the way to follow? He knew mortality would be filled with dangers and difficulties. He declared:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>5</sup>

## The bridge of obedience

Jesus provided the *bridge of obedience*. He was an unfailing example of personal obedience as He kept the commandments of His Father.

When He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan, He was weak from fasting. Satan was at his seduc-

tive best in the offerings he proffered. His first was to satisfy the Savior's physical needs, including His hunger. To this the Savior replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."<sup>6</sup>

Next Satan offered power. Responded the Savior, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."<sup>7</sup>

Finally the Savior was offered wealth and earthly glory. His response: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>8</sup>

The Apostle Paul was inspired of the Lord to declare for our time, as well as for his: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."<sup>9</sup>

Lest we equivocate, I mention a comment from ABC *Nightline*'s Ted Koppel: "What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions [but the Ten] Commandments!"<sup>10</sup>

A bit of subtle humor is found in an account of a conversation between Mark Twain and a friend. Said the wealthy friend to Twain, "Before I die, I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb to the top of Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud."

Replied Twain, "Why don't you stay home and keep them!"

## The bridge of service

The second bridge provided by the Master for us to cross is the *bridge of service*. We look to the Savior as our example of service. Although He came to earth as the Son of God, He humbly served those around Him. He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; He caused the lame

to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

In the 25th chapter of the book of Matthew, the Savior tells us this concerning the faithful who will be on His right hand at His triumphal return:

“Then shall the King say unto them . . . , Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>11</sup>

Elder Richard L. Evans once counseled, “We can’t do everything for everyone everywhere, but we can do something for someone somewhere.”<sup>12</sup>

May I share with you an account of an opportunity of service which came to me unexpectedly and in an unusual manner. I received a telephone call from a granddaughter of an old friend. She asked, “Do you remember Francis Brems, who was your Sunday School teacher?” I told her I did. She continued, “He is now 105 years of age. He lives in a small care center but meets with the entire family each Sunday, where he delivers a Sunday School lesson. Last Sunday, Grandpa announced to us, ‘My dears, I am going to die this week. Will you please call Tommy Monson and tell him this. He’ll know what to do.’”

I visited Brother Brems the very next evening. I could not speak to him, for he was deaf. I could not write a message for him to read, for he was blind. What was I to do? I was told that his family communicated with him by taking the finger of his right hand and then tracing on the palm of his left hand the name of the person visiting and then any message. I followed the procedure and took his finger and spelled on the palm of his hand T-O-M-M-Y M-O-N-S-O-N. Brother Brems became excited and, taking my hands, placed them on his head. I knew his desire was to receive a priesthood blessing. The driver who had taken me to the care center joined me as we placed our hands on the head of Brother Brems and provided the desired blessing. Afterward, tears streamed from his sightless eyes. He grasped our hands, and we read the movement of his lips. The message: “Thank you so much.”

Within that very week, just as Brother Brems had predicted, he passed away. I received the telephone call and then met with the family as funeral arrangements were made. How thankful I am that a response to render service was not delayed.

The bridge of service invites us to cross over it frequently.

### **The bridge of prayer**

Finally, the Lord provided us the *bridge of prayer*. He directed, “Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing.”<sup>13</sup>

I share with you an account described in a mother’s letter to me relating to prayer. She wrote:

“Sometimes I wonder if I make a difference in my children’s lives. Especially as a single mother working two jobs to make ends meet, I sometimes come home to confusion, but I never give up hope.

“My children and I were watching a television broadcast of general conference, and you were speaking about prayer. My

son made the statement, ‘Mother, you’ve already taught us that.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ And he replied, ‘Well, you’ve taught us to pray and showed us how, but the other night I came to your room to ask something and found you on your knees praying to Heavenly Father. If He’s important to you, He’ll be important to me.’”

The letter concluded, “I guess you never know what kind of influence you’ll be until a child observes you doing yourself what you have tried to teach him to do.”

No relating of a prayer touches me so deeply as the prayer offered by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. I believe Luke describes it best:

“He . . . went . . . to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

“And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”<sup>14</sup>

In due time came the trek to the cross. What suffering He endured as He made His burdensome way, carrying His own cross. Heard were the words He uttered upon the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>15</sup>

At length Jesus declared, “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”<sup>16</sup>

These events, coupled with His glorious Resurrection, completed the final bridge of our trilogy: *the bridge of obedience, the bridge of service, and the bridge of prayer.*

Jesus, the Bridge Builder, spanned that vast chasm we call death. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>17</sup> He did for us what we could not do for ourselves; hence, mankind can cross the bridges He built—into life eternal.

I close by paraphrasing the poem “The Bridge Builder”:

“You have crossed the chasm, deep  
and wide—

Why build you the bridge at the even-  
tide?”

“There followeth after me today

A vast throng whose feet must pass this  
way.

This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that great throng may a pitfall be.  
They too must cross in the twilight  
dim;

Good friend, I am building the bridge  
for them.”

That we may have the wisdom and determination to cross the bridges the Savior built for each of us is my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 342.
2. Matthew 1:21.
3. Luke 2:40.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Matthew 11:28–30.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
10. Duke University commencement speech, 10 May 1987.
11. Matthew 25:34–40.
12. *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 51.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 19:38.
14. Luke 22:39–44.
15. Luke 23:34.
16. John 19:30.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22.



## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Jesus revealed God's true nature

Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God, our Eternal Father, is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely. As both Old and New Testaments declare:

"The first of all the commandments is . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first [and great] commandment."<sup>1</sup>

Little wonder then that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God." "I want you all to know Him," he said, "and to be familiar with Him."<sup>2</sup> We must have "a *correct* idea of his . . . perfections, and attributes," an admiration for "the excellency of [His] character."<sup>3</sup> Thus the first phrase we utter in the declaration of our faith is, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father."<sup>4</sup> So, emphatically, did Jesus. Even as He acknowledged His own singular role in the divine plan, the Savior nevertheless insisted on this prayerful preamble: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God."<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus gave all glory to the Father

After generations of prophets had tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God, in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it, and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

"The Father . . . doeth the works," He said in earnest. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."<sup>6</sup> On another occasion He said: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."<sup>7</sup>

### Many feel that God is distant, impersonal

I make my own heartfelt declaration of God, our Eternal Father, this morning because some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of Him. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. And if they do believe, many moderns say they might feel comfortable in

the arms of Jesus, but they are uneasy contemplating the stern encounter of God.<sup>8</sup> Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son, as operating very differently, this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Restoration scriptures teach about God**

In reflecting on these misconceptions, we realize that one of the remarkable contributions of the Book of Mormon is its seamless, perfectly consistent view of divinity throughout that majestic book. Here there is no Malachi-to-Matthew gap, no pause while we shift theological gears, no misreading the God who is urgently, lovingly, faithfully at work on every page of that record from its Old Testament beginning to its New Testament end. Yes, in an effort to give the world back its Bible and a correct view of Deity with it, what we have in the Book of Mormon is a uniform view of God in all His glory and goodness, all His richness and complexity—including and especially as again demonstrated through a personal appearance of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

How grateful we are for *all* the scriptures, especially the scriptures of the Restoration, that teach us the majesty of each member of the Godhead. How we would thrill, for example, if all the world would receive and embrace the view of the Father so movingly described in the Pearl of Great Price.

There, in the midst of a grand vision of humankind which heaven opened to his view, Enoch, observing both the blessings and challenges of mortality, turns his gaze toward the Father and is stunned to see Him weeping. He says in wonder and

amazement to this most powerful Being in the universe: “How is it that thou canst weep? . . . Thou art just [and] merciful and kind forever; . . . peace . . . is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?”

Looking out on the events of almost any day, God replies: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands. . . . I gave unto them . . . [a] commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . . wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?”<sup>10</sup>

That single, riveting scene does more to teach the true nature of God than any theological treatise could ever convey. It also helps us understand much more emphatically that vivid moment in the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive tree, when after digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?”<sup>11</sup>

What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor “the gospel of God” He sent!<sup>12</sup> How easy to love someone who so singularly loves us!

### **Jesus’ life shows God’s love**

Of course the centuries-long drift away from belief in such a perfect and caring Father hasn’t been helped any by the man-made creeds of erring generations which describe God variously as unknown and unknowable—formless, passionless, elusive, ethereal, simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at all. Certainly that does not describe the Being we behold through

the eyes of these prophets. Nor does it match the living, breathing, embodied Jesus of Nazareth, who was and is in “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his [Father].”<sup>13</sup>

In that sense, Jesus did not come to improve God’s view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man’s view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.”<sup>14</sup> In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is *God’s* compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”<sup>15</sup>

### God cherishes us, seeks our happiness

I bear personal witness this day of a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns. We are created in His very image and like-

ness,<sup>16</sup> and Jesus of Nazareth, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, came to earth as the perfect mortal manifestation of His grandeur. In addition to the witness of the ancients, we also have the modern miracle of Palmyra, the appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son, the Savior of the world, to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of that appearance, and in the words of that prophet I too declare:

“Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive. . . . God does not look on sin with [the least degree of] allowance, but . . . the nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs.”<sup>17</sup>

I bear witness of a God who has such shoulders. And in the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: “Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”<sup>18</sup>—and to love Him forever, I pray. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Mark 12:29–30; see also Matthew 22:37–38; Deuteronomy 6:5.
2. *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38, 42.
4. Articles of Faith 1:1.
5. John 17:3.
6. John 14:10; 5:19.
7. John 8:38, 28; 6:38.
8. See William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (1961), especially the chapter “Looking at the Cross,” for a discussion of this modern tendency.
9. See, for example, 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:19; Doctrine and Covenants 20:12.
10. Moses 7:29–33, 37.

11. Jacob 5:41; see also verses 47, 49.
12. Romans 1:1.
13. Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 42.
15. John 3:16–17.
16. See Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27.
17. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 257, 240–41.
18. 1 John 4:10–11.

## Elder Charles Didier

### Why missionary work?

Words are part of a vocabulary that we use to share feelings, knowledge, or information between people. Among these words, one is used to find the cause or the reason of a thing. When expressed, it is to satisfy our curiosity, to discover the unknown, or to receive answers to vital questions related to our mortal life. If not used or ignored, the thinking process ceases and ignorance prevails. So what is this essential word? Did you guess it? It is comprised of three letters; it is the word *why*.

*Why* is among the first and favorite words pronounced early by children and especially teenagers. A favorite *why* of one of my grandchildren: “Why do I need to eat vegetables?” Then, as children grow, the *whys* start the exploration of feelings: “Why did Grandmother die?” Then it is the search for knowledge or for confirmation of responsibilities: “Why do I need to go to church or serve a mission?” “Why are we commanded to share the gospel with others?”

This last question is challenging! Missionary work is also the responsibility of every member—to sound “the warning voice” to their neighbors, in mildness and in meekness (D&C 38:41). *Why*? So that others may receive the saving ordinances in the Church of Jesus Christ by inviting them to come unto Christ (see Moroni 10:32). The message of the Restoration is this invitation to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church have been restored by a prophet in modern times.

How can you extend such an invitation to someone? First, by declaring that God our Father lives, that He loves us, and that He is a God of revelation. How is that known? By revelation and the witness of prophets.

### Revelation to Old Testament prophets

The time line of religious history starts with the Bible. It is a record of God’s early revelation to His prophets, dealing with mankind. It starts with an account of Adam and Eve, our first parents; their creation; their fall, with its consequences—mortality and separation from God; and their first steps in the mortal world. Probably then one of their first questions was “Why are we here?”

To find out, their only solution was to call upon the name of the Lord, their only source of true knowledge (see Genesis 4:26). By direct revelation, they heard the voice of the Lord commanding them that they should worship the Lord their God and should make an offering unto Him (see Genesis 4:4; Moses 5:4–5). Further revelation to Adam and Eve taught them that the offering was in similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, that Jesus Christ was the only name whereby salvation would come unto them. Then the gift of the Holy Ghost was promised to them, whereby whatsoever they would ask, it would be given to them (see Moses 5:6–7; 6:52).

Later Adam obtained by the power of the Holy Ghost a sure and infallible

witness that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. There was a literal restoration of an understanding of the mortal status of the fallen Adam and Eve by giving them knowledge about their relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; knowledge about the Atonement and the Resurrection; and further knowledge about the first principles and ordinances of the gospel of salvation.

Because of what Adam heard and what he saw, he qualified to be called the first prophet on earth, a personal witness of revelation given to man. His major responsibility now was to preserve the truth of the gospel and to teach it as it was given to him. Satan, on the other hand, representing the opposition, was going to do and teach anything to deny, to reject, or to ignore the gospel received by revelation, thus inducing the people who had accepted it into apostasy—a state of confusion, division, abandonment, or renunciation of their previous faith!

The rest of the story of the Old Testament became, then, a religious history of continuous revelation through various prophets like Noah, Abraham, and Moses, at various times—called dispensations—to restore what had been lost because of renewed apostasy. These prophets were always called by God. They were given divine authority; they had the keys of the priesthood; they had a divine commission to speak in the name of the Lord and to teach and prophesy of the coming and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world (see Amos 3:7).

### **The message of the New Testament**

The New Testament confirms the teachings, testimonies, and prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament. It is an account of the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and of His Atonement and His Resurrection. It tells about the establishment of

His Church, His divine authority, His gospel, and His commandment to His disciples to share, to “go . . . into all the world, and preach [His] gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The message of the New Testament was clear: there was one fold, one faith, one gospel, one priesthood, one church in order to be “in one, the children of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:17).

### **The Apostasy and the Reformation**

But again persecution, denial of divine identity, and rejection of Christ’s gospel and His authorized priesthood servants characterized the post-Resurrection era. And religious history shows us evidence of how rapidly the priesthood authority was superseded by the secular authority; how the divine doctrine was traded for shifting, distorted human philosophies; how the ordinances of salvation were altered or purchased for money; how revelation was replaced by a veil of obscurity leading into the ages of spiritual darkness.

However, there came a time during this great apostasy, which had been prophesied before, when the religious quest surfaced again—the “Why is it so?” Men who had great faith emerged to try to reform false doctrines and false spiritual authority. Their honest and sincere efforts only resulted in the creation of more churches carrying their names and their protest and adding more confusion and more divisions. In reality, two major elements were missing in the reform: revelation and authority, the Lord’s only way to communicate divine truth to mankind.

### **Restoration of knowledge and authority**

As we continue to move rapidly along this time line of religious history, we find a date and a name. The date is 1820; the name is Joseph Smith. Pondering about the total religious confusion and church division of his time, this young man asked

himself, “If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

Why such confusion? The prophetic model was to ask of God. Religious history suddenly repeated itself according to God’s scenario of how to answer mankind’s *whys*. Once again a vision came as an answer, this time a vision of the Father and the Son. Once again a divine testimony of the Father was given: “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Once again direct revelation answered Joseph Smith’s question: “Which of all the [churches] was right . . . and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19). Once again apostasy was declared from the source of truth—by Jesus Christ Himself. And once again it had to be followed by a restoration, and indeed it was.

In the following years, by revelation, Joseph Smith received full divine doctrinal knowledge and the authority and keys of the priesthood. Finally in 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ, with all the doctrines of salvation and the ordinances thereof, was restored. Joseph Smith qualified to be called the prophet of the Restoration in modern times.

### **Book of Mormon answers ultimate *why*?**

As the Bible is the tangible evidence of divine revelation to the prophets of ancient

times, in the same way the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the modern convincing evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet who received revelation and authority as they did. A testimony of the veracity of the Book of Mormon helps people find answers to *why* the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through a prophet and *why* we have a living prophet today, namely Gordon B. Hinckley. It also answers the ultimate *why*: all the ordinances of the gospel provide the greatest blessing to prepare our salvation and to fulfill our mortal purpose to create eternal families. This message of the Restoration is true because it is divine.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Thank you, brethren, for your timely remarks.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” We shall then hear from Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## **Sister Sydney S. Reynolds**

### **The Lord knows us and loves us**

Joseph Smith at age 14 had to be one of the least conspicuous human beings on the earth, and yet the God of heaven knew him and called him by name in the Sacred Grove. I believe the Lord knows my name and your name as well.

In Primary we teach the children that each is a child of God and that their Heavenly Father knows them and loves them. Primary and priesthood leaders model what the Savior would do when they call a child by his or her name. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep,

and am known of mine.”<sup>1</sup> The scriptures testify, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord not only knows who we are, He knows where we are, and He leads us to do good. One day a mother I know felt impressed to call her daughter. (This kind of thing happens to mothers all the time.) It was the middle of the day, and Mom was at work, which made the call out of the ordinary. To her surprise, her son-in-law answered the phone—he’s not usually home on a workday either. As he handed the phone to his wife, he said, “It’s your mother with her usual inspiration.”

They had just been to the doctor. She came on the phone, close to tears, and said, “The ultrasound shows the cord is double-wrapped around the baby’s neck. The doctor says we have no choice but to do a C-section and soon.” Then came the real cause for the distress: “And he says I can’t lift anything heavier than the new baby for four weeks!” She needed reassurance before going into the surgery that the Lord knew her need and loved her—and that there would be help in tending the three little ones at home, who were scarcely more than babies themselves. When mothers—and fathers—pray for the Lord to bless and strengthen their families, He often shows them the way.

### **Testimony in Portuguese touches a heart**

Sister Gayle Clegg of the Primary general presidency and her husband lived for a number of years in Brazil. Recently she had a Primary assignment in Japan. As she came into the chapel on Sunday, she noticed among the Japanese Saints a Brazilian family. “They just looked Brazilian,” she said. She only had a minute to greet them and found the mother and children very enthusiastic but noticed that the father was rather quiet. “I’ll have a chance to talk with them after the meeting,” she thought as she was quickly ushered to the stand.

She delivered her message in English, which was translated into Japanese, and then she felt impressed to bear her testimony in Portuguese as well. She hesitated, as there were no translators for Portuguese and 98 percent of the people would not understand what she said.

After the meeting the Brazilian father came up to her and said, “Sister, the customs are so different here, and I have been lonely. It is difficult to come to church and not understand anything. Sometimes I wonder if I would be better off just reading my scriptures at home. I told my wife, ‘I’ll give it one more chance,’ and I came today for what I thought would be the last time. When you bore your testimony in Portuguese, the Spirit touched my heart, and I knew that this was where I belonged. God knows I am here, and He will help me.” And he joined the others in putting away the chairs.

Was it a coincidence that the only Portuguese-speaking member of the Primary presidency was sent to Japan instead of to Portugal? Or was it because the Lord knew someone there needed what only she could give—and she had the courage to follow a prompting of the Spirit? One of the great blessings of having a calling in the Church is that the Lord, through His Spirit, will inspire us to help those we are called to serve.

### **John Orth pays tithing and is blessed**

Each of us who pays a full tithe can testify that the blessings of the Lord come to us personally and meet our individual needs. The Lord has promised that if we pay our tithing, He will open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing so great that we will scarcely have room enough to receive it.<sup>3</sup>

Many years ago John Orth worked in a foundry in Australia, and in a terrible accident, hot molten lead splashed onto his face and body. He was administered to, and some of the vision was restored

to his right eye, but he was completely blind in his left. Because he couldn't see well, he lost his job. He tried to get employment with his wife's family, but their business failed due to the Depression. He was forced to go door-to-door seeking odd jobs and handouts to pay for food and rent.

One year he did not pay any tithing and went to talk to the branch president. The branch president understood the situation but asked John to make it a matter of prayer and fasting so that he could find a way to pay his tithing. John and his wife, Alice, fasted and prayed and determined that the only thing of value they owned was her engagement ring—a beautiful ring bought in happier times. After much anguish, they took the ring to a pawnbroker, where they learned it was worth enough to pay their tithing and some outstanding bills. That Sunday, John went to the branch president and paid his tithing. As he left the office, he happened to meet the mission president, who noticed his damaged eyes.

Brother Orth's son, now serving as a bishop in Adelaide, later wrote: "We believe that [the mission president] was an eye doctor, for he was commonly called President Dr. Rees. He spoke to Dad and was able to examine him and offer suggestions to help his eyesight. Dad followed his advice, . . . and in due course sight was restored—15 percent sight to his left eye and 95 percent sight to his right eye—and with the help of glasses he could see again."<sup>4</sup> With his vision restored, John was never unemployed again; he redeemed the ring, which is now a family heirloom, and paid a full tithing for the rest of his life. The Lord knew John Orth, and He knew who could help him.

"President Dr. Rees" was my mother's father, and he probably never knew of the miracle that was wrought that day. Generations were blessed because a family decided they would pay their tithing regardless of the difficulty—and then met

a man who "happened by" and who "happened" to be an eye surgeon who was able to make a great difference in their lives. While some may be tempted to believe these are just coincidences, I have confidence that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground but He knows it.<sup>5</sup>

Our family didn't know this story until two years ago, but we know this about our grandfather: he loved the Lord and tried to serve Him all his life. And we know this about the Lord: He knows who we are and where we are, and He knows who needs our help.

### **Nothing can separate us from God's love**

I have seen you who know the Lord and love Him honestly tell a young person who was struggling to find the way, "God loves you. He wants you to be successful. His greatest desire is to bless you." I have heard you testify to a grieving friend, "I know there is a life after this one. I know your child still lives and that there is a way for you to see him and be with him again." I have watched many of you tell a discouraged young mother, "Let me help you—what you are doing is the most important work in the world." I have seen those you touch not only recognize your love but feel the Lord's love and power as His Spirit bears witness to them that what you have said is true.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, with Paul, that neither tribulation, nor life, nor death, nor any other circumstance shall have the power to separate us from His love.<sup>6</sup>

The Savior gave His life for each one of us. He knows our joys and our sorrows. He knows my name and your name. When we covenant with Him at baptism, we promise to keep His commandments, to always remember Him, and to take His name upon us. Ultimately, His is the name by which we want to be called, for "there shall be no other name given nor any other



way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>7</sup> I bear my witness that He lives and loves us and calls us by name to come unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John 10:14.
2. John 10:3.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Letter from J. Orth, Dec. 13, 2001.
5. See Matthew 10:29.
6. See Romans 8:35–39.
7. Mosiah 3:17.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Self-improvement programs

Recently I have noticed the large number of self-improvement programs that are available. There must be a tremendous demand for these products because one can scarcely turn on the television or radio without seeing or hearing promotions for products that promise everything from losing weight to growing a lush crop of thick hair. At times I wonder if the people who make these products know me personally.

Today I would like to offer my own self-improvement program. It consists of three steps that have been useful to me, and I am confident they will be helpful to you as well. What’s more, this self-improvement program is free. There’s no need for you to pull out your credit card. No toll-free number will flash on the screen warning that you have five minutes remaining to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime offer.

### Parable of the three choices

Perhaps the best way to teach these principles is by way of parable.

There was once a man named John who, although still relatively young, had experienced much suffering and sorrow. Homeless and addicted to alcohol and other drugs, John was terribly sick and weary of life. The more he descended into illness and despair, the more he knew that

if he didn’t make changes—and quickly—there was a very real possibility he would die miserable, useless, and alone.

Perhaps because he had attended Primary a few times when he was a boy, John ended up in a nearby meetinghouse where he asked to see the bishop.

“I have ruined my life,” John said between tortured sobs that emerged from the depths of his harrowed soul. He spoke of the mistakes he had made and the path of self-destruction and misery he had trod.

As the bishop listened to John’s sad story, he could tell that the man truly wanted to repent and change his life. But he could also sense that John had little confidence that he could change.

The bishop thought for a moment about what he could say. Finally, he looked up and said, “John, I have made three choices in my life that have been of value to me. They may be of assistance to you as well.”

“Please, tell me,” John pleaded. “I’ll do anything. I just want to start over. I want to go back.”

### Choose to begin repentance now

The bishop smiled and told him, “The first thing you should understand is that you can’t go back and begin where you once were. But all is not lost. You can begin where you are. Choose to begin your repentance now.”

To some degree, we all are like John. We have made mistakes. But no matter how badly we want to go back and begin again, we can't. We can, however, repent and begin where we are today.

In the Book of Mormon we read of Alma the Younger. He was the son of a great prophet, but he turned against his father and sought to do evil. After a visit from an angel that left him incapacitated and unable to speak, Alma repented and worked for the rest of his life to repair the damage he had done. As a result, he blessed and enriched the lives of thousands of others. Alma did not accept that he was doomed because of past mistakes. He understood that he could not erase the past. But he also understood that he had the power to repent and begin anew from where he was.

How do we begin to repent?

By first acknowledging our errors and deciding to repent. By committing today—this very day—to do better, to live noble and compassionate lives, to strive each day to be more like the Savior.

Our destiny and ultimate fate depend upon our daily decisions.

The great Old Testament prophet Joshua knew this when he said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Joshua understood how critical it is to choose without delay to be more righteous. We too should decide now. Will our lives be filled with regret and despair? Or will we repent and strive each day to make our days worthwhile and meaningful?

Tomorrow's joy or tomorrow's despair has its roots in decisions we make today. Perhaps some people think to themselves: "I know I need to change some things in my life. Maybe later, but not now."

Those who stand at the threshold of life always waiting for the right time to change are like the man who stands at the

bank of a river waiting for the water to pass so he can cross on dry land.

Today is the day of decision.

When John heard the bishop's words, he promised he would do what the bishop had said. Because of his addictions, John knew he needed to repent and improve his health. So he checked himself into a facility where he underwent the prolonged process of recovery. He began eating nutritious food. He began to walk and to do other exercises.

### **Choose your priorities**

Weeks passed. John was able to free himself from his addictions. He could see that his health was improving and he was getting stronger. But still he was not satisfied. There were so many things about his life that needed improvement that he felt overwhelmed and discouraged.

So, once again, he scheduled a meeting with his bishop.

That is when he learned the second choice: "John," the bishop said to him, "you'll most likely have a rough time if you think you can make yourself perfect all at once. What you must learn is to choose your priorities. You have to put first things first."

In most cases, growth comes slowly—one step at a time. We understand this when it comes to mastering a musical instrument, becoming an accomplished athlete, or flying a jet aircraft. Yet we often can scarcely forgive ourselves when we don't make the progress we expect in all areas of our own lives.

Great sculptors and artists spend countless hours perfecting their talents. They don't pick up a chisel or a brush and palette, expecting immediate perfection. They understand that they will make many errors as they learn, but they start with the basics, the key fundamentals first.

So it is with us.

We become masters of our lives in the same way—by focusing on first things first.

We all have a pretty good idea of the most important decisions we need to make—decisions that will improve our lives and bring us greater happiness and peace. That is where we should start. That is where we should place our greatest effort.

Each night before I go to bed, I take out a small card and write a list of the things I need to do the next day in order of their priority.

When I arrive at the office each morning, I check my card and put all my efforts into the first item on the list. When I accomplish that item, I move on to the second and so on. Some days I finish every item on my list. On other days some tasks are not completed. I don't become discouraged, however, because I'm focusing my energies on the things that matter most.

John began to understand that he couldn't change everything that was wrong with his life in an instant, but he could choose his priorities. He could focus on the things that mattered most, and with time his life would begin to improve.

With help from the elders quorum president, John found a modest place to live. He knew he needed to find a way to support himself, and as his health and attitude improved, he found part-time work.

Each night before John went to bed, he made a list of the most important things he needed to accomplish the next day.

### **Choose the right**

Eventually, John was earning a steady income. He moved into a more comfortable place and bought a car. Yet, although he was feeling much better about his life, he still felt that something was missing.

Consequently, John returned a third time to meet with his bishop.

"The reason you still feel empty," the bishop said, "is because you have not made the third choice."

John asked what it was.

"It's not enough to make choices and decisions and to work on them each day," the bishop said. "Many have spent their lives in productive labor and have accomplished much. But they still feel empty. At the end of their days they lament that their lives had little meaning."

That was exactly what John had been feeling. The bishop continued, "It is not enough to do things. We must do the right things—the things our Heavenly Father would want us to do."

"How do I know what the right things are?" John asked.

The bishop smiled and pulled from his desk a set of scriptures. The leather cover was scuffed and wrinkled. The gilded edges on the paper were nearly worn away. "Through the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets," the bishop replied. "These are the 'right things.' Some believe that the commandments of our Heavenly Father are restrictive and hard. To the contrary, they're a handbook to happiness. Every aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the principles, the doctrines, and the commandments—is a part of our Heavenly Father's plan to help us obtain peace and happiness."

The bishop turned to the Book of Mormon and read the words of King Benjamin: "Consider . . . the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."<sup>2</sup>

As the bishop spoke, John thought about his own life. The things he had acquired hadn't brought him happiness. Perhaps what the bishop was saying was true. Maybe happiness did come from living in harmony with the commandments of our Heavenly Father.

"Remember the words of the Savior," the bishop said, as though he knew what

John was thinking. “‘For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’”<sup>3</sup>

That very night, John made a commitment to open the word of God and to learn for himself the commandments and doctrines of his Heavenly Father. No longer did he resist the words of the Lord, but rather he embraced and cherished them. As he did, the emptiness in his soul began to shrink, and in its place he gradually discovered joy and peace that surpassed his understanding.

The things the bishop had told John had indeed transformed his life. Where once he was broken, sorrowful, and close to death, now he felt alive, vibrant, and filled with joy.

### **God has given all we need to choose right**

Brothers and sisters, our loving Heavenly Father has given us the scriptures to teach us the way to peace and happiness. Today we have great reason to rejoice, for His Son speaks to all of us!

The Lord does not sit in His heavens, silent and sealed behind impenetrable walls. Under the direction of our Heavenly Father, the Lord gives direction to His anointed servants. At this very hour, our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, directs the holy work of the Lord here upon the earth.

In addition, the Light of Christ leads all mortals to our Heavenly Father and to His truths. It teaches us to love the Lord and to love our fellowmen, for “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.”<sup>4</sup>

We have little excuse for not choosing the way of the Lord. Do you suppose at the day of judgment, our Savior will care one little bit about the wealth we have accumulated or the praise we have received? He wants us to come unto Him, to learn of Him, and to discover the pure love of Christ that comes through embracing His word and obeying His commandments.

That is the way to remove emptiness from our lives and to fill our souls with joy beyond description.

### **Review of three choices**

May I review these three choices for you to consider? No doubt you have had choices of your own that you have successfully followed throughout your life.

First, choose to begin the process of repentance now. Do not delay. Attend your meetings and serve cheerfully in the Church. Learn and live by gospel principles. Begin now to turn your steps toward the temple.

Second, choose your priorities. Let your family come first. Hold worthwhile family home evenings. Let the time that you spend with your families be consistent with how important they are. Cherish and nurture family members, and never allow busy schedules and frustrations to drive a wedge between you and your loved ones. Strive each day to be more obedient to the Lord’s commandments.

Third, choose the right. Study the scriptures and the words of our prophet today, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. Apply these sacred teachings to your lives. Reach out to those in distress—the lonely, the sick, and the needy. Do what you can to relieve suffering and help others become self-reliant. As you do so, the Lord will be well pleased with you.

Brothers and sisters, I know that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. I testify to you that Joseph Smith was raised up to organize the Lord’s Church in the dispensation of the fulness of times. As a special witness of Jesus Christ, I know that the Savior laid down His life for us. Through His Atonement, all mankind can repent and be cleansed of sin. We can return to our Heavenly Father and realize the value of our Savior’s infinite sacrifice. This I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Joshua 24:15.
2. Mosiah 2:41.
3. Mark 8:36.
4. Moroni 7:16.

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The choir sang “My Redeemer Lives.”

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**President Faust**

The choir has sung “My Redeemer Lives.” We express our thanks to the Tab-

ernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

As you leave the conference we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “O Divine Redeemer.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

**All working as one in a great cause**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I wish to acknowledge my gratitude for your sustaining faith and prayers. The Lord has imposed upon the leadership of this Church a great and serious trust, and you have supported us in that responsibility. We know that you pray for us, and we wish you to know that we pray for you.

Not a day passes that I do not thank the Lord for faithful Latter-day Saints. No day passes that I do not pray that He will bless you wherever you are and whatever your needs.

I wish to remind you that we are all in this together. It is not a matter of the General Authorities on one hand and the membership of the Church on the other. We are all working as one in a great cause. We are all members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Within your sphere of responsibility you have as serious an obligation as do I within my sphere of responsibility. Each of us should be determined to build the kingdom of God on the earth and to further the work of righteousness.

I think I can honestly say that we have no selfish desires with reference to this work other than that it succeed.

**Be strong and of a good courage**

We of the First Presidency are constantly dealing with a great variety of problems. They come before us every day.

At the close of one particularly difficult day, I looked up at a portrait of Brigham Young that hangs on my wall. I asked, “Brother Brigham, what should we do?” I thought I saw him smile a little, and then he seemed to say, “In my day, I had problems enough of my own. Don’t ask me what to do. This is your watch. Ask the Lord, whose work this really is.” And this, I assure you, is what we do and must always do.

As I reflected on these matters that recent difficult day, I opened my Bible to the first chapter of Joshua and read these words: “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee” (Joshua 1:9).

I said to myself, “There is never reason to despair. This is the work of God. Notwithstanding the efforts of all who oppose it, it will go forward as the God of heaven has designed it should do.”

### **Stand as an ensign to the nations**

I turned the pages of the Old Testament to the second chapter of Isaiah and read these words:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3).

Ever since the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, we have interpreted that scripture from Isaiah, repeated again in Micah (see Micah 4:1–2), as applying to this sacred house of the Lord. And of this place, since the day of its dedication, an ever-increasing number from across the world have said in effect, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He might teach us of His ways, that we might walk in His paths.”

I believe and testify that it is the mission of this Church to stand as an ensign to the nations and a light to the world. We have had placed upon us a great, all-encompassing mandate from which we cannot shrink nor turn aside. We accept that mandate and are determined to fulfill it, and with the help of God we shall do it.

### **Stand firm in holding back the world**

There are forces all around us that would deter us from that effort. The world is constantly crowding in on us. From all

sides we feel the pressure to soften our stance, to give in here a little and there a little.

We must never lose sight of our objective. We must ever keep before us the goal which the Lord has set for us.

To quote Paul:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:10–12).

We must stand firm. We must hold back the world. If we do so, the Almighty will be our strength and our protector, our guide and our revelator. We shall have the comfort of knowing that we are doing what He would have us do. Others may not agree with us, but I am confident that they will respect us. We will not be left alone. There are many not of our faith but who feel as we do. They will support us. They will sustain us in our efforts.

We cannot be arrogant. We cannot be self-righteous. The very situation in which the Lord has placed us requires that we be humble as the beneficiaries of His direction.

While we cannot agree with others on certain matters, we must never be disagreeable. We must be friendly, soft-spoken, neighborly, and understanding.

### **Youth must hold to the faith**

Now I emphasize a theme already treated in this conference. To our young people, the glorious youth of this generation, I say, be true. Hold to the faith. Stand firmly for what you know to be right.

You face tremendous temptation. It comes at you in the halls of popular entertainment, on the Internet, in the movies, on television, in cheap literature, and in

other ways—subtle, titillating, and difficult to resist. Peer pressure may be almost overpowering. But, my dear young friends, you must not give in. You must be strong. You must take the long look ahead rather than succumbing to the present seductive temptation.

#### *Avoid suggestive music and entertainment*

Uncouth-looking entertainers draw big crowds of our youth. They grow rich from high admission prices. Their songs, so many of them, are suggestive in nature.

Pornography is everywhere with its seductive invitation. You must turn away from it. It can enslave you. It can destroy you. Recognize it for what it is—tawdry and sleazy stuff created and distributed by those who grow rich at the expense of those who see it.

The sanctity of sex is utterly destroyed in its salacious portrayal in the media. That which by its nature is inherently beautiful is corrupted in its popular presentation. I was pleased to note that our Church-owned television station here in Salt Lake City refused to carry a network program of a salacious nature. It was also interesting to note that the only other station belonging to this network to cancel the broadcast was one in South Bend, Indiana, the location of the University of Notre Dame. It is comforting to know that there are others who feel as strongly as we feel and are willing to do something about it.

Life is better than that which is so frequently portrayed. Nature is better than that. Love is better than that. This kind of entertainment is only an evil caricature of the good and the beautiful.

#### *Shun alcohol*

You young men and women who are hearing me today, you university students on many campuses realize that one of the great problems on these campuses is binge drinking. It diminishes abilities. It destroys

lives. It wastes money and time and constructive effort. What a sorry sight it is to see bright young people damage themselves and ruin their opportunities with excessive drinking.

It was a great tribute to the students of Brigham Young University when the *Princeton Review* found them to be the most “stone-cold sober” student body in America. Most of you, of course, cannot attend BYU, but wherever you are you can live by the same standards required on the BYU campus.

#### *Stand together*

I recently read in our *New Era* magazine an article on young Latter-day Saints in Memphis, Tennessee. In some instances they are the only Latter-day Saints on campus. One of them is quoted as saying, “I may be the only member in my school, but . . . even when I’m physically alone, I’m never spiritually alone” (in Arianne B. Cope, “Smiling in Memphis,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 23–24).

Another is quoted: “I know a lot of teens wonder if they really know if the gospel is true. But . . . here you have to know one way or the other because people are asking you about it every day. Every time you answer a question, you share your testimony” (*New Era*, Oct. 2003, 25).

These young people, scattered through that big city, have learned to stand together, to bolster one another.

#### *The best generation*

God bless you, my dear young friends. You are the best generation we have ever had. You know the gospel better. You are more faithful in your duties. You are stronger to face the temptations which come your way. Live by your standards. Pray for the guidance and protection of the Lord. He will never leave you alone. He will comfort you. He will sustain you. He will bless and magnify you and make your reward sweet and beautiful. And you

will discover that your example will attract others who will take courage from your strength.

### **Take on the luster of the life of Christ**

As it is with the youth, so it is with you adults. If we are to hold up this Church as an ensign to the nations and a light to the world, we must take on more of the luster of the life of Christ individually and in our own personal circumstances. In standing for the right, we must not be fearful of the consequences. We must never be afraid. Said Paul to Timothy:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:7–8).

This Church, I submit, is far more than a social organization where we gather together to enjoy one another’s company. It is more than Sunday School and Relief Society and priesthood meeting. It is more than sacrament meeting, more even than temple service. It is the kingdom of God in the earth. It behooves us to act in a manner befitting membership in that kingdom.

### **Stand in the stature of the priesthood**

You men who hold the priesthood have such a tremendous responsibility. You must avoid the sultry siren voice of the world. You must rise above it. You must stand in the stature of the priesthood of God. You must eschew evil in all of its forms and take on the nature of goodness and decency, letting the light, the divine light, shine through your actions.

There is no way that a home can be a place of refuge and peace if the man who resides there is not an understanding and helpful husband and father. The strength to be gained from our homes will make us better able to face the world, more acceptable to the society in which we move,

more valuable to those who employ us—better men.

I know many such men. It is evident that they love their wives and their children. They are proud of them. And the marvelous thing is, they are tremendously successful in their chosen professions. They are magnified and honored and respected.

And to you women. I spoke at length to the women of the Relief Society a week ago. That talk represented my heartfelt views concerning you. You too can take on the luster of Christ. You too can be strong and encouraging and beautiful and helpful.

### **Unseen forces will assist us**

I remind all of us that we are Latter-day Saints. We have made covenants with our Heavenly Father, sacred and binding. Those covenants, if we keep them, will make us better fathers and mothers, better sons and daughters.

I believe that others will rally around us if we will do so. We can stand for truth and goodness, and we will not stand alone. Moreover, we shall have the unseen forces of heaven to assist us.

I take you back to the Old Testament:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?”

“And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15–17).

The Lord has said to us: “Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and



hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . . Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:34, 36). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "O Divine Redeemer."  
Elder Keith Crockett offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 173rd Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 5, 2003. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President James E. Faust**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings via radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "From All That Dwell below the Skies." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford, who yesterday received emeritus status.

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The choir sang "From All That Dwell below the Skies."

Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Lead, Kindly Light." We will then hear from Elders L. Tom Perry and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by Elder William W. Parmley of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### **Revelation and inspiration**

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

We declare to the world that the heavens are not closed. God continues to reveal His will to mankind, as He has in all periods of time when He has had authorized servants upon the earth. This fact should be familiar to all of our Father in

Heaven's children, for the scriptures give abundant evidence of this.

Sometimes we define the communication of God's will as revelation. Sometimes we refer to such communication as inspiration. Revelation, however, is a much broader term. While inspiration can properly be considered as revelation, revelation can also include visions, dreams, the spoken word, or other spiritual manifestations. Elder Talmage explained:

*"Revelation signifies the making known of divine truth by communication from the heavens. . . .*

*"The word inspiration is sometimes invested with a [significance] almost identical with that of revelation, though by origin and early usage it possessed a distinctive meaning. To inspire is literally to animate with the spirit; a man is inspired when under the influence of a power other than his own. Divine inspiration may be regarded as a lower or less directly intensive operation of spiritual influence upon man than is . . . revelation. The difference therefore is rather one of degree than of kind."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Revelation follows the Lord's order**

There is order in the way the Lord reveals His will to mankind. We all have the right to petition the Lord and receive inspiration through His Spirit within the realm of our own stewardship. Parents can receive revelation for their own family, a bishop for his assigned congregation, and on up to the First Presidency for the entire Church. However, we cannot receive revelation for someone else's stewardship. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

*"It is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church, are to come through the [First] Presidency. This is the order of heaven, and the power and privilege of this Priesthood. It is also the privilege of*

*any officer in this Church to obtain revelations, so far as relates to his particular calling and duty in the Church."*<sup>4</sup>

### **Be worthy to receive guidance**

The closer we keep our lives in harmony with the direction the Lord has given us to guide our lives, the more we will be in tune with His Spirit. A person who petitions the Lord for guidance must be worthy to receive it. His life must be in harmony and in keeping with the standards the Lord has prescribed for His children. His life must be in good standing before God and His people. It must be in harmony with the teachings of the scriptures, the prophets, and the order of the Church.

A person could say that he or she had received a revelation to be dishonest in order to improve his or her financial situation. Or a person may say that he or she has been instructed that the Church should go a different direction than it is being led by the prophet. We would immediately know that such a claim would not be from God.

There is great strength and power in the fact that millions throughout the world share the same testimony of God, the Savior, and the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have never been encouraged to be blindly obedient; it is an intelligent obedience that characterizes members of the Church.

Brigham Young is reported to have said that the greatest fear he had was that members of the Church would take what he said as the mind and will of God without first praying and obtaining a witness of the same for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

### **Obedience yields blessings**

In establishing His kingdom on earth, the Lord set forth fundamental principles and laws to govern His children here. Obedience to those laws and principles yields blessings that He has covenanted to be-

stow upon us. Violations are subject to His judgments.

Reviewing man's history reveals examples of obedience yielding blessings and disobedience yielding sorrow and destruction. The course we are to follow is revealed through His holy prophets, who direct us to be obedient to the Lord's instructions.

### *The building of the tabernacle*

One example is the Lord's directions to the children of Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness. In order that they would have a centerpiece for their worship and activity, the Lord instructed Moses to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a fore-runner of the temple, made portable so they could easily carry it with them.

"For the Lord [said] unto Moses, . . .

"But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

"And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. . . .

"And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.

"But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony."<sup>6</sup>

This tabernacle became the center of their camp as they journeyed to the promised land. Here sacred services could be performed. The day the tabernacle was complete, a cloud covered it. The cloud was removed when they were to go forward in their journey. When the cloud

covered the tabernacle, they were not to travel.

### *Tabernacle removed because of disobedience*

The Lord directed them in their journey to camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. Here Moses was instructed to climb the mountain and communicate with the Lord. Here he received instructions on how the children of Israel would be governed in the wilderness. Moses was also given "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."<sup>7</sup>

Moses was away from the people for an extended period of time. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."<sup>8</sup>

Aaron succumbed to the will of the people and told them to gather all their gold and silver and precious things and melt them into a form that made a golden calf, an idol that they could worship and carry with them as they journeyed. In the meantime, Moses was receiving the two tablets of testimony containing God's commandments to His people. With the tablets in hand, Moses descended from the mountain.

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount."<sup>9</sup>

Because of the disobedience of the children of Israel, "Moses took the tabernacle [out of their midst], and pitched it without the camp."<sup>10</sup>

Now their centerpiece, the tabernacle, was away from them. They could no longer be guided and protected by its presence. Now only the faithful were allowed to

come to the tabernacle. One thing the Lord would not tolerate was the worship of other gods. Because of their many years of captivity in Egypt, this was challenging to the children of Israel.

*Obedience brings God's law through Moses*

After a period of pleading for forgiveness from the Lord, Moses was instructed to "hew . . . two tables of stone like unto the first" and ascend up the mount.<sup>11</sup> He spent 40 days and 40 nights on top of Mount Sinai, without bread or water, and the Lord instructed him:

"Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

". . . And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the Ten Commandments were given to mankind to follow and to use throughout their lives. Obedience finally brought the law of the Lord to the children of Israel. Disobedience only delayed the progress of the children of Israel toward their promised land. They had to be worthy to receive the law of the Lord.

Note that the Lord delivered His word to Moses, His prophet. The Lord knows what will bless His children, and to that end He delivers laws through His prophets to the people. If obeyed, these laws will lead us back to God. We do not determine for ourselves what those laws are. They are given from God to man.

**The Lord's word revealed through Joseph**

The Savior fulfilled the law of Moses,<sup>13</sup> and similar divine instructions were revealed in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith, as contained in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord commanded:

"Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with

all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

"Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

"Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full."<sup>14</sup>

**Lord's system of communication works**

Note that the channel of communication comes from the Lord to us. So many times in our history, in our self-justification, we have attempted to reverse that channel and change God's laws. We find no record of this ever working.

We do find, however, that whenever God's children act contrary to His law, divine consistency and order are interrupted with disobedience and destruction. The Lord's system works. Adherence to His laws and commandments will always bring about His promised blessings.

### Nephi obeys and receives revelation

Nephi was commanded by the Lord to obtain the brass plates to carry with them as they journeyed into the wilderness. Laban resisted every effort they had made to obtain the record. The Lord then delivered Laban into Nephi's hands. Concerning the slaying of Laban, Nephi was taught: "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."<sup>15</sup>

This revelation helped Nephi recall something the Lord previously promised him in the wilderness: "Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise."<sup>16</sup>

Then Nephi reasoned:

"Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.

"And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass."<sup>17</sup>

Repeatedly the scriptures declare that the Lord gives His commandments to the children of men through living prophets. No committee, assembly, or any other authority has the right to dictate to Him doctrine that is contrary to His law. God's eternal blessings are contingent upon our

obedience and adherence to the word of the Lord that is revealed to us through His holy prophets.

God grant that we may always have the will and the courage to be obedient to Him who is our Eternal Father and to His chosen Son, our Lord and Savior, that we may enjoy Their blessings here and in the eternities to come. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:9.
2. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 296.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 21.
4. *Teachings*, 111.
5. See *Deseret News*, Dec. 9, 1857, 317; Feb. 12, 1862, 257.
6. Numbers 1:48, 50–53.
7. Exodus 31:18.
8. Exodus 32:1.
9. Exodus 32:19.
10. Exodus 33:7.
11. Exodus 34:1.
12. Exodus 34:27–28.
13. See 3 Nephi 15:5.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5–13.
15. 1 Nephi 4:13.
16. 1 Nephi 4:14.
17. 1 Nephi 4:15–16.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On the evening before he was martyred in Carthage, the Prophet Joseph Smith bore testimony to his guards. He testified of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He bore witness of the administration of angels and that the kingdom of God was again established upon the earth.

I wonder if any of those guards prayed that night. The Holy Ghost was ready to tell them that the remarkable message was

true. With a testimony of the Spirit, they would have known that they should ask for baptism. And then they could have received the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost. With that gift, they could know the truth of all things. I wonder if any of them sensed that night how close they were to starting down the only path which would lead them to the Savior in the world to come, to see His face with pleasure and to hear the words, "Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father."<sup>1</sup>

We all have people we love. Think of them now. They may be our children or our grandchildren. Perhaps you think of your husband or your wife. It may be someone you are teaching as a missionary. It may be a friend. You want with all your heart to have them someday hear those words from the Master. And for that blessing to come, they will need that testimony offered by the Prophet in Carthage burning in their hearts through all the tests of life, as it did in his.

### Testimony of the Three Witnesses

To begin, we can offer them the testimony of eyewitnesses. The Lord gave others to stand with Joseph to verify what the Lord had done. They were with the Prophet when the heavens were opened.

Oliver Cowdery preached the first missionary sermon the first Sunday after the Church was organized. He went into the mission field to proclaim what he knew by what he saw and heard and felt. With two others he signed a testimony which they never denied. Their witness is printed in the front of the Book of Mormon:

“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes,

that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery  
David Whitmer  
Martin Harris”<sup>2</sup>

### The Holy Ghost bears witness of truth

Those you love can have more than the physical evidence given to those witnesses by what they saw and heard. Those three witnesses had something more—something we all need. The Holy Ghost bore witness to their minds and hearts that what they saw and heard was true. The Spirit told them that the angel was from God and that the voice was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. That witness of the Spirit was given to them and many who were not there. It is a witness that can, if we qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, be ours and stay with us forever.

The Three Witnesses never denied their testimony of the Book of Mormon. They could not because they knew it was true. They made sacrifices and faced difficulties beyond what most people ever know. Oliver Cowdery gave the same testimony about the divine origin of the Book of Mormon as he lay dying. But in the times of trial, they wavered in their faith that Joseph was still God’s prophet

and that the only way to come unto the Savior was through His restored Church. That they continued to affirm what they saw and heard in that marvelous experience, during long periods of estrangement from the Church and from Joseph, makes their testimony more powerful.

### **Gift of Holy Ghost keeps testimony bright**

The Lord gave the witness of the Spirit without the same physical evidence to others who were severely tested by opposition and tribulation. Brigham Young, John Taylor, Heber C. Kimball, and many others stayed steady in their testimonies. They endured in faith because they paid the price to keep the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the burning testimony He alone brings.

Because of that, they had more than a memory of the moment when the Spirit whispered to their minds and hearts that God lived, that Jesus was the Christ, and that Joseph was their prophet. And they had more than a memory of the feeling of peace and the joy that witness brought. Because they qualified for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, they could say in every circumstance, however difficult, "I knew it then. I felt it was true then. I feel so now."

They did some simple things to keep that testimony bright and vibrant. We can teach those we love to do those same things. Done faithfully, they allow the Holy Ghost to be a constant companion. And we can promise those we love that they will feel joy and peace as the Spirit confirms truth, if they ask for that blessing in faith.

### **What to teach those you love**

Now, we teach things of the Spirit best with both example and testimony. I don't remember much of what my parents said about the Holy Ghost, but I remember what I felt when I saw them do

the things which brought the Holy Ghost into our home. Here are some things you can teach those you love with your example and testimony, with confidence that the Lord will send the Spirit to confirm truth to their minds and to their hearts.

#### *Teach them to pray*

Teach them to pray to the Father in faith in the name of Jesus Christ. There is a promise in the book of Omni about that: "And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved."<sup>3</sup>

The young Joseph Smith showed us how to pray that way. He believed in the promise he read in the book of James.<sup>4</sup> He went to the grove with faith that his prayer would be answered. He wanted to know which church to join. He was submissive enough to be ready to do whatever he was told to do. So he prayed, as we must, already committed to obey.

What he was told to do required his whole soul and finally his life. He endured during the 24 years that followed by continuing to pray with that childlike faith and humility. We can teach those we love to pray with the intent to obey. We can promise them they will gain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit will testify the truth to their hearts every time they read in the scriptures which came to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And the Spirit will confirm again that God spoke through His prophet.

#### *Teach them to ponder the scriptures daily*

Teach them to ponder the scriptures every day, with faith that they will be taught by the Spirit. Now listen to these words from scripture translated by Joseph

Smith. Expect to be taught now what you should do. You will feel impressions of how you should approach the scriptures and how you should teach that to the people you love.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet Joseph taught us what it means to feast on the scriptures. He said that the Book of Mormon would get a man “nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>6</sup> You will grow closer to the Lord and love Him more. That is the promise in Jacob 3:2:

“O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever.”

You and those you love will receive the word of God by obeying it. That will allow them to feel His love. That is one of the great blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost. When we feel that love, we can know that our course in life is approved of God. That is the feast of the delicious fruit described in the Book of Mormon.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Teach them to build the kingdom of God*

Teach them to sacrifice to build up the kingdom of God. That sacrifice brings the testimony of the Spirit. The Prophet Joseph translated a wonderful promise written by a prophet long ago for our time:

“And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.”<sup>8</sup>

All can claim that promise. The youngest and the newest member can seek to build up the kingdom of God. Zion is made up of individuals and families. When their faith increases, the kingdom is established more firmly. We can try to help with that every day. Even the smallest act to build faith in another person or in a family qualifies us for the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost testifies of truth. Therefore, in our service, our faith increases that Jesus is the Christ, that our Heavenly Father lives and loves us, and that Joseph was Their prophet. You can expect that, every time you go to a home to build faith, as a home teacher or a visiting teacher or a friend.

Some may not feel that blessing in their Church service. But that is because they have focused on the mechanics and not the glorious opportunity of publishing “peace, yea, tidings of great joy” to God’s children in His kingdom. When that is how we see our service, we will not only be lifted up at the last day but refreshed and encouraged along the way. And the Spirit will testify that this is the Lord’s kingdom restored in the latter days.

#### *Teach them to love others by serving them*

Teach them to love others by serving others. That brings the Spirit. The Prophet Joseph taught that, and he lived it. Of the many examples recorded of his loving nature, the one which most touches me occurred in Carthage Jail the night before his death. One of the men who went there with him was Dan Jones. The Prophet sensed the danger from the mob. He had reason to turn inward, to think of himself and his own peril. Instead his heart turned outward to comfort someone else.

“When all were apparently fast asleep, Joseph whispered to Dan Jones, ‘are you afraid to die?’ Dan [answered], ‘Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors.’ Joseph replied, ‘You will



yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die.’”<sup>9</sup>

Dan Jones survived to serve missions in Wales. Thousands of Welsh converts came to Zion. Some were gifted singers. They were among the first members of what became the Tabernacle Choir. When we hear the choir sing, I hope we remember Dan Jones, the faithful friend of the Prophet Joseph. Teach those you love to remember Joseph’s comfort, given when he needed comfort. When we comfort others, out of our faith in the Lord, He sends the Comforter to us. And the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, gave Joseph the power to give prophetic and loving encouragement.

Joseph showed in his loving kindness the truth of the words from the Book of Mormon: “Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”<sup>10</sup>

### Example of the Prophet Joseph Smith

The Prophet Joseph is for me an example and a teacher of enduring well in faith. I do not worship him, but I thank and love him as the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration. He has helped me pray with the intent to obey. I am better able to feast on the word and the love of God. Because of him, I feel the Holy Ghost more often in the moments when I try to build the faith of a person in the Lord’s kingdom. And because of what I know of the

Prophet Joseph and the scriptures which were revealed through him, I more often feel the love of God for His children and His love for me when I reach down to lift someone up.

My prayer is that we and those we love will endure in faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and in His kingdom. I pray that we will keep the promise as we take the sacrament to always remember Him so we may *always* have His Spirit to be with us. I pray that in family home evenings and in missionary discussions and in all the times we worship together, we will invite the Holy Spirit by what we do and what we say and by what we are.

I testify that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that He is our Savior. This is His Church. Joseph was His prophet. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. I know this by the Spirit, which tells me that it is true. I so testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Enos 1:27.
2. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
3. Omni 1:26.
4. See James 1:5.
5. 2 Nephi 31:20.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:461; see also 3 Nephi 5:18; Doctrine and Covenants 17:6; 20:6–10.
7. See 1 Nephi 11:21–23; 15:36.
8. 1 Nephi 13:37.
9. *History of the Church*, 6:601.
10. Moroni 7:46–47.

## Elder William W. Parmley

### “Come, follow me”

We are disciples of Jesus Christ. In the words of Nephi, “We believe in Christ, . . . we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ,

we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:24, 26). To believers everywhere, the three most powerful behavioral words He spoke were “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22; see also Matthew 16:24; Mark

1:17; Luke 9:23). When asked by a scribe which is the most important commandment, Jesus replied:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

“And the second is . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

Using the template of these two commandments, let us discuss how we can best follow Him.

### **Follow the Savior’s example in prayer**

The Savior’s example of the reciprocal love between Him and His Father was always evident. Frequent, long, and heartfelt prayers by the Savior have set a powerful example for us to follow. The Father’s love for His Son was ever apparent, particularly at the time of His baptism by John: “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

The unity between the two was apparent when the Savior said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Understanding that His will and the Father’s might even be transiently different as in Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:39) reminds us that our prayers may not always be answered in our preconceived way. Nevertheless, prayer is a powerful action principle. The Savior said that if one has faith and doubts not, “all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (see Matthew 21:21–22). Our love for the Savior must be accompanied by action: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

### **Love neighbors and care for the needy**

Let us next consider the second of the great commandments, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39), or its higher counterpart taught to the Apostles, “That ye love one another; as I have loved

you” (John 13:34). Although having the next-door neighbors over for dinner is a wonderful way to express love, the Savior chose a much more difficult example when the lawyer asked Him the question, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29).

There follows the familiar story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was robbed and beaten and left by the roadside half dead. The Levite and the priest looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews, had compassion and cared for him. The Samaritan did not ask about ethnicity before showing mercy. Jesus concluded this powerful story with the admonition to “go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37).

In every big city we have those who are beaten down and left by the roadside—those who are homeless, destitute, hungry, and sick. Some say that by giving them money we only support their habit of drug or alcohol addiction, thus enabling them to continue a lifestyle they have chosen. It is so easy to judge these individuals and, like Job’s friends, speculate about all the mistakes they have made in their lives that brought this great misery upon them (see Job 22; Mosiah 4:17).

Before we pass by like the Levite and the priest, however, let us consider the admonition of the Savior to “Come, follow me.” Remember that the Savior was homeless, had only the clothes on His back, and was often hungry. What would He do? There is no question what He would do. He would show mercy and minister unto them.

There are many ways to help the homeless, including the contribution of time, goods, and money to humanitarian groups, soup kitchens, or agencies that deal with these problems. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we must also show mercy unto them. The established principles of welfare are an appropriate guide. Remember that the poor will always be with us (see Mark 14:7).

### Importance of charity

The Savior emphasized this principle again when He discussed the Judgment Day and the separation of the sheep from the goats:

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:37–40).

Peter emphasized the importance of this kind of charity when he said, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Mormon expressed similar sentiments with this admonition:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46–47).

### Qualities of Jesus for us to exemplify

Jesus both taught and exemplified many personal qualities which we should consider as we try to follow Him. These qualities include love, meekness, humility, compassion, thirsting after righteousness, and being prayerful, merciful, and pure in heart. We should never judge others but should do unto our neighbor as we would have them do unto us. He taught that we should be the salt of the earth and a light unto the world. He said that what a man

thinketh in his heart is as important as his outward actions. We were told to forgive everyone, including our debtors, and to love our enemies. Not only are we to be peacemakers, but we are also to rejoice in persecution. He advised us to give our alms and to fast and pray in secret. He taught us to turn the other cheek and to go the extra mile. He especially cautioned us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth. (See Matthew 5–7.)

As we contemplate the full meaning of the phrase “Come, follow me,” it is apparent that we may have much to learn and much to do before we can fully respond to that injunction. It is of interest, however, that during the first 30 years of His life in Nazareth, Jesus apparently drew little attention to Himself even though He was living a sinless life (see Matthew 13:54–56; Mark 6:2–3). That should encourage us to do better in our own quiet and humble way without drawing attention to ourselves. The admonition to “Come, follow me” and the question “What would Jesus do?” provide powerful guidelines for living. Paying more attention to these guidelines will help all of us become more Christlike in our thoughts and actions.

Of the Savior, who is our exemplar, I bear personal witness that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

We invite the choir and congregation to join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. We shall then hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Elder Quentin L. Cook

### **“Are you a Saint?”**

A number of years ago I was in Atlanta, Georgia, as an attorney representing a man who was buying a business. After several days of negotiations, we reached an agreement and signed the closing documents. That evening one of the sellers invited us to a dinner to celebrate the closing. When I arrived, he offered me an alcoholic drink, which I declined. He then said, “Are you a Saint?” I didn’t fully understand what he meant, and he repeated, “Are you a Latter-day Saint?”

I responded, “Yes, I am,” and he said he had been observing my personal habits during our negotiations and had concluded that I was either LDS or had a stomach problem. We both chuckled. He then informed me that he had known only one member of the Church on a personal basis: David B. Haight. They were both executives in Chicago with a large retail chain following World War II. He told me of the significant influence Elder Haight had been in his life and that he held him in the highest regard.

As I flew back home to San Francisco, I thought about what had occurred, especially in two respects: I was surprised at how it felt to be asked if I was a Saint, and I was impressed with the positive influence one outstanding example—Elder Haight—had on this good man.

### **What it means to be a Saint**

What does it mean to be a Saint? In the Lord’s Church, the members are Latter-day Saints, and they attempt to emulate the Savior, follow His teachings, and receive saving ordinances in order to live in the celestial kingdom with God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Savior said, “This is my gospel; and ye know

the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not easy to be a Latter-day Saint. It was not meant to be easy. The ultimate goal of living in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is a privilege almost beyond comprehension.

### **“Come, Come, Ye Saints”**

Among the greatest trials the Church has ever faced were the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and then ultimately the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo. When they were making their way across the plains under very adverse circumstances, William Clayton penned the great hymn “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” It was a hymn that stirred their souls and helped them remember their sacred mission. Who among us does not become emotional as we feel their sacrifice, courage, and commitment when we sing: “And should we die before our journey’s through, / Happy day! All is well!”<sup>3</sup>

This hymn gave them comfort, solace, and hope in a time of great difficulty with almost insurmountable obstacles. It buoyed them up and highlighted the fact that this mortal life is a journey between premortal life and eternal life to come—the great plan of happiness. Brother Clayton’s inspiring hymn emphasizes sacrifices and what it really means to be a Saint. Our pioneer members met the challenges of their day to be Saints.

### **Separate ourselves from worldly conduct**

The word *saint* in Greek denotes “set apart, separate, [and] holy.”<sup>4</sup> If we are to be Saints in our day, we need to separate ourselves from evil conduct and destructive pursuits that are prevalent in the world.

We are bombarded with visual images of violence and immorality. Inappropriate music and pornography are increasingly tolerated. The use of drugs and alcohol is rampant. There is less emphasis on honesty and character. Individual rights are demanded, but duties, responsibilities, and obligations are neglected. There has been a coarsening of dialogue and increased exposure to that which is base and vulgar. The adversary has been relentless in his efforts to undermine the plan of happiness. If we separate ourselves from this worldly conduct, we will have the Spirit in our lives and experience the joy of being worthy Latter-day Saints.

### **Avoid the worship of worldly gods**

As Saints we also need to avoid the worship of worldly gods. President Hinckley has expressed the desire that “everyone might have some of the good things of life” but has cautioned, “It is the obsession with riches that cankers and destroys.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1630 John Winthrop set forth a vision for the new land (America) on behalf of his fellow passengers as he sailed on board the *Arbella*. It has become known as “The City upon a Hill” sermon. In the final paragraph, Winthrop references Deuteronomy 30 and warns against worshiping and serving other gods—particularly emphasizing “pleasures, and profits.”<sup>6</sup> In the recent past, President Kimball counseled that even homes, boats, credentials, titles, and other similar pursuits can be worshiped as idols when they entice us away from love and service to God.<sup>7</sup>

The prophet Moroni, speaking of our day, warned about the love of money and substance and suggested that we would love them more than we “love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”<sup>8</sup>

If we are to be worthy Saints, we should minister to others and adhere to the Savior’s admonition to love God and our fellowmen.

### **Let holiness and sacrifice guide your life**

Separation from the evils of the world needs to be accompanied by holiness. A Saint loves the Savior and follows Him in holiness and devotion.<sup>9</sup> Evidence of this kind of holiness and devotion is exemplified by consecration and sacrifice. President Hinckley taught, “Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God.”<sup>10</sup> Sacrifice is the crowning test of the gospel. It means consecrating time, talents, energy, and earthly possessions to further the work of God. In Doctrine and Covenants 97, verse 8, it concludes, “All . . . who . . . are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

Saints who respond to the Savior’s message will not be led astray by distracting and destructive pursuits and will be prepared to make appropriate sacrifices. The importance of sacrifice to those who want to be Saints is exemplified by the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, which is at the center of the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

### **Three questions for self-assessment**

Coming back to the original question that my acquaintance in Atlanta asked, “Are you a Saint?” may I suggest three questions that will allow for a self-assessment.

First, is the way we live consistent with what we believe, and would our friends and associates recognize, as Elder Haight’s friend did, that we have separated ourselves from worldly evils?

Second, are worldly pleasures, profits, and similar pursuits distracting us from following, worshiping, and serving the Savior in our daily lives?

Third, in order to serve God and be holy, are we making sacrifices consistent with our covenants?

What a wonderful blessing it is to be a Latter-day Saint. I love the words in the last lines of the hymn “O Saints of Zion”:

O Saints of Zion, tread the paths  
Your faithful fathers trod.  
Lift up your hearts in gratitude  
And serve the living God!<sup>12</sup>

I testify that avoiding evil and destructive pursuits and sacrificing in order to serve will qualify us to experience the joy of being committed Latter-day Saints and, as the scriptures promise, bring “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>13</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 9:18.
2. 3 Nephi 27:21.

3. *Hymns*, no. 30.
4. In Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1249.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Thou Shalt Not Covet,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 4–5.
6. “A Model of Christian Charity,” in Robert L. Ferm, ed., *Issues in American Protestantism* (1969), 11.
7. See *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 40–41.
8. Mormon 8:37.
9. See Wm. Grant Bangerter, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 12; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 11.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 565.
11. See Alma 34:8–16.
12. *Hymns*, no. 39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### Heroes are all around us

Some time ago in my high priests quorum meeting, the instructor introduced the lesson by asking each of us to respond to who our hero is and why. As each member took his turn responding, the answers were not unexpected. Of course, someone named the Savior, the Redeemer of the world. Another spoke of Abraham Lincoln, who freed the slaves, led the United States through a civil war, and eventually unified the country. Others chose the Prophet Joseph Smith and our beloved current prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. As each named a hero, I silently concurred and acknowledged that all of these were men worthy of emulating and that I would be a better person if I possessed some of the qualities that made those men great.

When my turn came to respond, I turned to a brother on my right, a few seats down the row from me, and said, “My hero is Ken Sweatfield and his wife, Jo Ann.”

For 20 years I watched Ken and Jo Ann care for their comatose son with all the love and patience a parent could possibly give. I had often pondered the shattered hopes and dreams they surely had for Shane before he suffered a terrible automobile accident just two weeks before he was to begin his mission in Leeds, England. I have watched Ken and Jo Ann wheel Shane into the sunlight or push him through the neighborhood, describing the scenery, hoping that he might hear and feel, and hoping that the fresh air and sunlight might lighten a very subdued spirit. For 20 years there were no vacations from this care, few evenings out, but there was always a spirit of faith, optimism, and gratitude—never a show of anger, despair, or questioning of God’s purposes.

I then turned to a brother on my left and said, “My hero is Jim Newton and his wife, Helen.” Shortly after Jim and Helen’s son Zach received his mission call to Peru, he was taken in an automobile accident.

When I heard of the accident, I rushed to the hospital, hoping to hear that Zach was alive and would recover. The parents, in a most dignified and peaceful manner, explained that Zach would now be serving his mission on the other side of the veil. As I witnessed the calm resolve of these two strong parents, I realized that through the pain and anguish there was a peace that could come only through a deep and abiding faith in a loving Father and an atoning Savior. My faith was strengthened, and through their inspiration my resolve to follow their example in meeting similar trials and tragedies was reaffirmed.

I could have also answered that my hero is Tom Abbott and his son John, my faithful home teachers who never missed a home teaching assignment even though we are often a difficult family to catch at home. I could have named dozens of others that I admire and could call my heroes. Many do not hold so-called high or prominent callings in the Church, but all are worthy to hold any position. None are widely known to the general membership of the Church, but all, I am certain, are known by name to our Heavenly Father.

### **Humble, righteous lives lend strength**

On the occasions that I am able to attend sacrament meeting in my own ward, I am often reflective as I look down in the congregation and see the same faces Sunday after Sunday. Some I have seen regularly in sacrament meeting for more than 20 years. Again, most are not in the limelight of the Church, but all consistently attend their meetings and privately meet life's challenges.

These are the many members I see, admire, and am grateful for. They are not seeking position, prominence, or fame, but each is earning a place in our Father's kingdom by taking care of the business of everyday living. They are consistently doing the unnoticed, the unspectacular—but humbly and righteously doing what is im-

portant. Challenges they have, but out of their bitter struggles they are able to find the sweetness that is so often the silent companion to adversity. This picture is duplicated hundreds of times in thousands of wards throughout the world. They are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Yes, the strength of the Church is in the millions of humble members striving every day to do the will of the Savior—day by day, one step at a time. These humble members come from all nationalities, all social strata, and every economic background. They include those of the highest educational backgrounds as well as those of the humblest who live in the smallest hamlets in the most remote areas of the world—all having hearts throbbing with a vital testimony of Jesus Christ and a desire to serve the Lord.

### **Heroes are humble, show gratitude**

As I have pondered these faithful members, I am struck by two qualities they all seem to have. First, regardless of social or economic status or position, their humility leads to submissiveness to the Lord's will. And second, in spite of the difficulties and trials of life, they are able to maintain a sense of gratitude for God's blessings and life's goodness. Humility and gratitude are truly the twin characteristics of happiness.

A story is told of an encounter between the Prophet Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. In the presence of a rather large group of brethren, the Prophet severely chastised Brother Brigham for some failing in his duty. Everyone, I suppose somewhat stunned, waited to see what Brigham's response would be. After all, Brigham, who later became known as the Lion of the Lord, was no shrinking violet by any means. Brigham slowly rose to his feet, and in words that truly reflected his character and humility, he simply bowed his head and said, "Joseph, what do you

want me to do?" The story goes that sobbing, Joseph ran from the podium, threw his arms around Brigham, and said in effect, "You passed, Brother Brigham, you passed" (see Truman G. Madsen, "Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran," *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16).

Many of us live or work in an environment where humility is often misunderstood and considered a weakness. Not many corporations or institutions include humility as a value statement or a desired characteristic of their management. Yet as we learn about the workings of God, the power of a humble and submissive spirit becomes apparent. In the kingdom of God, greatness begins with humility and submissiveness. These companion virtues are the first critical steps to opening the doors to the blessings of God and the power of the priesthood. It matters not who we are or how lofty our credentials appear. Humility and submissiveness to the Lord, coupled with a grateful heart, are our strength and our hope.

### **Importance of humility and sacrifice**

In giving the requirements for membership in His Church, the Lord stated, "All those who humble themselves before God . . . and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, . . . [these are the ones who] shall be received by baptism into his church" (D&C 20:37).

And so within the membership of the Church we see men and women of all backgrounds humbly submitting to the counsel of God. We see the prominent business executive graciously and humbly receiving and being taught by a humble, sometimes even intimidated home teacher. We see the highly educated humbly following counsel from their bishops, who sometimes have little formal education. We see former bishops and stake presidents graciously and humbly accepting callings to teach in the Primary, assist in the nursery, or assemble humanitarian kits

to be sent to the needy throughout the world. We see thousands of mature couples leaving their comfortable homes to live in circumstances to which they are not accustomed, to humbly serve the poverty-stricken throughout the world—and then serve again and again and again. We see the poverty-stricken in the world humbly sacrificing to share their meager substance of life with those who are even more destitute. And each, in their humility, is serving and giving with a grateful heart and giving praise to God.

### **God empowers the humble**

King Benjamin warned that we must "[become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Mosiah 3:19).

Humbly submitting our will to the Father brings us the empowerment of God—the power of humility. It is the power to meet life's adversities, the power of peace, the power of hope, the power of a heart throbbing with a love for and testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ, even the power of redemption. To this end, the Savior is our supreme example of the power of humility and submissiveness. After all, His submitting His will to the Father brought about the greatest and even the most powerful event in all of history. Perhaps some of the most sacred words in all the scriptures are simply, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

So we have the thousands, even millions, of throbbing hearts—heroes, I suspect we could say, but perhaps a more appropriate description is merely humble followers of the Savior Jesus Christ. And, as President Hinckley has asked of each of us, they are just doing their best—one day at a time.

May a humble and submissive heart be our empowerment from God, with all of its attendant blessings, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### How choice a seer!

From 1820 on, Joseph Smith was steadily attacked in a pattern of accusations—followed by eventual vindications. The pattern continues.

Just as prophesied, fools deride him, hell rages against him, and his name is “both good and evil spoken of” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). This swirl needlessly preoccupies a few who seem to prefer chewing on old bones in the outer courtyard instead of coming inside to the resplendent, revelatory banquet, thus diverting them from giving due attention to Joseph’s mission as “a choice seer” (see 2 Nephi 3:6–7).

As Ammon’s experience taught, a seer has the power to translate ancient records, and “a seer is greater than a prophet.” But, said Ammon, “a seer is . . . a prophet also” (see Mosiah 8:11–16). Thus called, Joseph has become “a great benefit to his fellow beings” (Mosiah 8:18).

The “choice” translator brought forth —“by the gift and power of God” (D&C 135:3)—the Book of Mormon, something tangible and verifiable. For all who heed it, the Book of Mormon is like the flinging open of long-closed doors on what was assumed to be a complete canon of scripture.

Noted on the very title page is the book’s special role in “convincing” mortals “that Jesus is the Christ” (see also 2 Nephi 25:18). In a day of disbelief and equivocation regarding this preeminent fact, this “convincing” effect is so needed! How sharp-edged that promise!

The Book of Mormon will be “read upon the housetops” (2 Nephi 27:11). Even if neglected, it will constitute a lingering invitation for “as long as the earth shall stand” (2 Nephi 25:22).

No wonder “the ends of the earth shall inquire after [Joseph’s] name” (D&C

122:1). Reassuring prophecies further declare that Joseph’s enemies “shall be confounded” and that the Prophet’s people will not be “turned against [him] by the testimony of traitors” (see 2 Nephi 3:14; D&C 122:3).

As President Faust reminded us yesterday, of his own imperfections, Joseph said, “I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* [1980], 369).

### Abundant and stunning revelations

Ironically, young Joseph Smith went into the grove merely wanting to know which church to join—not seeking to be called as a seer, revelator, translator, and prophet (see D&C 21:1). In the grove and subsequently, there came sunbursts of serendipity! The resulting revelations and translations were not mere speculations, thoughts for the day, or even epigrams, but instead they were divine, declarative disclosures.

The volume of resulting revelations and translations is enormous, underscoring the words “choice seer.” But it isn’t just the sheer volume of what Joseph received which is now being shared with mankind; it is also the existence of “stunners” in the midst of such abundance.

### Revelations about a vast universe

Through multiple revelations and translations, for example, came a description of a universe far, far exceeding the astrophysics of the 1830s, a cosmos containing “worlds without number” and advising us further that the “inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters [of] God” (Moses 1:33; D&C 76:24).

Anciently, the vastness of Abraham’s eventual posterity was compared to the

sand of the sea, a staggering promise (see Genesis 22:17). The Restoration's revelations and translations accommodate a vast universe; thus it is no surprise to us that scientists' latest estimate of the number of stars in the universe is approximately 70 sextillion—"more stars in the sky," scientists say, "than there are grains of sand in every beach and desert on Earth" (Allison M. Heinrichs, "The Stellar Census: 70 Sextillion," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 2003; see also Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* [1980], 196).

### Revelations about God's central purpose

Revelations and translations also came regarding God's central purpose "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man," giving us divine, succinct reassurances (Moses 1:39). God's plans for the development of souls have not changed. They were described to ancient Israel, whose 40 years in the wilderness were "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Therefore, disciples today can understand why our faith and patience are tried at times—so we can be prepared to go Home (see Mosiah 23:21).

Brothers and sisters, we do not go many hours in our lives without having to decide again "which way do we face" and whether we will pitch our tents facing Sodom or the holy temple (see Genesis 13:12; Mosiah 2:6).

God has no distracting hobbies off somewhere in the universe. We are at the very center of His concerns and purposes. What a sharp contrast to those who believe that man lives in an "unconscious universe" (Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* [1917], 50), a "universe . . . without a master" (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien [1955], 123).

### Revelations about us as God's children

Revelations likewise came about our longevity as God's spirit children, since "man was also in the beginning with God"—a declaration accompanied by even further glimmers about man's eternal nature (D&C 93:29). These enunciations with their profound implications are major—challenging, for instance, the teaching that man was created in an instant "out of nothing."

A further reality of our being with God "in the beginning" means that you have been you for a long time. Hence, the Apostle John correctly wrote that "[God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Likewise, amid the mortal turbulence, we learn who other mortals really are—our spiritual brothers and sisters, not functions, rivals, or enemies. Moreover, we should have a special sanctity and regard for human life.

### Revelations respond to deepest yearnings

"Stunners" all, these three revelations and translations are especially responsive to the deepest human yearnings and puzzles. They restructure our understanding of the nature of God, of the universe, and likewise of our personal identity and of life's meaning! What could be more personal than these brief but encompassing declarations?

If Joseph Smith had been the conduit for only one such divine revelation, it would be, standing alone, sufficient to ensure his prophetic greatness. Yet even though God wants to give us "all that [He] hath," we suffer from a poverty of perceptions! (D&C 84:38).

Little wonder that Paul commended Abraham, who "staggered not . . . [in] unbelief" (Romans 4:20). There is a risk when we contemplate the doctrines of the Restoration that we might "stagger" in the face of such bold and promising truths.

Given such breathtaking revelations and translations, let us, therefore, heed King Benjamin's counsel: "Believe in God; . . . believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend" (Mosiah 4:9).

### **Many are strangers to the Savior**

An omniscient God leaves all mortals free to choose, but how grateful we should be that God chose long, long ago to rescue and to resurrect all His children through the Atonement of His Son. Nevertheless, some reject and many are indifferent to these and other divine beckonings, mostly because they are too caught up in the cares of the world. They are strangers to the Savior, who is far from the thoughts and intents of their hearts (see Mosiah 5:13).

In the midst of God's plan and the universe's incredible vastness is incredible personalness. For example, "[God] looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Alma 18:32; see also Isaiah 66:18).

Since we are thus fully accountable to Him, on Judgment Day we cannot invoke the Fifth Amendment!

### **The preeminent revelation**

I have saved for last the preeminent revelation that truly ranks first: the theophanies showing the reality of the resurrected Jesus Christ, who is our Savior! Beginning with the Sacred Grove, other confirming appearances soon followed in obscure locations like Kirtland and Hiram, and all mankind thereby received this desperately needed confirmation.

Alas, in a secular world Jesus is regarded by many, at best, as a distant figure; He is even denigrated. How transcendently special, therefore, that the revelations of the Restoration confirm this cosmic fact:

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Jesus, who performed the "infinite atonement," thereby suffered infinitely and is a fully comprehending Savior, having "descended below all things" and "comprehended all things" (2 Nephi 9:7; D&C 88:6). Yes, as in the lyrics of the moving spiritual of yesteryear, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen; nobody knows but Jesus."

### **Many need these rescuing revelations**

Brothers and sisters, the cast of players on this planet for whom the revelations and translations are so pertinent includes those who, in that familiar phrase, are living "lives of quiet desperation" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* [1965], 7). They have now been joined by those living lives of noisy, slurping indulgence, wrongly celebrating their capacity to feel so that they finally lose their capacity to feel and become "past feeling" (Moroni 9:20; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Nephi 17:45). Hence they lick their particular platters in a desperate search for more sensations. Such individuals, however, are still not a majority but a "lesser part" of the people (see Mosiah 29:26–27).

Notably, at the last day the adversary "will not support" those who followed him anyway (Alma 30:60). He cannot. Jesus will triumph majestically, and the adversary's clever constructs, "pleasing [to] the carnal mind," will also collapse, and "the fall thereof [will be] exceedingly great" (Alma 30:53; 1 Nephi 11:36). Even now, one can see in the lives of those prodigals who come to themselves the devil's doctrines dripping in early meltdown (see Luke 15:17). Many, having experienced the utter emptiness of the lower ways, are "in a preparation to hear the word" and now await being informed of the rescuing revelations and translations (Alma 32:6).

### Do not hold back these revelations

Brothers and sisters, we dare not hold back the restored gospel's declaratives! We dare not hold back the reassuring revelations and truth-telling translations about "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13). These are so needed by those whose weary hands hang down because they suffer from doctrinal anemia, which can best be treated by the red blood cells of the Restoration. To hold back would be to restrain repentance and to obscure the beckoning spiritual alternative, which will become "fair as the sun, and clear as the moon" (D&C 105:31).

Meanwhile, let us expect that many will regard us indifferently. Others will see us as quaint or misled. Let us bear the pointing fingers which, ironically, belong to those finally who, being bored, find the "great and spacious building" to be a stale and cramped third-class hotel (see 1 Nephi 8:31–33). Let us revile not the revilers and heed them not (see D&C 31:9). Instead, let us use our energy to hold up the shield of faith to quench the incoming fiery darts—aided perhaps by a touch of spiritual Teflon (see 1 Nephi 15:24).

Brothers and sisters, given all of the foregoing, "what can I say more" except "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" (Jacob 6:12; "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

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The choir sang "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need."

Before President Hinckley addresses us, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the single adult choir from the Utah South Area, and the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the co-operation given, the doctors, the Church health unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance, the ushers and interpreters, and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to the local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, satellite and cable systems, and the Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you travel home from this conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Let Us Anew." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until April 2004.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Let us live the gospel more fully

What a glorious time we have had together, my beloved brethren and sisters.

It is truly a wonderful thing to step out of the world, as it were, and set aside two days to reflect on things divine.

We are all so busy with our mundane pursuits which pull us this way and that. We all need, the whole world needs, the opportunity to meditate and reflect on the things of God and to listen to words that inspire and help.

Our testimonies have been strengthened, and it is good, for as President Harold B. Lee once said, our testimonies need renewing every day.<sup>1</sup>

I am satisfied that the Latter-day Saints have within their hearts a desire to do the right thing, to live after the manner which the Lord has outlined for us. We have been reminded of many of these things during this conference.

I hope that when we return to our homes, before retiring for the night, we each will get on our knees and express our appreciation and ask for the strength to live the gospel more fully as a result of this conference.

I am so grateful for the beautiful music of the choir; they have sung so wonderfully. This is such a great and dedicated organization, and we thank all who give so generously of their time and talents to this great effort. I am grateful for the music yesterday of the singles choir; they were an inspiration. And the great singing last night of the young men in the Missionary Training Center, who came and sang to us with great power, thank you so very much for what you have given us.

### **“Come unto Christ, and be perfected”**

Now I would like to read in conclusion just a few words from Moroni:

“And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of [Christ]” (Moroni 10:31–32).

### **Each a better person**

As a result of this great conference, each of us should be a better man or a better woman, a better boy or a better girl. Thank you so much, my brothers and sisters, for your great service in moving this work forward. What a tremendous work you are doing, you faithful Latter-day Saints all across the world, who carry in your hearts a firm and unswerving testimony of the reality of the living God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, and of Their appearance in this dispensation to begin anew a great era in the history of the world in preparation for that time when the Son of God shall come to reign as Lord of lords and King of kings.

May the blessings of heaven rest upon you, my dear friends. I pray that what you have heard and seen may make a difference in your lives. I pray that each of us will be a little more kind, a little more thoughtful, a little more courteous. I pray that we will keep our tongues in check and not let anger prompt words which we would later regret. I pray that we may have the strength and the will to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile in lifting up the feeble knees of those in distress.

This gospel is an intimate thing. It is not some distant concept. It is applicable in our lives. It can change our very natures.

May God bless you, my wonderful, faithful associates, in this great work. May

His peace and His love be upon you and enshrine your lives with an essence of godliness.

As we return to our homes, I pray that in our hearts there will be a resolution to live together more fully as we should do as Latter-day Saints. I leave my love and my blessing with you in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ. God be with you till we meet again. Thank you, and amen.

#### NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion* (1989), 93.

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The choir sang “Come, Let Us Anew.” Elder Douglas L. Callister offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a single adult choir from the Utah South Area. The choir was directed by James C. Kasen, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a priesthood choir from the

Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

#### **F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

ENGLISH





Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-fourth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

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**3–4 April, 2004**



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# Report of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 2004, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4, 2004. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 3, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and priesthood sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Charles Didier, Dieter F.

Uchtdorf, Merrill J. Bateman, and John H. Groberg

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 3, 2004. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Press Forward, Saints." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Press Forward, Saints" and will now sing "For the Beauty of the Earth." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Elder Ronald A. Rasband offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **The Church grows stronger**

My beloved brethren and sisters, we warmly welcome you to another worldwide conference of the Church. We are now a great international family, living in many nations and speaking many languages. To me it is a marvelous and miraculous thing that you are able to see us and hear us across the globe.

During my life as a General Authority, we have moved from the time when we thought it a remarkable thing that we could speak in the Salt Lake Tabernacle and be heard by radio throughout the state of Utah. Now we are assembled in this great and magnificent Conference Center, and our images and words are available to 95 percent of the membership of the Church.

New technology has become available as the Church has grown larger and stronger. Our membership now reaches almost 12 million, with more members outside North America than within. Once we were recognized as a Utah church. Now we have become a great international body.

We have made a very long journey in reaching out to the nations of the world. There is much more yet to be done, but what has been accomplished is truly phenomenal.

### **Strong and committed members**

It is a fact that we lose some—far too many. Every organization of which I am aware does so. But I am satisfied that we retain and keep active a higher percentage of our members than does any other major church of which I know.

Everywhere there is great activity and great enthusiasm. We have strong and able leaders across the world who give of their time and means to move the work forward.

It is wonderfully refreshing to see the faith and faithfulness of our young people. They live at a time when a great tide of evil is washing over the earth. It seems to be everywhere. Old standards are discarded. Principles of virtue and integrity are cast aside. But we find literally hundreds of thousands of our young people holding to the high standards of the gospel. They find happy and uplifting association with those of their own kind. They are improving their minds with education and their skills with discipline, and their influence for good is felt ever more widely.

### **Construction and humanitarian efforts**

I am pleased to report, my brothers and sisters, that the Church is in good condition. We continue to build temples, to construct houses of worship, to carry forward many projects of construction and

improvement, all made possible because of the faith of our people.

We are carrying on a great humanitarian effort, which is blessing the lives of many of the less fortunate of the earth and those who are the victims of the catastrophes of nature.

### **Changing attitudes toward the Church**

We are pleased to note that on April 1 of this year, the Illinois House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution of regret for the forced expulsion of our people from Nauvoo in 1846. This magnanimous gesture may be coupled with action taken by then Governor Christopher S. Bond of Missouri, who in 1976 revoked the cruel and unconstitutional extermination order issued against our people by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs in 1838.

These and other developments represent a most significant change of attitude toward the Latter-day Saints.

### **Expression of gratitude and blessing**

How deeply grateful I feel to each of you and all of you for your dedicated and consecrated service. I thank you for your many kindnesses to me wherever I go. I stand as your servant, ready and willing to assist you in any way that I can.

God bless you, my dear associates. How I love you. How I pray for you. How I thank you.

May heaven smile upon you. May there be love and harmony, peace and goodness in your homes. May you be preserved from harm and evil. May our Father's "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8) become the standard by which you live. I ask it humbly and gratefully in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from our beloved associate Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve, who is now 97 years of age. Elder Haight, come up here and speak to your multitudinous friends.

## Elder David B. Haight

### How great the wisdom and the love

I stand here with a humble heart—a heart that is full of love for this work, for you people who are here and who are listening. At our last conference six months ago as I stood here by President Gordon B. Hinckley, he encouraged me to wave to you, and I used all the energy that I had. I've heard from some people who thought I was waving a farewell. But I've come here today to indicate to you and to tell you I'm back. And I don't have anyone else pushing my arm for me.

I understand the power of prayer and of faith and devotion, and I acknowledge precious witnesses from heaven. And so I stand here today just to bear my testimony and say hello to you. I'm hoping that by another conference I'll be totally healed and able to do what I'm asked to do.

God lives. He is our Father—our Father in Heaven.

Eliza R. Snow, who wrote some of our famous music, particularly sacrament music, wrote the words:

How great the wisdom and the love  
That filled the courts on high.

Just run that through your mind for a second—because we were there.

How great the wisdom and the love  
That filled the courts on high  
And sent the Savior from above  
To suffer, bleed, and die!  
[“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195]

We chose to come here. And so we're here, assembled in this vast auditorium, where we can speak to each other and

bear witness and bear testimony. I assure you that in those sleepless nights that I've had at times, when you attempt to solve all of your problems and to make new resolutions of things that need to be done, I have had those heavenly thoughts that lift us. God our Heavenly Father loves us, as we should love Him. He selected His Son to come to earth and bring the gospel of Jesus Christ, for whom this Church is named and which we bear witness to. I am honored to stand and bear witness today of the foundation of this Church and of our love for President Hinckley, who leads us today.

The gospel is true. I know it; I'm a witness of it. In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

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### President Faust

The choir just sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we will hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Gayle M. Clegg, second counselor in the Primary general presidency. Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by the choir singing “We Are Sowing.”



## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Preparation for the Second Coming

In modern revelation we have the promise that if we are prepared we need not fear (see D&C 38:30). I was introduced to that principle 60 years ago this summer when I became a Boy Scout and learned the Scout motto: “Be prepared.” Today I have felt prompted to speak of the importance of preparation for a future event of supreme importance to each of us—the Second Coming of the Lord.

The scriptures are rich in references to the Second Coming, an event eagerly awaited by the righteous and dreaded or denied by the wicked. The faithful of all ages have pondered the sequence and meaning of the many events prophesied to precede and follow this hinge point of history.

Four matters are indisputable to Latter-day Saints: (1) The Savior will return to the earth in power and great glory to reign personally during a millennium of righteousness and peace. (2) At the time of His coming there will be a destruction of the wicked and a resurrection of the righteous. (3) No one knows the time of His coming, but (4) the faithful are taught to study the signs of it and to be prepared for it. I wish to speak about the fourth of these great realities: the signs of the Second Coming and what we should do to prepare for it.

### Signs of the Second Coming

The Lord has declared, “He that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man,” signs that will be shown “in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath” (D&C 45:39–40).

The Savior taught this in the parable of the fig tree whose tender new branches give a sign of the coming of summer. “So

likewise,” when the elect shall see the signs of His coming, “they shall know that he is near, even at the doors” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:38–39; see also Matthew 24:32–33; D&C 45:37–38).

Biblical and modern prophecies give many signs of the Second Coming. These include:

1. The fulness of the gospel restored and preached in all the world for a witness to all nations.
2. False Christs and false prophets, deceiving many.
3. Wars and rumors of wars, with nation rising against nation.
4. Earthquakes in divers places.
5. Famine and pestilence.
6. An overflowing scourge, a desolating sickness covering the land.
7. Iniquity abounding.
8. The whole earth in commotion.
9. Men’s hearts failing them.

(See Matthew 24:5–15; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22, 28–32; D&C 45:26–33.)

In another revelation the Lord declares that some of these signs are His voice calling His people to repentance:

“Hearken, O ye nations of the earth, and hear the words of that God who made you. . . .

“How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, . . . and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!” (D&C 43:23, 25).

These signs of the Second Coming are all around us and seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity. For example, the list of major earthquakes in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 2004* shows

twice as many earthquakes in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s as in the two preceding decades (see pages 189–90). It also shows further sharp increases in the first several years of this century. The list of notable floods and tidal waves and the list of hurricanes, typhoons, and blizzards worldwide show similar increases in recent years (see pages 188–89). Increases by comparison with 50 years ago can be dismissed as changes in reporting criteria, but the accelerating pattern of natural disasters in the last few decades is ominous.

### **The gathering**

Another sign of the times is the gathering of the faithful (see D&C 133:4). In the early years of this last dispensation, a gathering to Zion involved various locations in the United States: to Kirtland, to Missouri, to Nauvoo, and to the tops of the mountains. Always these were gatherings to prospective temples.

With the creation of stakes and the construction of temples in most nations with sizable populations of the faithful, the current commandment is not to gather to one place but to gather in stakes in our own homelands. There the faithful can enjoy the full blessings of eternity in a house of the Lord. There, in their own homelands, they can obey the Lord's command to enlarge the borders of His people and strengthen her stakes (see D&C 101:21; 133:9, 14). In this way the stakes of Zion are "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:6).

### **Accelerating our preparation**

While we are powerless to alter the fact of the Second Coming and unable to know its exact time, we can accelerate our own preparation and try to influence the preparation of those around us.

A parable that contains an important and challenging teaching on this subject

is the parable of the ten virgins. Of this parable the Lord said, "And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins" (D&C 45:56).

Given in the 25th chapter of Matthew, this parable contrasts the circumstances of the five foolish and the five wise virgins. All ten were invited to the wedding feast, but only half of them were prepared with oil in their lamps when the bridegroom came. The five who were prepared went into the marriage feast, and the door was shut. The five who had delayed their preparations came late. The door had been closed, and the Lord denied them entrance, saying, "I know you not" (v. 12). "Watch therefore," the Savior concluded, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (v. 13).

The arithmetic of this parable is chilling. The ten virgins obviously represent members of Christ's Church, for all were invited to the wedding feast and all knew what was required to be admitted when the bridegroom came. But only half were ready when he came.

Modern revelation contains this teaching, spoken by the Lord to the early leaders of the Church:

"And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.

"For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes. . . .

"And . . . the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

"And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people.

"And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying: Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (D&C 88:88–92).

## Begin preparations today

Brothers and sisters, as the Book of Mormon teaches, “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). Are we preparing?

In His preface to our compilation of modern revelation, the Lord declares, “Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh” (D&C 1:12).

The Lord also warned: “Yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom; behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord” (D&C 133:10; see also D&C 34:6).

Always we are cautioned that we cannot know the day or the hour of His coming. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus taught:

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

“But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Matthew 24:42–43). “But would have been ready” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:47).

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44; see also D&C 51:20).

What if the day of His coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow—through our premature death or His unexpected coming—what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear?

If we would do those things then, why not now? Why not seek peace while peace can be obtained? If our lamps of preparation are drawn down, let us start immediately to replenish them.

We need to make both temporal and spiritual preparation for the events prophesied at the time of the Second Coming. And the preparation most likely to be neglected is the one less visible and more difficult—the spiritual. A 72-hour kit of temporal supplies may prove valuable for earthly challenges, but, as the foolish virgins learned to their sorrow, a 24-hour kit of spiritual preparation is of greater and more enduring value.

## Wickedness is spreading across the earth

We are living in the prophesied time “when peace shall be taken from the earth” (D&C 1:35), when “all things shall be in commotion” and “men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 88:91). There are many temporal causes of commotion, including wars and natural disasters, but an even greater cause of current commotion is spiritual.

Viewing our surroundings through the lens of faith and with an eternal perspective, we see all around us a fulfillment of the prophecy that “the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35). Our hymn describes “the foe in countless numbers, / Marshaled in the ranks of sin” (“Hope of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 259), and so it is.

Evil that used to be localized and covered like a boil is now legalized and paraded like a banner. The most fundamental roots and bulwarks of civilization are questioned or attacked. Nations disavow their religious heritage. Marriage and family responsibilities are discarded as impediments to personal indulgence. The movies and magazines and television that shape our attitudes are filled with stories or images that portray the children of God as predatory beasts or, at best, as trivial creations pursuing little more than personal pleasure. And too many of us accept this as entertainment.

The men and women who made epic sacrifices to combat evil regimes in the past were shaped by values that are dis-

appearing from our public teaching. The good, the true, and the beautiful are being replaced by the no-good, the “whatever,” and the valueless fodder of personal whim. Not surprisingly, many of our youth and adults are caught up in pornography, pagan piercing of body parts, self-serving pleasure pursuits, dishonest behavior, revealing attire, foul language, and degrading sexual indulgence.

An increasing number of opinion leaders and followers deny the existence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and revere only the gods of secularism. Many in positions of power and influence deny the right and wrong defined by divine decree. Even among those who profess to believe in right and wrong, there are “them that call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20; 2 Nephi 15:20). Many also deny individual responsibility and practice dependence on others, seeking, like the foolish virgins, to live on borrowed substance and borrowed light.

All of this is grievous in the sight of our Heavenly Father, who loves all of His children and forbids every practice that keeps any from returning to His presence.

### **Standing in holy places**

What is the state of our personal preparation for eternal life? The people of God have always been people of covenant. What is the measure of our compliance with covenants, including the sacred promises we made in the waters of baptism, in receiving the holy priesthood, and in the temples of God? Are we promisers who do not fulfill and believers who do not perform?

Are we following the Lord’s command, “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly”? (D&C 87:8). What are those “holy places”? Surely they include the temple and its covenants faith-

fully kept. Surely they include a home where children are treasured and parents are respected. Surely the holy places include our posts of duty assigned by priesthood authority, including missions and callings faithfully fulfilled in branches, wards, and stakes.

### **The righteous need not fear**

As the Savior taught in His prophecy of the Second Coming, blessed is the “faithful and wise servant” who is attending to his duty when the Lord comes (see Matthew 24:45–46). As the prophet Nephi taught of that day, “The righteous need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17; see also 1 Nephi 14:14; D&C 133:44). And modern revelation promises that “the Lord shall have power over his saints” (D&C 1:36).

We are surrounded by challenges on all sides (see 2 Corinthians 4:8–9). But with faith in God, we trust the blessings He has promised those who keep His commandments. We have faith in the future, and we are preparing for that future. To borrow a metaphor from the familiar world of athletic competitions, we do not know when this game will end, and we do not know the final score, but we do know that when the game finally ends, our team wins. We will continue to go forward “till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

“Wherefore,” the Savior tells us, “be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom—For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that I come quickly” (D&C 33:17–18).

I testify of Jesus Christ. I testify that He shall come, as He has promised. And I pray that we will be prepared to meet Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### Becoming converted to the gospel

My comments are directed particularly to young people, although I hope they may be helpful to everyone.

Years ago when I served as a stake president, a man came to confess a transgression. His confession surprised me. He had been an active member of the Church for years. I wondered how a person with his experience could have committed the sin that he did. After some pondering, it came to me that this brother had never become truly converted. Despite his Church activity, the gospel had not penetrated his heart. It was only an external influence in his life. When he was in wholesome environments, he kept the commandments, but in a different environment, other influences might control his actions.

How can you become converted? How can you make the gospel of Jesus Christ not just an influence in your life but the controlling influence and, indeed, the very core of what you are? The ancient prophet Jeremiah spoke of the law of God—the gospel—being written in our hearts. He quotes the Lord speaking about us, His people in the latter days: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”<sup>1</sup>

Do you want this for yourself? I can tell you how that can happen, but it must be something you want. The gospel cannot be written in your heart unless your heart is open. Without a heartfelt desire, you can participate in sacrament meetings, classes, and Church activities and do the things I will tell you, but it won’t make much difference. But if your heart is open and willing, like the heart of a child,<sup>2</sup> let me tell you what you can do to be converted.

### Lay aside pride and submit to God

As a first step, you must lay aside any feeling of pride that is so common in the world today. By this I mean the attitude that rejects the authority of God to rule in our lives. This attitude was described by the Lord to Joseph Smith when He said, “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god.”<sup>3</sup> You hear it expressed today in phrases such as “Do your own thing” or “Right and wrong depend on what I feel is right for me.” That attitude is a rebellion against God, just as Lucifer rebelled against God in the premortal world. He rejected God’s right to declare the truth and establish the law.<sup>4</sup> Satan wanted, and still wants, the power to declare arbitrarily what is right and wrong. Our beloved Creator does not force us to accept His authority, but willingly submitting to that authority is the first step in conversion.

### Study the scriptures

Further, for the gospel to be written in your heart, you need to know what it is and grow to understand it more fully. That means you will study it.<sup>5</sup> When I say *study*, I mean something more than reading. It is a good thing sometimes to read a book of scripture within a set period of time to get an overall sense of its message, but for conversion you should care more about the amount of time you spend in the scriptures than about the amount you read in that time. I see you sometimes reading a few verses, stopping to ponder them, carefully reading the verses again, and as you think about what they mean, praying for understanding, asking questions in your mind, waiting for spiritual impressions, and

writing down the impressions and insights that come so you can remember and learn more. Studying in this way, you may not read a lot of chapters or verses in a half hour, but you will be giving place in your heart for the word of God, and He will be speaking to you. Remember Alma's description of what it feels like: "It beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me."<sup>6</sup> You will know that the gospel is being written in your heart, that your conversion is happening, as the word of the Lord from His prophets, past and present, feels more and more delicious to your soul.

### **Pray with your whole soul**

I mentioned praying as you study to understand the scriptures, but your prayers must not be limited to that. In the Book of Mormon, Amulek tells us we should pray about everything in our lives. He says, "Pour out your souls [to God] in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness."<sup>7</sup> Your Heavenly Father wants you to pray about your hopes and fears, your friends and family, your school and work, and the needs of those around you. Most of all, you should pray to be filled with the love of Christ. This love is given to those who are true followers of Jesus Christ, who ask for it with all the energy of their hearts.<sup>8</sup> This love is the fruit of the tree of life,<sup>9</sup> and tasting it is a major part of your conversion because once you have felt your Savior's love for you, even the smallest part, you will feel secure, and a love for Him and for your Heavenly Father will grow within you. In your heart you will want to do what these holy beings ask of you. Go often to your closet, your secret place, your wilderness. Thank God for your blessings; ask for His help; ask Him to bestow upon you the pure love of Christ. Sometimes fasting will help.

### **Serve others**

After Amulek talked about prayer, he spoke about something else that is an important element of your conversion—serving others. Otherwise, he said, "your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing."<sup>10</sup> In other words, to be converted, you must not only open your heart to a knowledge of the gospel and the love of God, you must practice the gospel law. You cannot fully understand or appreciate it unless you personally apply it in your life. Jesus said that He came to serve, not to be served.<sup>11</sup> So it must be with you. You must look outward and care about others. You can be compassionate; you can be friendly; you can share; you can help others in a hundred small ways. As you do, the gospel of Jesus Christ will become a part of you.

### **Have a repentant heart, a contrite spirit**

Let me mention one other thing. In ancient times when people wanted to worship the Lord and seek His blessings, they often brought a gift. For example, when they went to the temple, they brought a sacrifice to place on the altar. After His Atonement and Resurrection, the Savior said He would no longer accept burnt offerings of animals. The gift or sacrifice He will accept now is "a broken heart and a contrite spirit."<sup>12</sup> As you seek the blessing of conversion, you can offer the Lord the gift of your broken, or repentant, heart and your contrite, or obedient, spirit. In reality, it is the gift of yourself—what you are and what you are becoming.

Is there something in you or in your life that is impure or unworthy? When you get rid of it, that is a gift to the Savior. Is there a good habit or quality that is lacking in your life? When you adopt it and make it part of your character, you are giving a gift to the Lord.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes this is hard to do, but would your gifts of repentance and obedience be worthy gifts if

they cost you nothing?<sup>14</sup> Don't be afraid of the effort required. And remember, you don't have to do it alone. Jesus Christ will help you make of yourself a worthy gift. His grace will make you clean, even holy. Eventually you will become like Him, "perfect in Christ."<sup>15</sup>

### **Conversion brings protection**

With conversion you will wear a protective armor—"the whole armour of God"<sup>16</sup>—and the words of Christ, which come by the Holy Spirit, "will tell you all things" you should do.<sup>17</sup>

In 1992, two sister missionaries in Zagreb, Croatia, were returning to their apartment one evening. Their last teaching appointment had been some distance away, and it was getting dark. Several men on the trolley made crude comments and became rather menacing. Feeling threatened, the sisters got off the trolley at the next stop just as the doors closed so no one could follow them. Having avoided that problem, they realized they were in a place unknown to either of them. As they turned to look for help, they saw a woman. The missionaries explained that they were lost and asked the woman if she could direct them. She knew where they could find another trolley to take them home and invited them to follow her. On the way they had to pass a bar with patrons sitting along the sidewalk in the gathering darkness. These men also appeared threatening. Nevertheless, the two young women had the distinct impression that the men could not see them. They walked by, apparently invisible to those who might have had a mind to harm them. When the sisters and their guide reached the stop, the trolley they needed was just arriving. They turned to thank the woman, but she was nowhere to be seen.<sup>18</sup>

These missionaries were furnished a guide and other blessings to protect them physically. As you become converted, you

will have comparable protections to keep you from temptation and deliver you from evil.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes evil will not find you. Sometimes you will be protected when evil is made invisible to you. Even when you must confront it directly, you will do so with faith, not fear.

### **Gospel written in your mind and heart**

We have talked of desire, submissiveness to God, study, prayer, service, repentance, and obedience. From these, coupled with your worship and activity in Church, will come testimony and conversion. The gospel won't be just an influence in your life—it will be what you are. Plead with God in the name of Christ to write the gospel in your mind that you may have understanding and in your heart that you may love to do His will.<sup>20</sup> Pursue this blessing diligently and patiently, and you will receive it, for God "is gracious and merciful, . . . and of great kindness."<sup>21</sup> I so bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Jeremiah 31:33. Ezekiel said conversion is like the Lord taking away our "stony heart" and giving us a heart that loves Him and His gospel (see Ezekiel 11:19–20). Surely this is what happened to the people of King Benjamin when they said their hearts had been changed and they didn't even want to do evil anymore "but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2).
2. See Matthew 18:3–4.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16; see also Helaman 12:6.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–29.
5. We are exceptionally fortunate to have so much of the recorded word of God at our fingertips. In prior ages of the world's history, very few people had copies of the scriptures in their possession. They had to try to remember what they could whenever they heard scriptures read in sermons. What an incomparable blessing that you can have your own copy to read whenever

you want. You can see how the gospel works in the lives of people who were converted, from Adam's time down to our own time.

6. Alma 32:28.
7. Alma 34:26.
8. See Moroni 7:47–48.
9. See 1 Nephi 11:21–23.
10. Alma 34:28.
11. See Mark 10:45. The Lord told Peter that when he was converted, he should strengthen his brethren (see Luke 22:32).
12. 3 Nephi 9:20.
13. Along with the scriptures, the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* (2001) can guide you.
14. Once when King David prepared to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, a loyal subject said he would give the king the place, the animals, and the firewood to make the sacrifice. But David declined, saying, "I

will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24).

15. See Moroni 10:32–33.
16. See Ephesians 6:13–17.
17. 2 Nephi 32:3.
18. As related by Sister Nicole Christoffer-son Miller.
19. See Matthew 6:13.
20. See Hebrews 8:10; 10:16.
21. Joel 2:13. "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:63).

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Now Let Us Rejoice."

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## Sister Gayle M. Clegg

### The finished story

Some time ago I found a large white envelope in my mailbox. Inside was a story written by a boy I had taught years before when he was in sixth grade. I remembered the student and the assignment his class had worked on for months. I also remembered that he loved to write and would sit and think and think. Sometimes only a word or two found their way to the page. At times he worked during recess, but when the due date arrived, his story still had a chapter to go. I told him just to turn it in as it was, but Jimmy had a different vision and wanted to turn in a finished story. The last day of class he asked if he could finish during the summer break. Again I told him just to turn it in. He pleaded for more time, and finally I sent him on his way with a stack of wrinkled and smudged papers, complimenting him on his determination and assuring him of my confidence in his ability to complete a great story.

I thought about him that summer, but the assignment left my mind until years later when I found his completed project in the mailbox. I was amazed and wondered what made Jimmy finish his story. What kind of vision, determination, and effort had been required in this task? Why do any of us finish a hard task, especially if no one demands its completion?

### A pioneer who kept the faith

My husband's great-grandfather Henry Clegg Jr. was a finisher. He joined the Church with his family when the first LDS missionaries went to Preston, England. Henry had a view of his destination in his mind as he and his wife, Hannah, and their two young boys immigrated to Utah. Henry left his older parents, who were too feeble to make such a long and arduous journey, knowing he would never see them again.

While crossing the plains, Hannah contracted cholera and died. She was laid



to rest in an unmarked grave. The company then moved on, and at 6:00 in the evening, Henry's youngest son also died. Henry retraced his steps to Hannah's grave, placed his young son in his wife's arms, and reburied the two of them together. Henry then had to return to the wagon train, now five miles away. Suffering from cholera himself, Henry described his condition as being at death's door while realizing he still had 1,000 miles to walk. Amazingly he continued forward, putting one foot in front of the other. He stopped writing in his journal for several weeks after losing his dear Hannah and little son. I was struck with the words he used when he did start writing again: "Still moving."

When he finally reached the gathering place of the Saints, he began a new family. He kept the faith. He continued his story. Most remarkably, his heartache over the burial of his sweetheart and son gave birth to our family's legacy of moving forward, of finishing.

### **To stay faithful is its own reward**

I have often wondered as I have heard pioneer stories like the one of Henry Clegg, "Could I ever do that?" Sometimes I fear this question, knowing our pioneer legacy lives on today. I recently visited West Africa and witnessed everyday pioneers walking forward, joining a new church, leaving behind centuries of traditions, even leaving behind family and friends, as did Henry. My admiration and love for them is as great as for my own forebears.

Do the challenges of others appear more difficult than our own? We often look at someone with tremendous responsibilities and think, "I could never do that." Yet others might look at us and feel exactly the same way. It is not the magnitude of the responsibility but rather how it feels to be the one in the middle of the unfinished task. For a young mother with many children at home, caring for them through

the day and then through the night could feel like 1,000 miles yet to walk. Giving a lesson in Relief Society to women who are older or younger, more experienced or more educated could feel difficult, especially when the topic is one you are struggling to understand and live yourself. Teaching a class of 10 active six-year-olds can be daunting, especially when your own six-year-old is in the class and you haven't quite figured out how to teach him one-on-one.

What do we learn from young Jimmy, from early pioneers, and from modern pioneers around the world that will help us in our specific challenges? Jimmy spent years writing on his own for no deadline, Henry Clegg marched on alone and without heart even to write in a journal, and African Saints lived worthy of a temple they could not have imagined would one day rise in their own nation. To keep going, to stay faithful, and to finish had to be its own reward.

### **Encouragement on the journey**

Years ago one of our daughters asked me to come outside and play tetherball with her. She told me to sit down and watch as she hit over and over again a ball on a rope that wound itself around a pole. After watching several windings, I asked what my part was in the game, and she said, "Oh, Mom, you say, 'Good job, good job,' every time the ball goes around the pole."

"Good job!" helps the journey seem possible. It might sound like a phone call from a mother of one of the six-year-olds in that Primary class, calling to let the teacher know that her son carefully helped his little sister into the car seat without being asked, acknowledging the Primary teacher's lesson as the impetus for this new behavior. It might look like a husband getting the children off to nursery and Primary as his wife sets up her lesson for Young Women. It might be as simple as a

smile, a hug, or a long walk to sort things out with a friend, a husband, or a child.

We each must find and finish our own stories, but how much sweeter the telling when encouragement is called out, when arriving at our destination is valued and celebrated, however long ago the journey commenced.

### **Follow the Savior every day**

The greatest mentor and advocate we have said: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). Can any of us afford to leave this piece out of our individual journey?

Henry Clegg was still moving forward to live among the faithful Saints, to take his place, to raise a righteous family, to serve his neighbor. He had that picture in his mind even when his heart was breaking. I heard a Primary child from Ghana answer the question “What does it mean to choose the right every day?” with, “It means to follow the Lord and Savior every day and do your best even when it is hard.” This modern pioneer boy knew President Hinckley’s admonition. He knew about keeping commandments every day. He understood that his own story would unfold simply by putting one foot in front of the other, one day at a time.

### **A Primary training video in Spanish**

Last fall I found myself with a wonderful but challenging opportunity to develop and teach Primary training through a video made entirely in Spanish. At one time in my life I was a Spanish speaker, but recently I had been speaking Portuguese and knew what it would take to relearn Spanish. I did all the things each of you do to complete a task that feels extremely difficult. I found help from ca-

pable and dedicated Hispanic sisters. Together we studied, prayed, fasted, and worked long hours. The day arrived to go and do the thing the Lord had asked, and we not only were fearful but felt our work was inadequate. We had worked up to the moment of delivery, and nothing more could be done. I wanted to start over.

Each of our husbands gave us priesthood blessings, and peace and calm started to come. Like angels, help came in the form of a sweet husband who set the alarm on his watch so he could pray for me every half hour during the recording, a cameraman whose eyes radiated “Good job,” and Primary leaders who had confidence in the workings of the Spirit and were able to communicate that with power. We ended up with a finished film that was helpful for our Spanish-speaking leaders. All who participated in it were partly surprised and entirely grateful for its success. We walked as far as we could go, and when we thought we might abandon our carts and drop by the wayside, angels somehow pushed from behind.

### **Jesus wants us to finish our stories well**

What did we learn from this task? The same lesson Henry Clegg Jr. and Jimmy learned and the same thing all faithful modern-day pioneers are learning. With the Lord, nothing is impossible (see Luke 1:37), but we each have to finish our own stories. He sends His Spirit, we call out encouragement to each other, but we have to keep writing, keep walking, keep serving and accepting new challenges to the end of our own stories. “Still walking” is the fundamental requirement in the journey of life. He wants us to finish well. He wants us to come back to Him. I pray that each of our stories will end in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, the authors and finishers of our faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### **In the strength of the Lord**

When I was a young man, I served as counselor to a wise district president in the Church. He tried to teach me. One of the things I remember wondering about was this advice he gave: “When you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right more than half the time.”

I thought then that he was pessimistic. Now, more than 40 years later, I can see how well he understood the world and life. As time passes, the world grows more challenging, and our physical capacities slowly diminish with age. It is clear that we will need more than human strength. The Psalmist was right: “But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble.”<sup>1</sup>

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us help in knowing how to qualify for the strength of the Lord as we deal with adversity. It tells us why we face tests in life. And even more importantly, it tells us how to get protection and help from the Lord.

### **Why we face trials**

We have trials to face because our Heavenly Father loves us. His purpose is to help us qualify for the blessing of living with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, forever in glory and in families. To qualify for that gift, we had to receive a mortal body. With that mortality we understood that we would be tested by temptations and by difficulties.

The restored gospel not only teaches us why we must be tested, but it makes clear to us what the test is. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us an explanation. By revelation he was able to record words spoken at the Creation of the world. They are about us, those of the spirit children

of our Heavenly Father who would come into mortality. Here are the words: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>2</sup>

That explanation helps us understand why we face trials in life. They give us the opportunity to prove ourselves faithful to God. So many things beat upon us in a lifetime that simply enduring may seem almost beyond us. That’s what the words in the scripture “Ye must . . . endure to the end”<sup>3</sup> seemed to mean to me when I first read them. It sounded grim, like sitting still and holding on to the arms of the chair while someone pulled out my tooth.

It can surely seem that way to a family depending on crops when there is no rain. They may wonder, “How long can we hold on?” It can seem that way to a youth who is faced with resisting the rising flood of filth and temptation. It can seem that way to a young man struggling to get the training he needs for a job to support a wife and family. It can seem that way to a person who can’t find a job or who has lost job after job as businesses close their doors. It can seem that way to a person faced with the erosion of health and physical strength which may come early or late in life for them or for those they love.

But the test a loving God has set before us is not to see if we can endure difficulty. It is to see if we can endure it well. We pass the test by showing that we remembered Him and the commandments He gave us. And to endure well is to keep those commandments whatever the opposition, whatever the temptation, and whatever the tumult around us. We have that clear understanding because the restored gospel makes the plan of happiness so plain.

That clarity lets us see what help we need. We need strength beyond ourselves

to keep the commandments in whatever circumstance life brings to us. For some it may be poverty, but for others it may be prosperity. It may be the ravages of age or the exuberance of youth. The combination of trials and their duration are as varied as are the children of our Heavenly Father. No two are alike. But what is being tested is the same at all times in our lives and for every person: will we do whatsoever the Lord our God will command us?

### **How to get help for trials**

Knowing why we are tested and what the test tells us how to get help. We have to go to God. He gives us the commandments. And we will need more than our own strength to keep them.

Again, the restored gospel makes plain the simple things we need to do. And it gives us confidence that the help we need will come if we do those things early and persistently, long before the moment of crisis.

### *Prayer*

The first, the middle, and the last thing to do is to pray. The Savior told us how. One of the clearest instructions is in 3 Nephi:

“Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name;

“And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.

“Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.”<sup>4</sup>

So, we must pray always.

### *Feast on the word*

Another simple thing to do, which allows God to give us strength, is to feast on the word of God: read and ponder the standard works of the Church and the words of living prophets. There is a promise of help from God that comes with that daily practice. Faithful study of scriptures brings the Holy Ghost to us. The promise is given in the Book of Mormon, but it applies as well to all the words of God that He has given and will give us through His prophets.

“Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>5</sup>

We should claim the promise not only once nor only for the Book of Mormon. The promise is sure. The power of the Holy Ghost is real. It will come, again and again. And one overriding truth it will always testify to is that Jesus is the Christ.

That testimony will draw us to the Savior and to accepting the help He offers to all who are being tested in the crucible of mortality. More than once He has said that He would gather us to Him as a hen would gather her chickens under her wings. He says that we must choose to come to Him in meekness and with

enough faith in Him to repent “with full purpose of heart.”<sup>6</sup>

One way to do that is to gather with the Saints in His Church. Go to your meetings, even when it seems hard. If you are determined, He will help you find the strength to do it.

### **Strength from early-morning seminary**

A member wrote to me from England. When her bishop asked if she would accept a call to teach early-morning seminary, he told her she’d better pray about it before she accepted. She did. She accepted. When she met the parents for the first time, the bishop stood beside her. She announced that she felt the program should go to five days a week. Some parents looked doubtful. One person said, “They won’t come. They’ll vote with their feet.”

Well, the doubt was half right. The students did vote with their feet. But their attendance in those cold and dark morning hours is now above 90 percent. That teacher and her bishop believed that if the students would start to come, they would be strengthened by power more than their own. It came. That power will protect them when they go to places where they will be the only Latter-day Saints. They will not be alone or without strength, because they accepted the invitation to gather with the Saints when it was not easy.

### **Help for a widow**

That strength is given to those who are older as well as the young. I know a widow more than 90 years of age. She is in a wheelchair. She prays as you do, pleading for help to solve problems beyond her human power to resolve. The answer is a feeling in her heart. It draws her to keep a commandment: “And behold, ye shall meet together oft.”<sup>7</sup> So she finds a way to

get to her meetings. People who attend there have told me, “We are so glad to see her. She brings such a spirit with her.”

She partakes of the sacrament, and she renews a covenant. She remembers the Savior, and she tries to keep His commandments. And so she takes His Spirit with her, always. Her problems may not be resolved. Most of them come from the choices of others, and even the Heavenly Father who hears her prayers and loves her cannot force others to choose the right. But He can send her to the safety of the Savior and the promise of His Spirit to be with her. And so I am sure that she will, in the strength of the Lord, pass the test she faces, because she keeps the commandment to gather often with the Saints. That is both the evidence that she is enduring well and the source of her strength for what lies ahead.

### **Responding to a call to serve**

There is another simple thing to do. The Lord’s Church has been restored, and so any call to serve in it is a call to serve Him. That bishop in England was so wise. He asked the woman to pray about her call to serve. He knew what answer she would receive. It would be an invitation from the Father and His Beloved Son. He knew what she has learned by responding to the call from the Master. In His service the Holy Ghost comes as a companion to those who try to do the best they can. She must have felt that as she stood before the parents and when she saw the students vote with their feet. What looked hard, almost impossible under her own power, became a joy in the strength of the Lord.

When she reads and ponders over the scriptures and prays to prepare for those classes, she knows that the Savior has asked the Father to send her the Holy Ghost, just as He promised His disciples He would at the Last Supper, when He

knew what trials they would face and that He must leave them. He did not leave them comfortless. He promised them the Holy Ghost, and He promises it to us in His service. So whenever the invitation to serve comes, take it. It brings with it help to pass tests far beyond those of that call.

Now, not all have formal calls. But every disciple serves the Master by bearing testimony and being kind to people around them. All have promised in the waters of baptism to do that. And all will gain the companionship of the Spirit as they persist in keeping their commitments with God.

### **Blessings from service**

In the Master's service, you will come to know and love Him. You will, if you persevere in prayer and faithful service, begin to sense that the Holy Ghost has become a companion. Many of us have for a period given such service and felt that companionship. If you think back on that time, you will remember that there were changes in you. The temptation to do evil seemed to lessen. The desire to do good increased. Those who knew you best and loved you may have said, "You have become more kind, more patient. You don't seem to be the same person."

You weren't the same person because the Atonement of Jesus Christ is real. And the promise is real that we can become new, changed, and better. And we can become stronger for the tests of life. We then go in the strength of the Lord, a strength developed in His service. He goes with us. And in time we become His tested and strengthened disciples.

You will then notice a change in your prayers. They will become more fervent and more frequent. The words you speak will have a different meaning to you. By commandment we always pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. But you will feel a greater confidence as you pray to the Father, knowing that you go to Him

as a trusted and proven disciple of Jesus Christ. The Father will grant you greater peace and strength in this life and with it a happy anticipation of hearing the words, when the test of life is over, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."<sup>8</sup>

I know that God the Father lives. I testify that He hears and answers our every prayer. I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, paid the price of all of our sins and that He wants us to come to Him. I know that the Father and the Son want us to pass the tests of life. I testify that They have prepared the way for us. Through the Restoration of the gospel in the last days, the way is made clear for us. We can know the commandments. We have the right to claim the promise of the companionship of the Holy Ghost in the true Church of Jesus Christ. And we can endure well. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Psalm 37:39.
2. Abraham 3:25.
3. 2 Nephi 31:20.
4. 3 Nephi 18:18–21.
5. Moroni 10:3–5.
6. 3 Nephi 10:6.
7. 3 Nephi 18:22.
8. Matthew 25:21.

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The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

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### **President Faust**

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wayne S. Peterson of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Your personal influence

My dear brothers and sisters, both within my view and assembled throughout the world, I seek an interest in your prayers and your faith as I respond to the assignment and privilege to address you.

More than 40 years ago, when President David O. McKay extended to me a call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he warmly welcomed me with a heartfelt smile and a tender embrace. Among the sacred counsel he extended was the declaration, “There is one responsibility that no one can evade. That is the effect of one’s personal influence.”

The calling of the early Apostles reflected the influence of the Lord. When He sought a man of faith, He did not select him from the throng of the self-righteous who were found regularly in the synagogue. Rather, He called him from among the fishermen of Capernaum. Peter, Andrew, James, and John heard the call, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”<sup>1</sup> They followed. Simon, man of doubt, became Peter, Apostle of faith.

When the Savior was to choose a missionary of zeal and power, He found him not among His advocates but amidst His adversaries. Saul of Tarsus—the persecutor—became Paul the proselyter. The Redeemer chose imperfect men to teach the way to perfection. He did so then; He does so now.

He calls you and me to serve Him here below and sets us to the task He would have us fulfill. The commitment is total. There is no conflict of conscience.

As we follow that Man of Galilee—even the Lord Jesus Christ—our personal influence will be felt for good wherever we are, whatever our callings.

Our appointed task may appear insignificant, unnecessary, unnoticed. Some may be tempted to question:

“Father, where shall I work today?”  
And my love flowed warm and free.  
Then he pointed out a tiny spot  
And said, “Tend that for me.”  
I answered quickly, “Oh no, not that!  
Why, no one would ever see,  
No matter how well my work was done.  
Not that little place for me.”  
And the word he spoke, it was not  
stern; . . .  
“Art thou working for them or for me?  
Nazareth was a little place,  
And so was Galilee.”<sup>2</sup>

### Service in the home

The family is the ideal place for teaching. It is also a laboratory for learning. Family home evening can bring spiritual growth to each member.

“The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions.”<sup>3</sup> Such truth has been taught by many Presidents of the Church.

It is in the home where fathers and mothers can teach provident living to their children. Sharing of tasks and helping one another set a pattern for future families as children grow, marry, and leave home. The lessons learned in the home are those that last the longest. President Gordon B. Hinckley continues to stress the avoidance of unnecessary debt, the fallacy of living beyond our means, and the temptation to let our wants become our necessities.

The Apostle Paul’s exhortation to his beloved Timothy provides the counsel that will enable our personal influence to find lodgment in the hearts of those with whom

we associate: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>4</sup>

### **A dedicated Sunday School teacher**

When I was a boy, our family lived in the Sixth-Seventh Ward of the Pioneer Stake. The ward population was rather transient, which resulted in an accelerated rate of turnover with respect to the teachers in the Sunday School. As boys and girls we would just become acquainted with a particular teacher and grow to appreciate him or her when the Sunday School superintendent would visit the class and introduce a new teacher. Disappointment filled each heart, and a breakdown of discipline resulted.

Prospective teachers, hearing of the unsavory reputation of our particular class, would graciously decline to serve or suggest the possibility of teaching a different class where the students were more manageable. We took delight in our newly found status and determined to live up to the fears of the faculty.

One Sunday morning a lovely young lady accompanied the superintendent into the classroom and was presented to us as a teacher who requested the opportunity to teach us. We learned that she had been a missionary and loved young people. Her name was Lucy Gertsch. She was beautiful, soft-spoken, and interested in us. She asked each class member to introduce himself, and then she asked questions which gave her an understanding and insight into the background of each. She told us of her girlhood in Midway, Utah, and as she described that beautiful valley she made its beauty live within us and we desired to visit the green fields she loved so much.

When Lucy taught, she made the scriptures actually live. We became personally acquainted with Samuel, David, Jacob, Nephi, Joseph Smith, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our gospel scholarship grew.

Our deportment improved. Our love for Lucy Gertsch knew no bounds.

### **A lesson in sacrifice**

We undertook a project to save nickels and dimes for what was to be a gigantic Christmas party. Sister Gertsch kept a careful record of our progress. As boys with typical appetites, we converted in our minds the monetary totals to cakes, cookies, pies, and ice cream. This was to be a glorious event. Never before had any of our teachers even suggested a social event like this was to be.

The summer months faded into autumn. Autumn turned to winter. Our party goal had been achieved. The class had grown. A good spirit prevailed.

None of us will forget that gray morning when our beloved teacher announced to us that the mother of one of our classmates had passed away. We thought of our own mothers and how much they meant to us. We felt sincere sorrow for Billy Devenport in his great loss.

The lesson this Sunday was from the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 35: “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” At the conclusion of a well-prepared lesson, Lucy Gertsch commented on the economic situation of Billy’s family. These were Depression times, and money was scarce. With a twinkle in her eyes, she asked, “How would you like to follow this teaching of our Lord? How would you feel about taking our party fund and, as a class, giving it to the Devenports as an expression of our love?” The decision was unanimous. We counted so carefully each penny and placed the total sum in a large envelope. A beautiful card was purchased and inscribed with our names.

This simple act of kindness welded us together as one. We learned through our own experience that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.



The years have flown. The old chapel is gone, a victim of industrialization. The boys and girls who learned, who laughed, who grew under the direction of that inspired teacher of truth have never forgotten her love or her lessons. Her personal influence for good was contagious.

### **The influence of President Kimball**

A General Authority whose personal influence was felt far and wide was the late President Spencer W. Kimball. He really made a difference in the lives of countless individuals.

When I was a bishop, the telephone rang one day, and the caller identified himself as Elder Spencer W. Kimball. He said, "Bishop Monson, in your ward is a trailer court, and in a little trailer in that court—the smallest trailer of all—is a sweet Navajo widow, Margaret Bird. Would you have your Relief Society president visit her and invite her to come to Relief Society and to participate with the sisters?" We did. Margaret Bird came and found a warm welcome.

Elder Kimball called on another occasion. "Bishop Monson," he said, "I have learned that there are two Samoan boys living in a downtown hotel. They're going to get in trouble. Will you make them members of your ward?"

I found these two boys at midnight sitting on the steps of the hotel playing ukuleles and singing. They became members of our ward. Eventually each of them married in the temple and served valiantly. Their influence for good was widespread.

### **The influence of two dedicated women**

When I was first called as a bishop, I discovered that our record for subscriptions to the *Relief Society Magazine* in the Sixth-Seventh Ward had been at a low ebb. Prayerfully we analyzed the names of individuals whom we could call to be magazine representative. The inspiration

dictated that Elizabeth Keachie should be given the assignment. As her bishop, I approached her with the task. She responded, "Bishop Monson, I'll do it."

Elizabeth Keachie was of Scottish descent, and when she replied, "I'll do it," one knew she indeed would. She and her sister-in-law, Helen Ivory—neither more than five feet tall—commenced to walk the ward, house by house, street by street, and block by block. The result was phenomenal. We had more subscriptions to the *Relief Society Magazine* than had been recorded by all the other units of the stake combined.

### *Covering the final two blocks*

I congratulated Elizabeth Keachie one Sunday evening and said to her, "Your task is done."

She replied, "Not yet, Bishop. There are two square blocks we have not yet covered."

When she told me which blocks they were, I said, "Oh, Sister Keachie, no one lives on those blocks. They are totally industrial."

"Just the same," she said, "I'll feel better if Nell and I go and check them ourselves."

On a rainy day she and Nell covered those final two blocks. On the first one she found no home, nor did she on the second. She and Sister Ivory paused, however, at a driveway which was muddy from a recent storm. Sister Keachie gazed about 100 feet down the driveway, which was adjacent to a machine shop, and there noticed a garage. This was not a normal garage, however, in that there was a curtain at the window.

She turned to her companion and said, "Nell, shall we go and investigate?"

The two sweet sisters then walked down the muddy driveway 40 feet to a point where the entire view of the garage could be seen. Now they noticed a door

which had been cut into the side of the garage, which door was unseen from the street. They also noticed that there was a chimney with smoke rising from it.

Elizabeth Keachie knocked at the door. A man 68 years of age, William Ringwood, answered. They then presented their story concerning the need of every home having the *Relief Society Magazine*. William Ringwood replied, "You'd better ask my father."

Ninety-four-year-old Charles W. Ringwood then came to the door and also listened to the message. He subscribed.

### *The fruits of their efforts*

Elizabeth Keachie reported to me the presence of these two men in our ward. When I requested their membership certificates from Church headquarters, I received a call from the Membership Department at the Presiding Bishopric's Office. The clerk said, "Are you sure you have living in your ward Charles W. Ringwood?"

I replied that I did, whereupon she reported that the membership certificate for him had remained in the "lost and unknown" file of the Presiding Bishopric's Office for the previous 16 years.

On Sunday morning Elizabeth Keachie and Nell Ivory brought to our priesthood meeting Charles and William Ringwood. This was the first time they had been inside a chapel for many years. Charles Ringwood was the oldest deacon I had ever met. His son was the oldest male member holding no priesthood I had ever met.

It became my opportunity to ordain Brother Charles Ringwood a teacher and then a priest and finally an elder. I shall never forget his interview with respect to seeking a temple recommend. He handed me a silver dollar, which he took from an old, worn leather coin purse, and said, "This is my fast offering."

I said, "Brother Ringwood, you owe no fast offering. You need it yourself."

"I want to receive the blessings, not retain the money," he responded.

It was my opportunity to take Charles Ringwood to the Salt Lake Temple and to attend with him the endowment session.

Within a few months, Charles W. Ringwood passed away. At his funeral service I noticed his family sitting on the front rows in the mortuary chapel, but I noticed also two sweet women sitting near the rear of the chapel, Elizabeth Keachie and Helen Ivory.

As I gazed upon those two faithful and dedicated women and contemplated their personal influence for good, the promise of the Lord filled my very soul:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."<sup>5</sup>

### **The influence of the Savior**

There is one, above all others, whose personal influence covers the continents, spans the oceans, and penetrates the hearts of true believers. He atoned for the sins of mankind.

I testify that He is a teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel, even the risen Lord, who declared:

"I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and the life of the world."<sup>6</sup>

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father."<sup>7</sup>

As His witness, I testify to you that He lives! In His holy name—even Jesus Christ, the Savior—amen.

## NOTES

1. Matthew 4:19.
2. Meade MacGuire, "Father, Where Shall I Work Today?" in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, comp. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 152.
3. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
4. 1 Timothy 4:12.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–6.
6. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.

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The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Wayne S. Peterson offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 174th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 3, 2004, at 2:00 p.m. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake. Vanja Watkins directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

**President James E. Faust**

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake, under the direction of Vanja Watkins, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Dearest Children, God Is Near You." The invocation will then be offered by Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

Elder L. Whitney Clayton offered the invocation.

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**President Faust**

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies for your sustaining vote. Brother Wesley L. Jones, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2003.

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The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor may please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Authority Seventies:

Adolfo Ávalos, Lowell C. Barber, David J. Barnett, R. Michael Duffin, Rowland E. Elvidge, Silvio Geschwandtner, Brent H. Koyle, A. Roger Merrill, J. Michael Moeller, Adrian Ochoa, Lindon J.

Robison. All who wish to join in expressing appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks as the Sunday School general presidency Elders Merrill J. Bateman, John H. Groberg, and Val R. Christensen; and as the Young Men general presidency Elders F. Melvin Hammond, Lynn G. Robbins, and Donald L. Hallstrom. All who can join in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder John H. Groberg as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies:

Jorge M. Alvarado, Homero S. Amato, John S. Anderson, Jorge D. Arrevilaga, A. Venâncio Caleira, Gabriel A. Campos, Mario L. Carlos, John J. Chipman, LeGrand R. Curtis Jr., César A. Dávila, Mosiah S. Delgado, Keith R. Edwards, J. Roger Fluhman, Luiz C. França, Manuel Gonzalez, Tohru Hotta, Bin Kikuchi, Yong Hwan Lee, Alfredo Heliton de Lemos, Domingos S. Linhares, Alexander A. Nuñez, Melvin R. Perkins, James C. Perry, Errol S. Phippen, John C. Pingree, Neil E. Pitts, Dinar M. Reyes, Jorge A. Rojas, Eric B. Shumway, Joseph W. Sitati, Terrence C. Smith, Lowell M. Snow, Michael J. Teh, Stanley Wan, and Allen P. Young. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

With a recent decision that members of the Quorums of the Seventy not serve in the general presidencies of the Sunday School and Young Men, it is proposed that we sustain A. Roger Merrill as general president of the Sunday School, with Daniel K. Judd as first counselor and William D. Oswald as second counselor.

It is also proposed that we sustain Charles W. Dahlquist as general president of the Young Men, with Dean Reid Burgess as first counselor and Michael An-

tone Neider as second counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor may please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We now ask the newly called members of the Sunday School and Young Men general presidencies to take their places on the stand. We note, however, that William D. Oswald is currently serving as president of the Russia Vladivostok Mission and is therefore not in attendance.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2003

**Wesley L. Jones**

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an auditing department, which performs its work independently from all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consist of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

By charge from the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments and operations worldwide. The Church Auditing Department has access to all systems, records, personnel, and properties necessary to audit contributions, expenditures, and Church resources. Professional financial and operational auditing standards govern the performance of audit work. Risk is the primary factor guiding the selection of audits.

The Council on the Disposition of the Tithes is responsible for, and for the year 2003 authorized, the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. Under direction of this council, accountability for

contributions, expenditures, and Church resources is controlled through each department's management and through the Church's Budget and Finance Departments. Administration of funds by these management, budget, and finance groups is audited and reported.

Based upon our audits, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and Church resources used during the year 2003 have been administered in accordance with approved budget guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

Financial activities of Church-affiliated organizations, which are operated separately from the Church, were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2003. Independent public accounting firms audited the financial statements and corresponding controls in these organizations. These organizations include, among others, Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries and the Church's institutions of higher education, including Brigham Young University. Nevertheless, the Church Auditing Department did verify that appropriate reporting of these public accounting firms' audit results occurred with each organization's audit committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
Church Auditing Department  
Wesley L. Jones  
Managing Director

# Church Statistical Report for 2003

## F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2003:

### Number of Church units

Stakes .....	2,624
Districts .....	644
Missions .....	337
Wards and branches .....	26,237

### Church membership

Total membership .....	11,985,254
Increase in children of record during 2003 .....	99,457
Converts baptized during 2003 ..	242,923

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	56,237
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## Temples

Temples dedicated during 2003 .....	2
(Brisbane Australia, Redlands California)	
Temples in operation .....	116

### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Jacob de Jager*, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder Andrew Wayne Peterson*, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder Robert L. Simpson*, an emeritus General Authority; *Sister Elaine Cannon*, former Young Women general president; *Brother Roy M. Darley*, former Tabernacle organist.

### President Faust

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, also of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Roots and branches

Each time we experience security checks at an airport, we are asked to show photographic identification. We understand the need and comply, knowing that it is necessary and helpful. But I submit my photograph as evidence of my true identity somewhat apologetically. If someone were to examine my passport photo and say that it's a good likeness, I would know it's time to go home. But I feel apologetic for another reason. The photo shows nothing about my roots and branches. They are important parts of my identity. Could you tell much about a tree by looking at a photograph of only its trunk? No! Roots and branches of trees provide much more in-

formation. So it is with us both *personally* and with *our religion*.

### Personal roots

Personal roots are really important. Sister Nelson and I know a family that proudly display evidence of their ancestral roots with large paintings portrayed on the *outside* walls of their home. Beautiful artwork there depicts distinctive patterns of identity for both of their family lines.

When relatives gather around a new baby, one inevitably hears comments such as "She has red hair, just like her mother" or "He has a dimple in his chin, just like his father."

Each of us has ancestral roots. Each man has received some genetic markers that are just like those of his father. Each woman has received some genetic markers that are just like those of her mother.<sup>1</sup> In addition, each of us has received other genetic gifts that make us unique.

Because we have a spirit as well as a physical body,<sup>2</sup> we also have spiritual roots that go way back. They shape our values, our beliefs, and our faith. Spiritual roots guide our commitment to the ideals and teachings of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Children have a natural desire to emulate the examples of their parents. Generally, boys incline toward the attitudes and work of their fathers; girls aspire to live as their mothers do. And you parents, don't be too surprised if, sometime along the way, your children become better than you.

Personal roots, physical and spiritual, merit gratitude. For my life, I am grateful to my Creator as well as to my dear parents and progenitors. I try to honor them by learning of them and serving them in the temple.<sup>4</sup> Parents have a responsibility to share knowledge of their personal roots with their children and grandchildren. Learning their history together unifies a family.

### **Religious roots**

We also need to know the roots of our religion. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, though officially organized in 1830, has been restored from roots that also go way back. Truths from previous dispensations have now been gathered, amplified, and clarified.<sup>5</sup> For us as parents and teachers, we have an excellent teaching resource in the Articles of Faith. Written by the Prophet Joseph Smith,<sup>6</sup> this document refers to many doctrines that undergird our religion. It mentions the Godhead, moral agency, the Fall of Adam, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It spells out the foundational prin-

ciples and ordinances of faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. It addresses matters of priesthood authority and organization. It notes as sacred scripture the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, and an open canon of continuing revelation from God. And it proclaims the actuality of the gathering of Israel.<sup>7</sup> What a treasure-house of truth is this precious document as we teach of our religious roots.

Other revealed doctrines at the root of our religion include the Creation, the Resurrection, the law of tithing, prayer, and the consummate blessings of the temple. As we teach of these doctrines, we realize how very firm is our foundation. As we apply these doctrines in our lives, the roots of our religion become part of our own spiritual strength.

Converts need to strengthen their religious roots. President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught that each convert needs a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing by the good word of God. With such roots to support them and their children, precious converts become pioneers for their own families to follow.

Unfortunately some members of faithful families drift away because their own roots are weak. My heart aches when I learn of those who turn from the faith of their pioneer predecessors. One professionally acclaimed friend and gifted son of faithful ancestors has allowed one doctrinal doubt to dim his view of the fulness of the gospel and drive an ever-widening wedge between him and the temple. Another acquaintance, a sweet sister with illustrious pioneer progenitors, now politely states that she is not a "practicing member" of the Church.

Have these dear people become so fashionable that they have forgotten their roots? Have they forgotten what the Restoration really means and what it cost? Have they forgotten their pioneer heritage and their lineage as declared in patriarchal

blessings? For a few fleeting favors now, would they forget and forfeit eternal life? Oblivious to the roots that have blessed them, they no longer enjoy the spiritual sparkle of Saints engaged in the work of Almighty God.

Their noble ancestors “were brought to the knowledge of the truth . . . according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God.” Their forebears “were converted unto the Lord [and] never did fall away.”<sup>8</sup> How will those progenitors feel about the drift of their descendants? Their disappointment will likely turn to sorrow, for fruit detached from roots cannot long survive.

The Lord issued this solemn warning: “After ye have been nourished by the good word of God . . . , will ye reject these words . . . of the prophets; and will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, . . . and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, . . . and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which [has] been laid for you?

“ . . . The resurrection . . . will bring you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God.”<sup>9</sup>

I plead with each of us to heed that sacred warning.

### Personal branches

Just as our roots determine to a significant degree who we are, our branches are also an important extension of our identity. Personal branches bear the fruit of our loins.<sup>10</sup> Scriptures teach, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”<sup>11</sup> Earlier in life, Sister Nelson and I often met young people who said they felt like they knew us because they knew our children. Now we are greeted fondly by those who know us because they know our grandchildren.

### Religious branches

In much the same way, our religion is known by the fruit of its branches. Re-

cently I met with some government officials from a land far from here who were deeply impressed with the Church and its efforts throughout the world. They liked our teachings about the family and wanted copies of our proclamation to the world and guidebooks for family home evening. They wanted to know more about our welfare program and humanitarian help. We complied as we could and then shifted attention from *what* we do to *why* we do it. I explained with an analogy to a tree. “You are attracted by various fruits of our faith,” I said. “They are plentiful and powerful. But you cannot savor this fruit unless you know the tree that produces it. And you cannot understand the tree unless you comprehend its roots. With our religion, you cannot have the fruits without the roots.” This they understood.

Fruits from the branching tree of the gospel include “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, [and] faith.”<sup>12</sup> President Harold B. Lee once said: “Beautiful, luscious fruit does not grow unless the roots of the . . . tree have been planted in rich, fertile soil and unless due care is given to proper pruning, cultivation, and irrigation. So likewise the luscious fruits of virtue and chastity, honesty, temperance, integrity, and fidelity are not to be found growing in that individual whose life is not founded on a firm testimony of the truths of the gospel and of the life and the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

The fruits of the gospel are delicious to those who obey the Lord. We pursue an education knowing that “the glory of God is intelligence.”<sup>14</sup> The blessing of tithing comes by paying tithing.<sup>15</sup> Rewards are reaped from the Word of Wisdom by obedience to it.<sup>16</sup> We learn from experience borne of gospel living that prayer, honoring the Sabbath day, and partaking of the sacrament protect us from the bondage of sin. We shun pornography and immorality, knowing that the peace of personal purity



can be ours only as we live according to the laws of the gospel.

The Lord gave this promise and commandment: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, ye are the branches.”<sup>17</sup> Simply summarized, life’s greatest blessings will come to us if our love of Jesus Christ is rooted deeply in our hearts.<sup>18</sup>

### Divinity is rooted in each of us

Personal identity is much more than a passport photograph. We also have roots and branches. Divinity is rooted in each of us. “We all are the work of [our Creator’s] hand.”<sup>19</sup> We are eternal beings. In premortal realms, we brethren were foreordained for our priesthood responsibilities.<sup>20</sup> Before the foundation of the world, women were prepared that they may bear children and glorify God.<sup>21</sup>

We came to this mortal experience to acquire a body, to be tried and tested.<sup>22</sup> We are to form families and be sealed in holy temples, with joy and loving relationships that endure eternally. To these everlasting truths we are personally rooted.

Branches of our families and of the gospel bear fruit to enrich our lives. God’s work and His glory—“to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”—can become ours.<sup>23</sup> We can dwell with Him and with our families forever. Those blessings will be granted to the faithful in His own way and time.<sup>24</sup>

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Joseph Smith is the revelator and prophet of this last dispensation. The Book of Mormon is true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom established once again upon the earth. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His living prophet. If rooted to these truths, the fruit of our branches will remain.<sup>25</sup> I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In addition to the genetic information each child receives from his or her mother and father, a small set of mitochondrial DNA comes from the mother to both her son(s) and her daughter(s).
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
3. See Ephesians 3:14–19; Colossians 2:6–7.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
6. The Articles of Faith were included in a letter to Mr. John Wentworth, editor and proprietor of a Chicago newspaper; first published in the *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 1, 1842; see *Ensign*, July 2002, 26–32.
7. This document also mentions gifts of the Spirit that enlighten the lives of members of the Church. It foretells of great events of the latter days, such as the restoration of the ten tribes, the establishment of Zion, and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon a renewed earth. It includes principles of freedom of worship, tolerance, and obedience to law. And it concludes with an expression pertaining to our perception of life and of lofty personal ideals.
8. Alma 23:6.
9. Jacob 6:7–9.
10. See, for example, 2 Nephi 3:6–7.
11. Matthew 7:20; 3 Nephi 14:20; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:25.
12. Galatians 5:22.
13. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 218–19.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
15. See Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
17. John 15:3–5.
18. See Ephesians 3:17.
19. Isaiah 64:8.
20. See Alma 13:1–5.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:63.
22. “Even as Abraham” (D&C 101:4). See also Hebrews 11:17.
23. Moses 1:39.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:68. When any blessing is obtained from God, “it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).
25. See John 15:16.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Dedicated servants of the Lord

In earlier years the Brethren often reported their missions in general conference. I realize this is 2004, not 1904, but I wish to invoke the spirit of that earlier practice and reflect on some of the wonderful things Sister Holland and I are experiencing in Latin America. In doing so I hope to make general application to all of you, wherever you may live or serve.

First of all I would like to thank every missionary who has ever labored in this transcendent latter-day undertaking we have been given. The rolling forth of the restored gospel is a miracle in every sense of the word, and not the least of the miracle is that a significant portion of it rolls forward on the shoulders of 19-year-olds! As we have seen your sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters (and in some cases your parents and grandparents!) faithfully laboring in Chile, I have pictured the tens of thousands of others like them we have met all over the world. Clean, clear, bright-eyed missionaries, laboring two-by-two, have become a living symbol of this Church everywhere. They themselves are the first gospel message their investigators encounter—and what a message that is. Everyone knows who they are, and those of us who know them the best love them the most.

### Sacrifices of missionaries

I wish you could meet the sister called to serve with us from her native Argentina. Wanting to do everything possible to finance her own mission, she sold her violin, her most prized and nearly sole earthly possession. She said simply, “God will bless me with another violin after I have blessed His children with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

I wish you could meet the Chilean elder who, living without family in a boarding school, happened upon a Book of Mormon

and started reading it that very evening. Reminiscent of Parley P. Pratt’s experience, he read insatiably—nonstop through the night. With the breaking of day, he was overwhelmed with a profound sense of peace and a new spirit of hope. He determined to find out where this book had come from and who had written its marvelous pages. Thirteen months later he was on a mission.

I wish you could meet the marvelous young man who came to us from Bolivia, arriving with no matching clothing and shoes three sizes too large for him. He was a little older because he was the sole breadwinner in his home, and it had taken some time to earn money for his mission. He raised chickens and sold the eggs door-to-door. Then, just as his call finally came, his widowed mother faced an emergency appendectomy. Our young friend gave every cent of the money he had earned for his mission to pay for his mother’s surgery and postoperative care, then quietly rounded up what used clothing he could from his friends and arrived at the MTC in Santiago on schedule. I can assure you that his clothes now match, his shoes now fit, and both he and his mother are safe and sound, temporally as well as spiritually.

And so they come, from your homes all over the world. Included in such a long list of dedicated servants of the Lord is an increasing number of senior couples who make an indispensable contribution to the work. How we love and need couples in virtually every mission of this Church! Those of you who can, put away your golf clubs, don’t worry about the stock market, realize that your grandchildren will still be your grandchildren when you return—and go! We promise you the experience of a lifetime.

### Faithfulness of Church members

Let me say something of the marvelous members of the Church themselves. In the

reorganization of a rather far-flung stake recently, I felt the Lord's prompting to call a man to the stake presidency who, I had been told, owned a bicycle but no automobile. Many leaders across the Church don't have cars, but I was nevertheless worried about what that might mean for this man in this particular stake. In my terminally ill Spanish I pursued the interview, then said, "*Hermano, ¿no tiene un auto?*" With a smile and not a second's hesitation he replied, "*No tengo un auto; pero yo tengo pies, yo tengo fe.*" ("I do not have a car, but I do have feet and I do have faith.") He then said he could ride the bus, ride his bicycle, or walk, "*como los misioneros,*" he smiled—"like the missionaries." And so he does.

Just eight weeks ago I was holding a mission district conference on the island of Chiloé, an interior location in the south of Chile that gets few visitors. Imagine the responsibility I felt in addressing these beautiful people when it was pointed out to me that a very elderly man seated near the front of the chapel had set out on foot at five o'clock that morning, walking for four hours to be in his seat by nine o'clock for a meeting that was not scheduled to begin until eleven o'clock. He said he wanted to get a good seat. I looked into his eyes, thought of times in my life when I had been either too casual or too late, and thought of Jesus's phrase, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."<sup>1</sup>

### **Sacrifices to go to the temple**

The Punta Arenas Chile Stake is the Church's southernmost stake anywhere on this planet, its outermost borders stretching toward Antarctica. Any stake farther south would have to be staffed by penguins. For the Punta Arenas Saints it is a 4,200-mile round-trip bus ride to the Santiago temple. For a husband and wife it can take up to 20 percent of an annual local income just for the transportation alone. Only 50 people can be accommodated on the bus, but for every excursion

250 others come out to hold a brief service with them the morning of their departure.

Pause for a minute and ask yourself when was the last time you stood on a cold, windswept parking lot adjacent to the Strait of Magellan just to sing with, pray for, and cheer on their way those who were going to the temple, hoping your savings would allow you to go next time? One hundred ten hours, 70 of those on dusty, bumpy, unfinished roads looping through Argentina's wild Patagonia. What does 110 hours on a bus feel like? I honestly don't know, but I do know that some of us get nervous if we live more than 110 miles from a temple or if the services there take more than 110 minutes. While we are teaching the principle of tithing to, praying with, and building ever more temples for just such distant Latter-day Saints, perhaps the rest of us can do more to enjoy the blessings and wonder of the temple regularly when so many temples are increasingly within our reach.

### **"Abide in me"**

And that leads me to my final point. For the Church at large, we have so many things to associate in our minds with the visionary ministry of President Gordon B. Hinckley, including (perhaps especially) the vast expansion of temples and temple building. But I dare say for those of us on this rostrum, it is likely that we will remember him at least as emphatically for his determination to retain in permanent activity the converts who join this Church. No modern prophet has addressed this issue more directly nor expected more from us in seeing that it happen. With a twinkle in his eye and a hand smacking the table in front of him, he said to the Twelve recently, "Brethren, when my life is finished and the final services are concluding, I am going to rise up as I go by, look each of you in the eye, and say, 'How are we doing on retention?'"

This subject brings us full circle, linking the kind of true, deep conversion the missionaries are striving to bring with the greater commitment and devotion being seen in wonderful members all over the Church.

Christ said, "I am the true vine, and . . . ye are the branches."<sup>2</sup> "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."<sup>3</sup>

"Abide in me" is an understandable and beautiful enough concept in the elegant English of the King James Bible, but *abide* is not a word we use much anymore. So I gained even more appreciation for this admonition from the Lord when I was introduced to the translation of this passage in another language. In Spanish that familiar phrase is rendered *permaneced en mi*. Like the English verb *abide*, *permanecer* means "to remain, to stay," but even gringos like me can hear the root cognate there of "permanence." The sense of this, then, is "stay—but stay forever." That is the call of the gospel message to Chileans and everyone else in the world. Come, but come to remain. Come with conviction and endurance. Come permanently, for your sake and the sake of all the generations who must follow you, and we will help each other be strong to the very end.

### Stay aboard the Good Ship Zion

"He who picks up one end of the stick picks up the other," my marvelous mission president taught in his very first message to us.<sup>4</sup> And that is the way it is supposed to be when we join this, the true and living Church of the true and living God. When we join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we board the Good Ship Zion and sail with her wherever she goes until she comes into that millennial port. *We stay in the boat*, through squalls and stills, through storms and sunburn, because that is the only way to the promised

land. This Church is the Lord's vehicle for crucial doctrines, ordinances, covenants, and keys that are essential to exaltation, and one cannot be fully faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ without striving to be faithful in the Church, which is its earthly institutional manifestation. To new convert and longtime member alike, we declare in the spirit of Nephi's powerful valedictory exhortation:

"Ye have entered in by the gate; . . . [but] now, . . . after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; . . . press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, . . . and endure to the end, behold, thus . . . ye shall have eternal life."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing."<sup>6</sup> I testify that that is God's truth. Christ is everything to us, and we are to "abide" in Him permanently, unyieldingly, steadfastly, forever. For the fruit of the gospel to blossom and bless our lives, we must be firmly attached to Him, the Savior of us all, and to this, His Church, which bears His holy name. He is the vine that is our true source of strength and the only source of eternal life. In Him we not only will endure but also will prevail and triumph in this holy cause that will never fail us. May we never fail it nor fail Him, I pray in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 8:10.
2. John 15:1, 5.
3. John 15:4.
4. Marion D. Hanks quoting Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Living under Tension* (1941), 111.
5. 2 Nephi 31:18–20.
6. John 15:5.

### President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing "Let Us All Press On." Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric

will then address us, after which we shall hear from Elders W. Rolfe Kerr and Francisco J. Viñas of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Let Us All Press On.”

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## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### “Jesus, the very thought of thee”

Recently President Hinckley was overheard saying to a young couple newly married in the temple, “What a wonderful time to be alive and to be in love.” His optimistic outlook and nature are reassuring. They foster hope in an otherwise gloomy world. These are, however, more than mere expressions of a positive personality. A glimpse into the past will help illustrate what I mean.

In the early 12th century, the cleric Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, “a man of intense . . . faith,”<sup>1</sup> penned the following words:

Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far thy face to see  
And in thy presence rest.<sup>2</sup>

These lines speak of hope and joy and peace, though written in a time when much of the world lay blanketed in ignorance, impoverishment, and despair. These words capture the calm assurance that always accompanies the testimony of Jesus. This same assurance gives buoyancy and optimism to our beloved prophet and to all the faithful followers of Christ.

What, then, is this testimony of Jesus, how can it be acquired, and what will it do for those who receive it? The testimony of Jesus is the sure and certain knowledge, revealed to the spirit of a person through the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the living Son of the living God.<sup>3</sup>

Because the testimony of Jesus is God-given, it stands preeminent and is essential to a happy life. It is the fundamental prin-

ciple of our religion, and all other things pertaining to our faith are appendages to it.<sup>4</sup> President Hinckley reminds us:

“It is the privilege, it is the opportunity, it is the obligation of every Latter-day Saint to gain for himself or herself a certain knowledge . . . that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of all mankind. . . . That testimony . . . is the most precious possession that any of us can hold. . . .

“ . . . I am satisfied . . . that whenever a man has a true witness in his heart of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ all else will come together as it should.”<sup>5</sup>

Nurtured through righteous living, this testimony of Jesus becomes the governing force in all that a person does. Furthermore, it is available to everyone, for “God is no respecter of persons.”<sup>6</sup>

### Acquiring a testimony

Acquiring such a testimony does not, however, come without personal effort. One must *desire to know, study to learn, live to merit, and pray to receive*. When so pursued in humility and faith, the knowledge comes, and with this knowledge comes both the sweet assurance that all will be well and the inner strength to make it so.

#### *Desire to know*

The *desire to know* is the first step in one’s quest for a testimony of Jesus. The scriptures counsel, “If ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more

than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.”<sup>7</sup>

### *Study to learn*

A testimony of Jesus requires that the honest seeker *study to learn*. Said the Lord, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”<sup>8</sup>

From cover to cover, the Holy Bible teaches and testifies of Christ. He is Jehovah of the Old Testament, Messiah of the New.<sup>9</sup> The Book of Mormon, another testament of Him, was compiled, preserved, and brought forth for the express purpose of “convincing . . . Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”<sup>10</sup>

### *Live to merit*

Concurrent with one’s *desire* and *study*, one must *live to merit* such a testimony. The person who does what Jesus says comes to know who Jesus is. Said He:

“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Pray to receive*

Finally, the testimony of Jesus comes to those who *pray to receive* it. “Ask, and it shall be given you”<sup>12</sup> is the invitation that leads those who are humble and penitent to such knowledge. With this knowledge, the seeker also gains an understanding of the origin and purposes of life, opening vistas that would otherwise remain hidden.

For example, the Lord’s life did not begin in Bethlehem,<sup>13</sup> and ours did not begin at birth. In the premortal world, He stood as the stalwart, unwavering advocate of God’s eternal plan for His children,<sup>14</sup> and we were there. In the great War in

Heaven, it was by the power of the First-born that Lucifer was cast out,<sup>15</sup> and we helped champion the cause. Through God’s Only Begotten Son “the worlds are and were created,”<sup>16</sup> and we can therefore achieve our divine potential. As President J. Reuben Clark has said:

“It was not a novice, not an amateur, not a Being making a first trial, that came down in the beginning . . . and . . . made this world. . . .

“And if you think of this galaxy of ours having within it from the beginning perhaps . . . one million worlds, and multiply that by the number of millions of galaxies . . . that surround us, you will then get some view of who [Jesus Christ] is.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The divine mission of Jesus Christ**

In awe, we exult with the ancient cleric: Jesus, the very thought of Thee with wonder fills my breast.

As the literal offspring of God and being born of a mortal mother, the premortal Christ became the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. Though the fulness of His majesty, messiahship, and godhood came not at first, He “continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness,” and so can we.<sup>18</sup>

Angels attended Him, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, the woes of all mankind were carried by Him, and our sins can be forgiven through Him.<sup>19</sup>

This Jesus, who is called Christ, wrought out a perfect atonement for all mankind by His incomparable life, His suffering in Gethsemane, the shedding of His blood, His death upon the cross, and His glorious Resurrection. He conquered the grave, and because of Him, so will we.<sup>20</sup> “He is the greatest Being to be born on this earth. . . . He is Lord of lords, King of kings, . . . the Savior, . . . the Bright and Morning Star. . . . His name . . . is the only name under heaven [whereby] we can be saved.”<sup>21</sup> He is the Anointed One. Again

we exclaim: Jesus, the very thought of Thee with *reverence* fills my breast.

As the world could not overcome Him in the meridian of time, so the world cannot do without Him in our time, and neither can we. His purpose is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>22</sup> Hence, He came to the Prophet Joseph Smith, restored the priesthood, reestablished His Church, and again proclaimed the plan of redemption. Joseph saw Him, conversed with Him, and has left us this transcendent, poetic account of Him:

I beheld round the throne holy angels  
and hosts,  
And sanctified beings from worlds that  
have been,  
In holiness worshipping God and the  
Lamb,  
For ever and ever. Amen and amen.

And now after all of the proofs made  
of him,  
By witnesses truly, by whom he was  
known,  
This is mine, last of all, that he lives;  
yea, he lives!  
And sits at the right hand of God on  
his throne.

And I heard a great voice bearing  
record from heav’n,  
He’s the Saviour and only begotten  
of God;  
By him, of him, and through him, the  
worlds were all made,  
Even all that [careen] in the heavens  
so broad.

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first  
to the last,  
Are sav’d by the very same Saviour of  
ours;  
And, of course, are begotten God’s  
daughters and sons  
By the very same truths and the very  
same powers.<sup>23</sup>

## Witnesses of Christ

We have with us today the Lord’s duly ordained Apostles. True to their sacred commission as “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,”<sup>24</sup> they declare:

“Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.”<sup>25</sup>

Jesus, the very thought of Thee fills my heart with *inexpressible joy*. It controls every part of my being. My life, my loves, my ambitions are molded, enlivened, and given purpose because I know that Thou art the Christ, the Holy One.

I thank God for my testimony of Jesus and pray that all may be likewise blessed, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (1988), 167.
2. “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 141.
3. See Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11.
4. See *History of the Church*, 3:30.
5. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 647–48.
6. Acts 10:34; see also Doctrine and Covenants 1:35; 38:16.
7. Alma 32:27; italics added.
8. John 5:39.
9. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
10. Book of Mormon title page.
11. John 7:16–17.
12. See Matthew 7:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 4:7.
13. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles”; see also Moses 2:26.
14. See Abraham 3:22–27.

15. See Moses 4:1–3; Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–27.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24.
17. “Who Is Our Savior?” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1962, 798–99.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–20.
19. See Alma 7:11–13.
20. See Luke 24:36–39; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Alma 11:41–45; 3 Nephi 11:7–14.
21. Bible Dictionary, “Christ,” 633.
22. Moses 1:39.
23. “A Vision,” *Millennial Star*, Aug. 1843, 51; see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 65–66; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:21–24.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
25. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.”

## Elder W. Rolfe Kerr

### Prophets speak the words of Christ

I feel it a sacred honor and a privilege to have joined with members of the Church around the world in sustaining the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. We humbly declare that they are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). We testify that they “speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:3–4). The Savior said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). We declare to the world that these latter-day servants of the Lord speak the words of Christ.

### The Book of Mormon is the word of God

The Savior said, “Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). The Apostle Paul wrote to his trusted companion Timothy, saying, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). We declare to the world that the Book of Mormon is

scripture, given by inspiration of God. It too is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

We fervently declare that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated from ancient records by the gift and power of God. This ancient record was written and preserved to come forth in fulfillment of prophecy as a companion scripture to the Holy Bible, the two to be used as one in the hands of the Lord (see Ezekiel 37:16–20). In the Book of Mormon we are admonished to “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3). We testify that the Book of Mormon is a second witness of the life and mission of the Savior. It is, indeed, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” We declare that the Book of Mormon contains the words of Christ.

### Christ’s ministry in ancient America

Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Lord directed the ancient prophet Lehi to leave Jerusalem with his family and embark on a marvelous journey that would ultimately take them across the many waters to a land that would become a “promised land” to them. The Book of Mormon is the scriptural record of the sojourn of these people in ancient America. It contains the prophetic writings and



revelations given to these people. Included in these divine communications are many prophecies of the Savior's birth, His ministry, and His great atoning sacrifice. They describe His ultimate Crucifixion and Resurrection and foretell of His coming to that ancient American civilization. We read in the Book of Mormon that after His Resurrection and soon after His Ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ did truly manifest Himself unto them. Hear and feel with me the description of this marvelous event in history:

"Now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together. . . .

"And they were . . . conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

"And . . . while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and . . . they understood not the voice which they heard; . . . it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, . . . it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

"And . . . again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

"And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

"And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

"Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

"And . . . as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white

robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; . . .

"And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven" (3 Nephi 11:1–12).

The Savior blessed those people and taught them His glorious gospel just as He had done in Jerusalem. We are blessed to have within the pages of the Book of Mormon His words, even the very words of Christ, as spoken to that ancient civilization.

### **Words of Christ are a personal Liahona**

After Lehi and his family were commanded to leave Jerusalem, they were given a sacred instrument which worked as a compass for them, showing them the course that they should travel. We read that it worked only according to their faith in God. Alma, a Book of Mormon prophet, told his son Helaman that the compass was called "Liahona" (see Alma 37:38). He said:

"And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

“For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land.

“And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

“O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way” (Alma 37:43–46).

So we see, brethren and sisters, that the words of Christ can be a personal Liahona for each of us, showing us the way. Let us not be slothful because of the easiness of the way. Let us in faith take the words of Christ into our minds and into our hearts as they are recorded in sacred scripture and as they are uttered by living prophets, seers, and revelators. Let us with faith and diligence feast upon the words of Christ, for the words of Christ will be our spiritual Liahona telling us all things what we should do. Of this I bear solemn testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Francisco J. Viñas

### Establishing gospel principles in the home

In the general Relief Society meeting in September of 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: “I believe our problems, almost every one, arise out of the homes of the people. If there is to be reformation, if there is to be a change, if there is to be a return to old and sacred values, it must begin in the home. It is here that truth is learned, that integrity is cultivated, that self-discipline is instilled, and that love is nurtured” (“Walking in the Light of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99).

Among the old and sacred values to which we should return are the plain and simple principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These should be firmly established in our homes to ensure happiness in family life.

President Wilford Woodruff declared: “The Lord has a great many principles in store for us, and the greatest principles which he has for us are the most simple and plain. The first principles of the gospel which lead us unto eternal life are the simplest and yet none are more glorious or

important unto us” (“Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 1, 1857, 27).

It is precisely because these principles are plain and simple that many times they are not considered when there are challenges to face that affect family life. At times we have the tendency to think that the more serious the problem, the bigger and more complex the solution should be. That idea can lead us, for example, to seek help from people or institutions outside the home when in reality the most effective solution will come by applying the glorious principles of the gospel in our homes in the small actions and duties of everyday life. The scriptures remind us “that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

### Principles of successful families

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declare that “successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgive-

ness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

By analyzing these principles, we can see that the majority of them are related to and complement each other and that the power that makes it possible for them to be incorporated into our lives comes from the atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ.

These principles, once applied, will act as a light that will illuminate each member of the family and, in a progressive way, will lead us to integrate other related values and principles which will strengthen family relationships. We know that “he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

If we succeed in establishing and maintaining our families by applying these principles, we will be able to observe the powerful impact that these will have in situations that affect our homes day by day. Any hurts caused by the friction of living together will heal. Offenses will be forgiven. Pride and selfishness will be replaced by humility, compassion, and love.

The principles that we choose to incorporate into our lives will determine the spirit that we contribute in our relationships with others. When we adopt a principle, its influence radiates from us and can be felt by others.

Now more than ever, when we see that the family is at the center of attacks from the forces of evil—as in the days of the prophet Mormon, when “the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land” (Mormon 1:19)—it is necessary for us as parents to incorporate these principles into our lives in order to radiate their influence and for this influence to be perceived by our children.

## **Faith in Christ is built in the home**

I would now like to show how these principles can be put into practice, forming part of a process that will put the effects of the Atonement within the reach of individuals and families. This process begins with the first principle of the gospel: faith.

In a world of changing values where evil is called good and good evil (see Isaiah 5:20), the words declared by Mormon fill us with hope and confidence by teaching us that Jesus Christ “claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing” (Moroni 7:28).

That faith that causes us to cleave unto every good thing comes by hearing the word of God (see Romans 10:17), and this word is heard with more power in family home evening lessons and in family scripture study. There is no better place to build faith than in the home, where the lessons and practical applications are realized and lived day to day.

## **The Atonement and repentance**

It is in the home that one learns that faith is intimately related to the Atonement, “this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15).

Without the effects of the Atonement in our lives, it would be impossible to develop the type of faith necessary for repentance, and so we would remain outside the marvelous plan of mercy since “only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” (Alma 34:16).

Repentance—that change that takes place in the heart, that is born of love for the Lord, that leads us to move away from

sin and submit to His will—can “become effective and accepted by God” “only through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Repent, Repentance,” 206).

### **Baptism and the Holy Ghost**

Once God has accepted repentance, the process that we are describing leads us to participate in ordinances and the covenants associated with them, such as baptism and confirmation. The renewal of these covenants is brought about when we regularly and worthily partake of the sacrament, and then the remission of our sins is realized.

After receiving a remission of sins and striving to retain it through obedience to the commandments, we will receive, as described in the book of Moroni, meekness and lowliness of heart, which will allow the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter will fill us with hope and perfect love, love that will be maintained by the diligence we give to the principle of prayer (see Moroni 8:26).

The person who obtains meekness and lowliness of heart and who enjoys the company of the Holy Ghost will have no desire to offend or hurt others, nor will he feel affected by any offenses received from others. He will treat his spouse and children with love and respect and will have good relationships with everyone he associates with. In occupying positions of leadership in the Church, he will apply the same principles as he does in the home, showing that there is no difference between the person he is when within the walls of his own home and the person he is in his relationship with the members of the Church.

### **Vaccines to combat the disease of sin**

Principles like faith, repentance, love, forgiveness, and prayer, lived in the process I just described, become the best vac-

cine to combat the disease of sin, which can manifest itself in families in different ways, such as immorality, pride, envy, contention, abuse, and other practices that affect family relationships and that result in pain, deception, and the breakup of family ties.

The decision to incorporate them into our lives and the opportunity to begin the process whenever it may be necessary depends solely on our agency. It is a simple process that is within the reach of all. It is based on the fundamental principles of the gospel that have been and continue to be applied successfully by all those who put their trust in the Lord.

It is our duty to continue teaching them to a world that needs them more all the time, because:

“Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance” (2 Nephi 26:27).

I share with you my testimony that these principles are true. I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible to incorporate them into our lives. I know this because I am striving together with my family to live in accordance with them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake for their beautiful music which they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Follow-

ing his remarks, the choir will sing “Go Forth with Faith.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Steven E. Snow of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### **Beware of covetousness**

My beloved brethren and sisters, what a glorious event it is to attend conference. We find that the words spoken are words of inspiration, and it's a joy to be present.

I would like to talk about our heavenly debts and earthly debts. The Gospels record that nearly everywhere the Savior went, He was surrounded by multitudes of people. Some hoped that He would heal them; others came to hear Him speak. Others came for practical advice. Toward the end of His mortal ministry, some came to mock and ridicule Him and to clamor for His crucifixion.

One day a man approached the Savior and asked Him to intervene in a family dispute. “Master, speak to my brother,” he pleaded, “that he divide the inheritance with me.”

The Savior refused to take sides on this issue, but He did teach an important lesson. “Beware of covetousness,” He told him, “for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”<sup>1</sup>

Brothers and sisters, beware of covetousness. It is one of the great afflictions of these latter days. It creates greed and resentment. Often it leads to bondage, heartbreak, and crushing, grinding debt.

The number of marriages that have been shattered over money issues is staggering. The amount of heartbreak is great. The stress that comes from worry over

money has burdened families, caused sickness, depression, and even premature death.

### **Earthly debts**

In spite of the teachings of the Church from its earliest days until today, members sometimes fall victim to many unwise and foolish financial practices. Some continue to spend, thinking that somehow the money will become available. Somehow they will survive.

Far too often, the money hoped for does not appear.

Remember this: debt is a form of bondage. It is a financial termite. When we make purchases on credit, they give us only an illusion of prosperity. We think we own things, but the reality is, our things own us.

Some debt—such as for a modest home, expenses for education, perhaps for a needed first car—may be necessary. But never should we enter into financial bondage through consumer debt without carefully weighing the costs.

We have often heard that interest is a good servant but a terrible master. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. described it this way: “Interest never sleeps nor sickens nor dies; it never goes to the hospital; it works on Sundays and holidays; it never takes a vacation. . . . Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away

from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you.”<sup>2</sup>

The counsel from the other inspired prophets in our time on this subject is clear, and what was true 50 or 150 years ago is also true today.

President Heber J. Grant said, “From my earliest recollections, from the days of Brigham Young until now, I have listened to men standing in the pulpit . . . urging the people not to run into debt; and I believe that the great majority of all our troubles today is caused through the failure to carry out that counsel.”<sup>3</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Do not leave yourself or your family unprotected against financial storms. . . . Build up savings.”<sup>4</sup>

President Harold B. Lee taught, “Not only should we teach men to get out of debt but we should teach them likewise to stay out of debt.”<sup>5</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“Many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings. . . .

“ . . . I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.”<sup>6</sup>

My brothers and sisters, many have heeded this prophetic counsel. They live within their means, they honor the debts they have incurred, and they strive to reduce the burden they owe to others. We congratulate those who are doing so, for the day will come when they will reap the blessings of their efforts and understand the value of this inspired counsel.

However, others struggle when it comes to finances. Some are victims of adverse and often unforeseen events that have financially damaged them. Others are in financial bondage because they

have not learned to discipline themselves and control their impulses to spend. Consequently, they have made unwise financial choices.

### Five steps to financial freedom

May I suggest five key steps to financial freedom for your consideration.

*First, pay your tithing.*

Do you want the windows of heaven opened to you? Do you wish to receive blessings so great there is not room enough to receive them?<sup>7</sup> Always pay your tithing and leave the outcome in the hands of the Lord.

Obedience to God’s commandments is the foundation for a happy life. Surely we will be blessed with the gifts of heaven for our obedience. Failure to pay tithing by those who know the principle can lead to heartache in this life and perhaps sorrow in the next.

*Second, spend less than you earn.*

This is simple counsel but a powerful secret for financial happiness. All too often a family’s spending is governed more by their *yearning* than by their earning. They somehow believe that their life will be better if they surround themselves with an abundance of things. All too often all they are left with is avoidable anxiety and distress.

Those who live safely within their means know how much money comes in each month, and even though it is difficult, they discipline themselves to spend less than that amount.

Credit is so easy to obtain. In fact, it is almost thrust upon us. Those who use credit cards to overspend unwisely should consider eliminating them. It is much better that a plastic credit card should perish than a family dwindle and perish in debt.

*Third, learn to save.*

Remember the lesson of Joseph of Egypt. During times of prosperity, save up for a day of want.<sup>8</sup>

Too often people assume that they probably never will be injured, get sick, lose their jobs, or see their investments evaporate. To make matters worse, often people make purchases today based upon optimistic predictions of what they hope will happen tomorrow.

The wise understand the importance of saving today for a rainy day tomorrow. They have adequate insurance that will provide for them in case of illness or death. Where possible they store a year's supply of food, water, and other basic necessities of life. They set aside money in savings and investment accounts. They work diligently to reduce the debt they owe to others and strive to become debt free.

Brothers and sisters, the preparations you make today may one day be to you as the stored food was to the Egyptians and to Joseph's father's family.

*Fourth, honor your financial obligations.*

From time to time we hear stories of greed and selfishness that strike us with great sorrow. We hear of fraud, defaulting on loan commitments, financial deceptions, and bankruptcies.

We hear of fathers who financially neglect their own families. We say to men and women everywhere, if you bring children into the world, it is your solemn obligation to do all within your power to provide for them. No man is fit to be called a man who gathers around himself cars, boats, and other possessions while neglecting the sacred financial obligations he has to his own wife and children.

We are a people of integrity. We believe in honoring our debts and being honest in our dealings with our fellowmen.

Let me tell you the story of one man who sacrificed greatly to maintain his own financial integrity and honor.

In the 1930s Fred Snowberger opened the doors of a new pharmacy in northeastern Oregon. It had been his dream to own his own business, but the economic turn-

around he had hoped for never materialized. Eight months later, Fred closed the doors of his pharmacy for the last time.

Even though his business had failed, Fred was determined to repay the loan he had secured. Some wondered why he insisted on repaying the debt. Why didn't he simply declare bankruptcy and have the debt legally forgiven?

But Fred did not listen. He had said he would repay the loan, and he was determined to honor his word. His family made many of their own clothes, grew much of their food in their garden, and used everything they had until it was thoroughly worn out or used up. Rain or shine, Fred walked to and from his work each day. And every month, Fred paid what he could on the loan.

Years passed, and finally the wonderful day arrived when Fred made the last payment. He delivered it in person. The man who had loaned him the money wept, and with tears streaming down his face he said, "You not only paid back every penny, but you taught me what a man of character and honesty is."

To this day, nearly 70 years after Fred signed his name to that note, descendants of Fred and Erma Snowberger still tell this story with pride. This act of honor and nobility has lived through the decades as a cherished example of family integrity.

*Fifth, teach your children to follow your example.*

Too many of our youth get into financial difficulty because they never learned proper principles of financial common sense at home. Teach your children while they are young. Teach them that they cannot have something merely because they want it. Teach them the principles of hard work, frugality, and saving.

If you don't consider yourself informed well enough to teach them, all the more reason for you to begin learning. Abundant resources are available—from classes to books to other resources.

There are those among us who have been blessed abundantly with enough and to spare. Our Heavenly Father expects that we do more with our riches than build larger barns to hold them. Will you consider what more you can do to build the kingdom of God? Will you consider what more you can do to bless the lives of others and bring light and hope into their lives?

### Heavenly debts

We have spoken of earthly debts and our duty to repay them. But there are other debts—debts more eternal in nature—that are not so easy to repay. In fact, we will never be able to repay some of them. These are heavenly debts.

Our mothers and fathers gave us life and brought us into this world. They gave us the opportunity to obtain mortal bodies and experience the joys and sorrows of this bounteous earth. In many cases they set their own dreams and desires aside for the sake of their children. How fitting it is that we honor them and show by word and deed our love for them and our gratitude.

We also have a great debt to our ancestors, who have preceded us and who wait beyond the veil for those ordinances that will allow them to continue their eternal progression. This is a debt we can repay for them in our temples.

What a debt we owe to the Lord for restoring His divine Church and true gospel in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. From his youth until his martyrdom, he devoted his days to bringing to mankind the gospel of Jesus Christ that had been lost. We owe our deepest gratitude to him and to all men in this sacred calling who have been given the mantle to preside over His Church.

How can we ever repay the debt we owe to the Savior? He paid a debt He did not owe to free us from a debt we can never pay. Because of Him we will live forever.

Because of His infinite Atonement, our sins can be swept away, allowing us to experience the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life.<sup>9</sup>

Can such a gift have a price? Can we ever make compensation for such a gift? The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin taught “that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess . . . [and] serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.”<sup>10</sup>

### Treasures in heaven

We have earthly debts and heavenly debts. Let us be wise in dealing with each of them and ever keep in mind the words of the Savior. The scriptures tell us, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”<sup>11</sup> The riches of this world are as dust compared to the riches that await the faithful in the mansions of our Heavenly Father. How foolish is he who spends his days in the pursuit of things that rust and fade away. How wise is he who spends his days in the pursuit of eternal life.

Know within your hearts that Jesus the Christ lives. Be at peace, for as you draw near to Him, He will draw near to you. Let not your hearts be weary, but rejoice. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the gospel is restored once again. The heavens are not sealed. As in ancient days, we have a man who communicates with the Infinite. A prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, walks the earth in our day and at this time. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Luke 12:13, 15.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1938, 103.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 3.



4. *Pay Thy Debt, and Live . . .*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (Feb. 28, 1962), 10.
5. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 315.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53–54.
7. See Malachi 3:10.
8. See Genesis 41:47–57.

9. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
10. Mosiah 2:20–21.
11. Matthew 6:19–20.

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The choir sang “Go Forth with Faith.” Elder Steven E. Snow offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 174th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 3, 2004. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes. Douglas Brenchley, Don Keaton, and Ryan Eggett directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Faust opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries of the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from

the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, Don Keaton, and Ryan Eggett, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing “Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice.”

Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing “Beautiful Savior.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Mervyn B. Arnold of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Beautiful Savior.”

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## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Being stretched by a merciful Lord

Brethren, please allow me to reminisce informally and gratefully. Hopefully this will be done in a relaxed, almost conversational way by citing a few remembrances, a few of life's little lessons—nothing spectacular. There will also be several one-liners whose durability reflects their brevity. The focus of these remembrances is upon being stretched by a merciful Lord (see Moroni 10:3).

If just one of these remembrances can be “likened” unto yourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23), there might be a brief father and son discussion later on.

### Training of youth

Let's go back 60 years. The minutes of the Wandamere Ward of the Grant Stake for June 4, 1944, indicate the sacrament was administered by my friends Ward Jackson, Arthur Hicks, and me to a congregation of 141. Then it was off to war. In May of 1945, I was blessing the sacrament again—but in a foxhole on Okinawa for a congregation of only one—myself!

The training of my youth took over without fanfare—something only partially appreciated by me then—including abstaining from coffee in those same circumstances when water was scarce and highly chlorinated.

I do not know what lies ahead of you young men, but my advice would be to fasten your seat belts and hold on firmly to your principles!

In my Primary days we sang “‘Give,’ Said the Little Stream” (*Children's Songbook*, 236)—certainly sweet and motivating but not exactly theologically drenched. Today's children, as you know, sing the more spiritually focused “I'm Trying to Be like Jesus” (*Children's Songbook*, 78–79).

Back then, in family, neighborhood, ward, and school life, we were all poor together, but we didn't know it. We made room for each other to grow, to make dumb mistakes, to repent, and to begin to develop at least some spiritual reflexes. Today some anxious parents seem to insist on constantly pulling up the daisies to see how the roots are doing.

### Examples and influences

Young or old, my priesthood brothers, be grateful for people in your lives who love you enough to correct you, to remind you of your standards and possibilities, even when you don't want to be reminded.

A dear and now deceased friend said to me years ago when I had said something sardonic, “You could have gone all day without saying that.” His one-liner reproof was lovingly stated, illustrating how correction can be an act of affection.

When loved ones exemplify, it is especially memorable. My sister Lois, legally blind from birth, not only coped but served well as a public schoolteacher for 33 years. She had that same reflex possessed by those pioneer souls who quietly picked up their handcarts and headed west—a reflex we all need. So if various trials are allotted to you, partake of life's bitter cups, but without becoming bitter.

Soon after arriving home from World War II, I had “promises to keep” (Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”)—meaning going on a mission *now*. I grew tired of waiting for the bishop. And in some early ark-steadying, I went to the bishop's home and said I had saved the money and wanted to go, so let's “get this show on the road.” The good bishop hesitated and then said he'd been meaning to ask me about going.

Years later I would learn from that bishop's devoted ward clerk that the bishop had felt I needed a little more time with my family after having been away so far and for a tenth of my life. Hearing this, I chastised myself for having been too judgmental. (See Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* [2002], 129–30.)

No wonder the wise father of Elder Henry B. Eyring observed once how the Lord had a perfect Church until He let all of us inside!

### Teaching children with wisdom

Two relevant memories for young fathers. When I was such, I had just received a phone call telling me of a friend's death in an accident. I was sitting in the living room with tears streaking down my cheeks. Our young son, Cory, saw the tears as he passed in the hallway. I learned that he had anxiously assumed the tears were because he had disappointed me in some way. He didn't know about the phone call. Brethren, we underestimate how genuinely and frequently our children want to please us.

Having virtually no quantitative skills, I was seldom if ever able to help our children with math and scientific subjects. One day our high school daughter Nancy asked me for "a little help" regarding a Supreme Court case, *Fletcher v. Peck*. I was so eager to help after so many times of not being able to help. At last a chance to unload! Out came what I knew about *Fletcher v. Peck*. Finally my frustrated daughter said, "Dad, I need only a little help!" I was meeting my own needs rather than giving her "a little help."

We worship a Lord who teaches us precept by precept, brethren, so even when we are teaching our children the gospel, let's not dump the whole load of hay.

### Press forward in the gospel

In later years I saw a few leave the Church who could then never leave it alone. They used often their intellectual reservations to cover their behavioral lapses (see Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* [1979], 110). You will see some of that. By the way, do not expect the world's solutions to the world's problems to be very effective. Such solutions often resemble what C. S. Lewis wrote about those who go dashing back and forth with fire extinguishers in times of flood (see *The Screwtape Letters* [1959], 117–18). Only the gospel is constantly relevant, and the substitute things won't work.

Once when traveling with Elder and Sister Russell M. Nelson, we left our hotel in Bombay, India, to catch a plane for Karachi, Pakistan, and then on to Islamabad. When we got to the chaotic airport, our flight had been canceled. Impatiently, I said to the man at the airline counter, "What do you expect us to do, just give up and go back to the hotel?" He said with great dignity, "Sir, you never go back to the hotel." We rummaged about the airport, found a flight, kept the appointment in Islamabad, and even had a night's sleep. Sometimes life is like that: we are left to press forward and endure frustrated expectations—refusing to "go back to the hotel"! Otherwise, such "give-up-itis" will affect all seasons of life. Besides, the Lord knows how many miles we have to go "before [we] sleep"! ("Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening").

### Learning from family

In 1956, after returning home from several years in Washington, D.C., and having declined several attractive offers there, I received an offer to work at the University of Utah. My wife said I should

take it. She said presciently, “I feel if you go there, maybe you will have some influence on students.” I replied impatiently, “I’ll be typing news releases, not working with students.” The subsequent opportunities included being a bishop of a student ward, dean of students, and teaching hundreds of fine students in political science. It wasn’t status that mattered, of course, but being stretched and being given opportunities to serve.

Our wives are often inspired but sometimes in counterintuitive ways—a reality, young men, which your fathers may be brave enough to explain to you sometime.

It’s interesting, too, how we create, cumulatively, expectations in the lives of our grandchildren even when we are not aware of it. Some years ago, when our grandson Robbie was about five, we dropped by to see his family in Orem. He was asleep upstairs, and his mother called, “Robbie, Grandpa Neal is here!” A tired little voice floated downstairs saying, “Shall I bring my scriptures?”

Of course he was too young to read them, but he carried them, as so many do in the Church today in that fine new pattern!

Brethren, there are clusters of memories embedded in each of your lives. And these can help us to “remember how merciful the Lord hath been” (Moroni 10:3). He certainly has been to me!

### Submitting our wills to God

Brethren, as you submit your wills to God, you are giving Him the *only* thing you *can* actually give Him that is really yours to give. Don’t wait too long to find the altar or to begin to place the gift of your wills upon it! No need to wait for a receipt; the Lord has His own special ways of acknowledging.

I testify to you that God has known you individually, brethren, for a long, long time (see D&C 93:23). He has loved you for a long, long time. He not only knows the names of all the stars (see Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 40:26), He knows your names and all your heartaches and your joys! By the way, you have never seen an immortal star; they finally expire. But seated by you tonight are immortal individuals—imperfect but who are, nevertheless, “trying to be like Jesus”! In His name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Mervyn B. Arnold

### A persistent leader activates a young man

Brother José de Souza Marques was the type of leader who truly understood the principle taught by the Savior: “And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also” (D&C 84:106).

As a member of the branch presidency in Fortaleza, Brazil, Brother Marques, with the other priesthood leaders, developed a plan to reactivate those who were less active in his branch. One of those

who was less active was a young man by the name of Fernando Araujo. Recently I spoke to Fernando, and he told me of his experience:

“I became involved in surfing competitions on Sunday mornings and stopped going to my Church meetings. One Sunday morning, Brother Marques knocked on my door and asked my nonmember mother if he could talk to me. When she told him I was sleeping, he asked permission to wake me. He said to me, ‘Fernando, you are late for church!’ Not listening to my excuses, he took me to church.

“The next Sunday the same thing happened, so on the third Sunday I decided to leave early to avoid him. As I opened the gate I found him sitting on his car, reading the scriptures. When he saw me he said, ‘Good! You are up early. Today we will go and find another young man!’ I appealed to my agency, but he said, ‘We can talk about that later.’

“After eight Sundays I could not get rid of him, so I decided to sleep at a friend’s house. I was at the beach the next morning when I saw a man dressed in a suit and tie walking toward me. When I saw that it was Brother Marques, I ran into the water. All of a sudden I felt someone’s hand on my shoulder. It was Brother Marques, in water up to his chest! He took me by the hand and said, ‘You are late! Let’s go.’ When I argued that I didn’t have any clothes to wear, he replied, ‘They are in the car.’

“That day as we walked out of the ocean, I was touched by Brother Marques’s sincere love and worry for me. He truly understood the Savior’s words: ‘I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick’ (Ezekiel 34:16). Brother Marques didn’t just give me a ride to church—the quorum made sure I remained active. They planned activities that made me feel needed and wanted, I received a calling, and the quorum members became my friends.”

Following his reactivation, Brother Araujo went on a full-time mission and has served as bishop, stake president, mission president, and regional representative. His widowed mother, three sisters, and several cousins have also entered the waters of baptism.

### **Rescue work is the focus in quorums**

When speaking about the work of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in his ward,

Brother Araujo, who is once again serving as a bishop, stated:

“Our rescue work is the focus in all three quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood. We have a list of each one of our lost sheep. The quorum presidencies, advisers, and bishopric divide up and go visit them on a regular basis. We visit not only the less-active members, but we also visit the nonmembers in less-active or part-member families.

“Activities are organized to reach each young man. We discuss each young man in our quorum presidency meetings and in our monthly bishopric youth committee meetings. In 2003 we managed to rescue five priests, one teacher, and two deacons, who are now active in their quorums. We have also reactivated some families and have enjoyed the blessing of seeing some nonmembers enter the waters of baptism.”

As I reflected on the desire of these priesthood brethren to fulfill their sacred duties, spending the bulk of their time ministering instead of administering, these words of the Savior came into my mind:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:35–36).

### **Jesus’s example in finding the lost sheep**

The Savior’s example of going the extra mile to find His lost sheep is evident throughout the scriptures. “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine and go into the wilderness after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 15:4). The Good Shepherd knew when one of His sheep was missing: “He numbereth his sheep, and they know him” (1 Nephi 22:25), “and he calleth his own sheep by name” (John

10:3). He went “into the wilderness,” which at times has been defined as “a confusing multitude or mass” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “wilderness,” 1432), and He searched for that which was lost.

We are not told how long it took the Good Shepherd to find the lost sheep or if others helped in the search, but we do know that “they [knew] his voice” (John 10:4) and that He loved them. We also know that *He did not give up*, that He did “go . . . after that which [was] lost, until he [did] find it” (Luke 15:4), and that when *He returned*, the lost sheep was safely on His shoulders. And then He exclaims: “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:6–7).

### To the shepherds of Israel

In Ezekiel chapter 34 we read the prophet’s warning voice:

“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, . . .

“ . . . Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? . . .

“My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. . . .

“As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock . . . ;

“ . . . *I will require my flock at their hand*” (verses 1–2, 6, 8, 10; italics added).

The Lord has always required that those He entrusts with His holy priesthood, including fathers, quorum leaders, and

quorum members, be held accountable for His flocks. Brethren, we must search and seek out our flocks, and we must not allow our flocks to become “meat to every beast of the field.”

In section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Savior teaches us many of our duties as priesthood holders and quorum members. The following action words and phrases underline His sense of urgency: “watch over,” “take the lead,” “expound,” “visit the house of each member,” “pray,” “strengthen,” “warn,” “send,” “teach,” “exhort,” “baptize,” and “*invite all to come unto Christ*” (verses 42, 44, 46–47, 53, 59, 81–82; italics added).

I also felt the urgency in President Hinckley’s voice when he stated, “Let us, every one, resolve within ourselves to arise to a new opportunity, a new sense of responsibility, a new shouldering of obligation to assist our Father in Heaven in His glorious work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters throughout the earth” (“Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 110).

### Examples of good shepherds

I am grateful for the example of the Good Shepherd, who did not give up until He had His lost sheep safely home; for the examples of President Thomas S. Monson, who while serving as a bishop left his flock in the care of the adviser and went to the West Temple Garage to rescue Richard from a grease pit (see Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 43); of Brother Marques, who rescued Fernando from the ocean; of a quorum adviser and various quorum members I am well acquainted with who knocked on Scott’s bedroom window every Sunday morning for six months, fellowshipped and loved him, until Scott returned to the fold; and

for the examples of many of you who have gone the extra mile until you have found that which was lost.

Your efforts will have an eternal effect on the lives of your quorum members and their posterity for generations to come. They will be living testimonies of the promise given by the Savior when He said: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, . . . and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:2, 4), “that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 15:6), and “how great will be your joy” (D&C 18:16).

## Elder Earl C. Tingey

### Things as they really are

My dear brethren of the priesthood, how honored I am to be with you this evening. Four of my grandsons are in the Conference Center tonight—Craig, Brent, Kendall, and Michael. I would like to speak to them and all Aaronic Priesthood bearers and invite others to listen.

In a message from the First Presidency, included in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, we read:

“Our beloved young men . . . , we have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity.”<sup>1</sup>

You live in a world of great uncertainty. There are many voices. There are many paths. Not all lead to our Heavenly Father. How will you know to whom to listen or where to go?

### Strengthen those who are weak

May each quorum and each one of us individually, working in conjunction with the councils of the Church, follow the example of our Lord and Savior to “take . . . him that is weak, . . . that he may become strong also” (D&C 84:106).

I bear humble witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is scripture, that President Gordon B. Hinckley is indeed a prophet of God, that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and the Good Shepherd, and that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The prophet Jacob answered these questions in the following scripture: “The Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be.”<sup>2</sup>

But what are “things as they really are” as referred to by Jacob? Elder Neal A. Maxwell, addressing this subject, has said:

“Without the obedient response to ‘things as they really are,’ there are the endless detours and the empty searches for another course of life. . . . A course of life that is wrong now cannot and will not be proven right later on.”

“The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us many truths . . . —that there really is the living God; there really is the living Church; there really are living prophets; there really are living scriptures; and there really will be a resurrection with a judgment.”<sup>3</sup>

### Standards and truths

There are certain truths, certain “things as they really are,” that are enforced by standards—many of which can be mea-

sured. Let's look at several examples in athletics.

The cover of the March 2004 *New Era* shows a picture of Moroni Rubio of Mexico. Two years ago, at age 16, he took first place at the Central American Junior Championships in the 100-meter sprint. His current best time is 10.46 seconds.<sup>4</sup> He would be timed by a stopwatch, which measures performance.

The men's world record for high jump is held by a Cuban athlete who jumped approximately 8 feet (2.4 m). Can you imagine jumping that high? High jumpers leap over a horizontal bar resting on two vertical poles. This bar represents a standard, a measure to meet or exceed.

Imagine holding a track meet where the runners are not measured by a stopwatch or where the high jumpers do not have a horizontal bar to measure their jumps.

In life, as in athletics, there are standards, or measured behavior. There are rights and wrongs. As priesthood holders, we do not high jump without a horizontal bar.

Unfortunately we are seeing the removal of traditional standards of morality and behavior in today's world. The vernacular of today is "anything goes." The world views time-honored standards as old-fashioned or out-of-date.

We belong to a church where adhering to standards is expected. Things that have always been wrong in the past are still wrong today. The Church does not modify standards of morality by adapting to changing customs or to the mores of the societies in which we live.

President Gordon B. Hinckley tells of an experience he had as a boy lying in the bed of an old farm wagon at night with his brother Sherman. They "looked at the myriads of stars in the heavens, and took turns picking out familiar stars and tracing the Big Dipper, the handle and the cup, to find the North Star." President Hinckley said he was fascinated by the North Star.

Regardless of the earth's rotation, the North Star maintained its position in the heavens and never moved. He said: "I recognized it as a constant in the midst of change. It was something that could always be counted on, something that was dependable, an anchor in what otherwise appeared to be a moving and unstable firmament."<sup>5</sup>

Noting the unwavering, absolute position of the North Star, one writer told the contrasting story of a young boy who became lost on a camping trip. When his father finally found him, his father asked if he had remembered to pick out something in the landscape that he could always see. This, his father said, would have helped him to fix a steady position. The boy said, "I did."

"What was it?" the father asked.

"That rabbit over there," the boy said.<sup>6</sup>

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, fix your gaze on the unchanging standards of the gospel and not on the moving rabbit.

### **Standards in *For the Strength of Youth***

In the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the following standards, among others, are like a North Star to you: choose friends with high standards, do not disfigure your body with tattoos or body piercings, avoid pornography, do not listen to music that contains offensive language, do not use profanity, date only those who have high standards, remain sexually pure, repent as necessary, be honest, keep the Sabbath day holy, pay tithing, and keep the Word of Wisdom.<sup>7</sup>

A dozen years ago, in one of the countries of Africa, we had faithful members of the Church who had been meeting in their homes for several years. I went to that country to see if we could receive permission from the government to bring in missionaries and establish the Church. I met with a high-ranking government minister. He gave me 20 minutes to explain our position.



When I finished he said, “I do not see where anything you have told me is any different from what is currently available in our country. I see no reason to approve your request to bring missionaries into our country.”

He stood up to usher me out of his office. I was panic-stricken. I had failed. In a moment our meeting would be over. What could I do? I offered a silent prayer.

Then I had an inspired thought. I said to the minister, “Sir, if you will give me five more minutes, I would like to share one other thought with you. Then I will leave.” He kindly consented.

I reached for my wallet and removed this small *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, which I have always carried.

I said, “This is a little booklet of standards we give to all of the youth in our Church.”

I then read some of the standards I have mentioned tonight. When I finished he said, “You mean to tell me you expect the youth of your church to live these standards?”

“Yes,” I replied, “and they do.”

“That is amazing,” he said. “Could you send me some of these booklets so that I could distribute them to the youth of my church?”

I replied, “Yes,” and I did.

Several months later we received official approval from the government of that country to come and establish the Church.

### Standards are for your eternal security

Young men, these standards you are privileged to keep are truly a pearl of great price. The world does not understand them. Many good people seek them. You have them.

The Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that establishes how we may know today which voices to listen to—what standards to follow. In this revelation, our time, or generation, was referred to as a time when men would “see an over-

flowing scourge” and “a desolating sickness [would] cover the land.”<sup>8</sup>

The Lord then gave the standard of safety that will protect faithful followers. He said, “But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.”<sup>9</sup>

The Brethren of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are disciples who stand in holy places. They are not moved or swayed by changing times from what has been established as true in all prior generations. The standards of the Church are firm and true. They are for your safety and eternal security. When you commit to live them, you are measured against time-proven standards that are approved by God.

Now, my grandsons and dear brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are in a race for life. It is not a brief sprint. It is more like a marathon.

You will be tested and proven against God’s established standards. You will be guided by the Spirit to help you know what to do.

We are almost the only organization left that has established, time-honored standards. Most others have succumbed to the culture of our world. How blessed we are to have living prophets.

May you be blessed as you keep the standards of the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 2.
2. Jacob 4:13.
3. *Things as They Really Are* (1978), xii, xi.
4. See Adam C. Olson, “Moroni’s Feet,” *New Era*, Mar. 2004, 20–23.
5. See Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 5–6.
6. See Jerry Johnston, “Following True North Is Lifelong Challenge,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 14, 2004, E1.
7. See *For the Strength of Youth*, 12–37.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 45:31.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.

## President Faust

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir and congregation will then sing “Praise to the

Man.” At the conclusion of the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

## President James E. Faust

### Choices determine our happiness

My beloved brethren of the holy priesthood of God all over the world, I greet each of you in the spirit of love and fellowship.

In this life we have to make many choices. Some are very important choices. Some are not. Many of our choices are between good and evil. The choices we make, however, determine to a large extent our happiness or our unhappiness, because we have to live with the consequences of our choices. Making perfect choices all of the time is not possible. It just doesn’t happen. But it is possible to make good choices we can live with and grow from. When God’s children live worthy of divine guidance, they can become “free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”<sup>1</sup>

### A young man yields to peer pressure

Sometimes we make poor choices when we yield to peer pressure. Kieth Merrill had such an experience when he was a young man. He and his friends were diving from sheer rock walls at the East Canyon Reservoir, northeast of Salt Lake City. It inevitably turned into a teenage contest when one young man climbed up to the top of the dam and dived 50 feet into the deep water of the reservoir. The rest of the young men all went to the top of the dam and made the same high dive. One boy wasn’t satisfied with that, so he said, “All right, I’ll do one better!” He climbed 60 feet up the side of the cliff. Not

wanting to be outdone, Kieth climbed up beside him. After the other boy had dived into the water and seemed to be all right, Kieth took courage and made his dive. The contest was now down to these two boys. Kieth’s friend then climbed up to 70 feet and dived. He came up from the water laughing, rubbing his shoulders and his eyes. He then challenged Kieth, “Well, are you going to do it?”

“Of course I’m going to do it!” And everybody on the shore said, “Of course he’s going to do it!”

So Kieth swam back to the shore and climbed up the rocks. He knew if he jumped from the same height of 70 feet that his friend would want to go higher, so he scrambled up 80 feet to the very top of the cliff. No one could go any higher than the top. As Kieth looked down, he was terrified to see the water so very far away. He had made a rash decision. It was not what he wanted to do nor what he felt was right. Instead he had based his decision on the prodding and dares of a half dozen young men whose names he cannot now even remember.

He backed up and ran as hard as he could toward the edge. He found the mark he had carefully laid at the edge of the rock and sprang out into space. On the way down he remembered his parents teaching him to be careful when making decisions because a wrong one could kill him. And now he thought, “You have done it, because when you hit the water you’ll be going so fast that it might as well be concrete.” When he hit the water, it even felt like concrete. How grateful he was when his head finally popped above water.

Why did he jump? What was he trying to prove? The young men who dared him didn't care and probably don't even remember that foolish act. But Kieth realized afterward that he had made what could easily have been a fatal decision. He had yielded to the pressure of friends expecting him to do what he didn't want to do. He knew better. He said:

"I was living in the world, and at that moment I was of the world because I was not in control of myself. I was not making decisions about my own life. The world made the decisions for me, . . . and [I] had barely avoided being in the world about six feet deep."<sup>2</sup>

It takes a certain kind of courage to stand back rather than leaping forward, foolishly allowing someone else to make our choices for us. We can more readily take firm stands when we have a clear idea of our identity as sons of God and bearers of the holy priesthood, having a bright potential for a meaningful future.

### **Repent of unwise choices**

Unfortunately some of our poor choices are irreversible, but many are not. Often we can change course and get back on the right track. Getting back on the right track may involve the principles of repentance: first, recognizing the error of our ways; second, forsaking the wrongful conduct; third, never repeating it; and, fourth, confessing<sup>3</sup> and making restitution where possible. Learning by experience has value, but the "school of hard knocks" is deserving of its name. Progression comes faster and easier by learning from our parents, those who love us, and our teachers. We can also learn from the mistakes of others, observing the consequences of their wrong choices.

### **Varieties of important choices**

Some choices present good opportunities no matter which road we take—for ex-

ample, when deciding which career path to follow or which school to attend. I know one bright and able young man who wanted to become a doctor, but the opportunity did not open up for him, so he chose to follow the law. He has become a very successful lawyer, but I am satisfied he would have been equally successful as a doctor.

Some of our important choices have a time line. If we delay a decision, the opportunity is gone forever. Sometimes our doubts keep us from making a choice that involves change. Thus an opportunity may be missed. As someone once said, "When you have to make a choice and don't make it, that in itself is a choice."<sup>4</sup>

Some people find it hard to make a decision. A psychiatrist once said to a patient, "Do you ever have any trouble making up your mind?" The patient said, "Well, yes and no." My hope and prayer is that we can be as resolute as Joshua when he proclaimed, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>5</sup>

Some choices have greater consequences than others. We make no greater voluntary choice in this life than the selection of a marriage partner. This decision can bring eternal happiness and joy. To find sublime fulfillment in marriage, both partners need to be fully committed to the marriage.

### **Make some choices only once**

Some important choices for fulfillment and happiness should be made only once and then, having been made, never have to be made again. For example, we need only once to make the firm and unequivocal resolution not to smoke tobacco, drink alcoholic drinks, or use mind-changing drugs.

In 1976, Elder Robert C. Oaks, then a colonel in the United States Air Force, was a member of the Incidents at Sea negotiating team. They were guests at a dinner

hosted by the Leningrad Naval District. About 50 senior officers of the Soviet Union and the United States were present as the host led the group in toasts before dinner. They stood for the first toast and raised their glasses, most of which were filled with Russian vodka. Brother Oaks had pink lemonade in his glass, which was immediately noticed by the admiral leading the toast. He stopped and demanded that Brother Oaks fill his glass with vodka, stating that he would not proceed until he had done so. Brother Oaks declined, explaining that he was happy with what he had in his glass.

A significant tension began to build, and even his own team members, most of whom were senior to him, were growing uneasy over the impasse. Brother Oaks's Soviet escort hissed in his ear, "Fill your glass with vodka!" Brother Oaks uttered the shortest prayer of his life: "God, help me!"

Within seconds the Soviet interpreter, an army captain with whom he had previously discussed religion, whispered to the host admiral, "It is because of his religion." The admiral nodded his head, the tension immediately diffused, and the program moved on.<sup>6</sup>

Elder Oaks had decided years before that he would never drink alcohol, and so in the moment of trial he did not have to make this choice again. Elder Oaks was convinced that more harm would have come to him if he had compromised a tenet of his faith than the harm that would have come from drinking the vodka. Incidentally, adhering to his religious principles did not hurt his career. After this incident he went on to become a four-star general.

### Responsibility for choices

Strangely, doing the wrong thing often seems reasonable, possibly because it seems to be the easiest course. We often

hear as a justification for wrong behavior, "Well, everybody is doing it." This evil distorts the truth, and its author is Satan. As Nephi tells us, "Thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell."<sup>7</sup>

No matter how many people in our society are involved, none are justified in being dishonest, lying, cheating, using profanity (especially taking the Lord's name in vain), engaging in immoral sexual relationships, or not respecting the Lord's day.

Other people's actions do not dictate what is right or wrong. One person having the courage to make the right choice can influence many others to also choose wisely. I wish to endorse what is stated in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*:

"You are responsible for the choices you make. You should not blame your circumstances, your family, or your friends if you choose to disobey God's commandments. You are a child of God with great strength. You have the ability to choose righteousness and happiness, no matter what your circumstances."<sup>8</sup>

### How to make correct choices

How do we make correct choices? A choice involves making a conscious decision. To make an intelligent decision we need to evaluate all available facts on both sides of an issue. But that isn't enough. Making correct decisions involves prayer and inspiration. The 9th section of the Doctrine and Covenants gives us the grand key. The Lord said to Oliver Cowdery:

"Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

"But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong.”<sup>9</sup>

As we look into the future, we are going to need to be stronger and more responsible for our choices in a world where people “call evil good, and good evil.”<sup>10</sup> We do not choose wisely if we use our agency in opposition to God’s will or to priesthood counsel. Tomorrow’s blessings and opportunities depend on the choices we make today.

Brethren, it is my belief and testimony that collectively we have the responsibility to set the example of righteousness to all of the world. Under the great leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley, we must point the way by the inspired choices we make. The power of choice is yours. May we all use our God-given agency wisely

as we make these eternal choices. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26.
2. See “Deciding about Decisions,” *New Era*, June 1976, 12–13.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.
4. William James, as quoted in Evan Esar, ed., *20,000 Quips and Quotes* (1968), 132.
5. Joshua 24:15.
6. See *Believe! Helping Youth Trust in the Lord* (2003), 27–28.
7. 2 Nephi 28:21.
8. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 5.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9.
10. 2 Nephi 15:20.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Praise to the Man.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Great expectations for priesthood holders

Brethren, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is awesome to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world at this hour, your fellow holders of the priesthood of God are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Your nationalities vary, and your languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

Long ago the renowned author Charles Dickens wrote of opportunities that await. In his classic volume entitled *Great Expectations*, Dickens described a boy by the name of Philip Pirrip, more commonly known as Pip. Pip was born in unusual circumstances. He was an orphan. He wished

with all his heart that he were a scholar and a gentleman. Yet all of his ambitions and all of his hopes seemed doomed to failure. Do you young men sometimes feel that way? Do those of us who are older entertain these same thoughts?

Then one day a London lawyer by the name of Jaggers approached little Pip and told him that an unknown benefactor had bequeathed to him a fortune. The lawyer put his arm around the shoulder of Pip and said to him, “My boy, you have great expectations.”

Tonight, as I look at you young men and realize who you are and what you may become, I declare, “You have great expectations”—not as the result of an unknown benefactor but as the result of a known benefactor, even our Heavenly Father, and great things are expected of you.

### The call for courage is constant

Life's journey is not traveled on a freeway devoid of obstacles, pitfalls, and snares. Rather, it is a pathway marked by forks and turnings. Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say *no*, the courage to say *yes*. Decisions do determine destiny.

The call for courage comes constantly to each of us. It has ever been so, and so shall it ever be.

The courage of a military leader was recorded by a young infantryman wearing the gray uniform of the Confederacy during America's Civil War. He describes the influence of General J. E. B. Stuart in these words:

"[At a critical point in the battle,] he waved his hand toward the enemy and shouted, 'Forward men! Forward! Just follow me!' . . .

" . . . With courage and resolution [they followed] after him like a wide raging torrent," and the objective was seized and held.<sup>1</sup>

At an earlier time, in a land far distant, another leader issued the same plea: "Follow me."<sup>2</sup> He was not a general of war. Rather, He was the Prince of Peace, the Son of God. Those who followed Him then and those who follow Him now win a far more significant victory, with consequences that are everlasting. The need for courage is constant.

### Scriptural examples of courage

The holy scriptures portray the evidence of this truth. Joseph, son of Jacob, the same who was sold into Egypt, demonstrated the firm resolve of courage when to Potiphar's wife, who attempted to seduce him, he declared: "How . . . can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And . . . he hearkened not unto her . . . and got . . . out."<sup>3</sup>

In our day a father applied this example of courage to the lives of his children

by declaring, "If you ever find yourself where you shouldn't be, get out!"

Who can help but be inspired by the lives of the 2,000 stripling sons of Helaman, who taught and demonstrated the need of courage to follow the teachings of parents, the courage to be chaste and pure?<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps each of these accounts is crowned by the example of Moroni, who had the courage to persevere to the end in righteousness.<sup>5</sup>

All were fortified by the words of Moses: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid . . . : for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."<sup>6</sup> He did not fail them. He will not fail us. He did not forsake them. He will not forsake us.

It is this sweet assurance that can guide you and me—in our time, in our day, in our lives. Of course we will face fear, experience ridicule, and meet opposition. Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God's approval. Courage becomes a living and an attractive virtue when it is regarded not only as a willingness to die manfully, but also as a determination to live decently. A moral coward is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh. Remember that all men have their fears, but those who face their fears with dignity have courage as well.

### Courage of a seaman to pray

From my personal chronology of courage, let me share with you an example from military service.

Entering the United States Navy in the closing months of World War II was a challenging experience for me. I learned of brave deeds, acts of valor, and examples of courage. One best remembered was the quiet courage of an 18-year-old seaman

—not of our faith—who was not too proud to pray. Of 250 men in the company, he was the only one who each night knelt down by the side of his bunk—at times amidst the jeers of the curious, the jests of unbelievers—and, with bowed head, prayed to God. He never wavered. He never faltered. He had courage.

I love these words from the poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

It is easy enough to be pleasant,  
When life flows by like a song,  
But the man worth while is one who  
will smile,  
When everything goes dead wrong.<sup>7</sup>

### **Courage of Paul Tingey**

Such a man was Paul Tingey. Just a month ago I attended his funeral services here in Salt Lake City. Paul grew up in a fine Latter-day Saint home and served an honorable mission for the Lord in Germany. A companion of his in the mission field was Elder Bruce D. Porter of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elder Porter described Elder Tingey as one of the most dedicated and successful missionaries he ever knew.

At the conclusion of his mission, Elder Tingey returned home, completed his studies at the university, married his sweetheart, and together with her reared their family. He served as a bishop and was successful in his vocation.

Then, without much warning, the symptoms of a dreaded disease struck his nervous system—even multiple sclerosis. Held captive by this malady, Paul Tingey struggled valiantly but then was confined to a care facility for the remainder of his life. There he cheered up the sad and made everyone feel glad.<sup>8</sup> Whenever I attended Church meetings there, Paul lifted my spirits, as he did all others.

When the World Olympics came to Salt Lake City in 2002, Paul was selected to carry the Olympic torch for a specified distance. When this was announced at the

care facility, a cheer erupted from those patients assembled and a hearty round of applause echoed through the halls. As I congratulated Paul, he said with his limited diction, “I hope I don’t drop the torch!”

Brethren, Paul Tingey didn’t drop the Olympic torch. What’s more, he carried bravely the torch he was handed in life and did so to the day of his passing.

Spirituality, faith, determination, courage—Paul Tingey had them all.

### **Courage to rise from failure, to try again**

Someone has said that courage is not the absence of fear but the mastery of it.<sup>9</sup> At times, courage is needed to rise from failure, to strive again.

As a young teenager I participated in a Church basketball game. When the outcome was in doubt, the coach sent me onto the playing floor right after the second half began. I took an inbounds pass, dribbled the ball toward the key, and let the shot fly. Just as the ball left my fingertips, I realized why the opposing guards did not attempt to stop my drive: I was shooting for the wrong basket! I offered a silent prayer: “Please, Father, don’t let that ball go in.” The ball rimmed the hoop and fell out.

From the bleachers came the call, “We want Monson, we want Monson, we want Monson—*out!*” The coach obliged.

Many years later, as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I joined other General Authorities in visiting a newly completed chapel where, as an experiment, we were trying out a tightly woven carpet on the gymnasium floor.

While several of us were examining the floor, Bishop J. Richard Clarke, who was then in the Presiding Bishopric, suddenly threw the basketball to me with a challenge: “I don’t believe you can hit the basket, standing where you are!”

I was some distance behind what is now the professional three-point line. I had never made such a basket in my entire life. Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Twelve called out to the others, “I think he can!”

My thoughts returned to my embarrassment of years before, shooting toward the wrong basket. Nevertheless, I aimed and let that ball fly. Through the net it went!

Throwing the ball in my direction, Bishop Clarke once more issued the challenge: "I know you can't do that again!"

Elder Petersen spoke up, "Of course he can!"

The words of the poet echoed in my heart:

Lead us, O lead us,  
Great Molder of men,  
Out of the shadow  
To strive once again.<sup>10</sup>

I shot the ball. It soared toward the basket and went right through.

That ended the inspection visit.

At lunchtime, Elder Petersen said to me, "You know, you could have been a starter in the NBA."

### **Be worthy to receive divine help**

Winning or losing in basketball fades from our thoughts when we contemplate our duties as bearers of the priesthood of God—both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood. We have a solemn duty to prepare ourselves through compliance with the commandments of the Lord and in responding to the calls we receive to serve Him.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys, we can mend men, we can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

Though the task seems large, we are strengthened by the truth "The greatest force in this world today is the power of God as it works through man." If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. That divine help, however, is predicated upon our worthiness. To sail safely the seas of mortality, to perform a

human rescue mission, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner, even the great Jehovah. We look up, we reach out to obtain heavenly help.

Are our reaching hands clean? Are our yearning hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, we find a lesson on worthiness gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. Through proper rites, Darius had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander the Great, had been declared legitimate son of Amon. He too was Pharaoh. Alexander, finding the defeated Darius on the point of death, laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, "I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods that I do these things truly and without faking." Darius replied with a gentle rebuke: "Alexander my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?"<sup>11</sup>

### **A mother's faith in her son**

Brethren, as we learn our duty and magnify the callings which have come to us, the Lord will guide our efforts and touch the hearts of those whom we serve.

Many years ago I would visit an older widow named Mattie, whom I had known for many years and whose bishop I had been. My heart grieved at her utter loneliness. A precious son of hers lived many miles away, and for years he had not visited his mother. Mattie spent long hours in a lonely vigil at her front window. Behind a frayed and frequently opened curtain, the disappointed mother would say to herself, "Dick will come; Dick will come."

But Dick didn't come, and the years passed by one after another. Then, like a ray of sunshine, Church activity came into the life of Dick, one of my former Aaronic Priesthood boys, who now lived in Houston, Texas, far away from his mother. He journeyed to Salt Lake to visit with me. He telephoned upon his arrival and, with



excitement, reported the change in his life. He asked if I had time to see him if he were to come directly to my office. My response was one of gladness. However, I said, "Dick, first visit your mother and then come to see me." He gladly complied with my request.

Before he could get to my office, there came a phone call from Mattie, his mother. From a joyful heart came words punctuated by tears: "Bishop, I knew Dick would come. I told you he would. I saw him coming through the window."

Not many years later at Mattie's funeral, Dick and I spoke tenderly of that experience. We had witnessed a glimpse of God's healing power through the window of a mother's faith in her son.

Time marches on. Duty keeps cadence with that march. Duty does not dim nor diminish. Catastrophic conflicts come and go, but the war waged for the souls of men continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you, to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>12</sup>

May we each have the courage to do so, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Emory M. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon: The Life of J. E. B. Stuart* (1986), 211–12.
2. Matthew 4:19.
3. Genesis 39:9–10, 12.

4. See Alma 56.
5. See Moroni 1–10.
6. Deuteronomy 31:6.
7. "Worth While," in *The Best-Loved Poems of the American People*, sel. Hazel Felleman (1936), 144.
8. See "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
9. See Mark Twain, in Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds., *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (1988), 111.
10. From the "Alma Mater" of Yonkers High School.
11. See Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (1981), 192.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.

#### President Faust

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 a.m. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Salt Lake Valley and Orem institutes for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Redeemer of Israel." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Craig C. Christensen of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

#### Significance of the Church welfare plan

I've just been thinking of what would happen if I forgot to turn my clock forward.

In 1936, 68 years ago, one of the secretaries to the Quorum of the Twelve told me what a member of the Twelve had told

her. She said that in the coming general conference there would be announced a program which would come to be recognized as even more noteworthy than the coming of our people to these valleys as pioneers.

Now, parenthetically, you should not tell your secretary what you should keep confidential, and she should not tell anyone else when she is given confidential information.

But that was what happened back then. It never happens today. Oh no! I should add that my able secretaries are never guilty of such a breach of confidentiality.

As you who are acquainted with the history know, there was announced at that time the Church security plan, the name of which was subsequently changed to the Church welfare program.

I wondered back in those days how anything the Church did could eclipse in anyone's judgment the historic gathering of our people to these western valleys of the United States. That was a movement of such epic proportions that I felt nothing could ever be so noteworthy. But I have discovered something of interest in the last short while.

We receive many prominent visitors in the office of the First Presidency. They include heads of state and ambassadors of nations. A few weeks ago we entertained the mayor of one of the great cities of the world. We have likewise recently entertained the vice president and the ambassador of Ecuador, the ambassador from Lithuania, the ambassador from Belarus, and others. In our conversations, not one of these visitors mentioned the great pioneer journey of our forebears. But each of them, independently, spoke in high praise of our welfare program and our humanitarian efforts.

And so as I speak in this great priesthood meeting, I wish to say a few words concerning our efforts in behalf of those in need, be they members of the Church or otherwise, in various parts of the world.

### **Program has served thousands in need**

When the modern welfare program was put in motion, it was designed to take care of the needs of our own people. In the years that have followed, thousands

upon thousands have been served. Bishops and Relief Society presidents have had available to them food and clothing and other supplies for those in need. Numberless members of the Church have worked in volunteer capacities in producing that which was required. We now operate 113 storehouses, 63 farms, 105 canneries and home storage centers, 18 food processing and distribution plants, as well as many other facilities.

Not only have the needs of Church members been met, but aid has been extended to countless others. Right here in this Salt Lake City community, many of the hungry are fed daily by non-LDS agencies utilizing LDS welfare supplies.

Here, in this city, and in a number of other places, we operate beautiful stores where there is no cash register, where no money changes hands, where food, clothing, and other necessities are provided to those in distress. I believe that no better milk, no better meat, and no better flour is found on any grocery shelf than that which is distributed from the bishops' storehouses.

### **Principles of Church welfare**

The principles on which these establishments operate are essentially what they were at the beginning.

Those in need are expected to do all they can to provide for themselves. Then families are expected to assist in taking care of their less-fortunate members. And then the resources of the Church are made available.

We believe in and take very seriously the words of our Lord:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:34–36).

This is the Lord's way of caring for those in need which, He declared, "ye have . . . always with you" (Matthew 26:11).

Those who are able voluntarily work to provide for those who are not able. Last year there were 563,000 days of donated labor in welfare facilities. That is the equivalent of a man working eight hours a day for 1,542 years.

### Service in an Idaho community

A recent issue of the *Church News* carried the story of a group of farmers in a small Idaho community. May I read briefly from that account?

"It is 6 a.m. in late October, and frost already hangs in the air over the sugar beet fields of Rupert, Idaho.

"The long arms of the 'beeters' stretch out over twelve rows, slicing the tops off sugar beets. Behind them, the harvesters thrust their steel fingers into the soil and scoop up the beets, pulling them up toward a belt and into a waiting truck.

"... This is the Rupert Idaho Welfare Farm, and those who are working here today are volunteers. . . . At times more than 60 machines [are] working in harmony together— . . . all owned by local farmers."

The work goes on throughout the day.

"[At] 7 p.m. . . . the sun has set, leaving the land dark and cold once again. The farmers head home, exhausted and happy.

"They have finished well another day.

"They have harvested the Lord's sugar beets" (Neil K. Newell, "A Harvest in Idaho," *Church News*, Mar. 20, 2004, 16).

Such remarkable volunteer service goes on constantly to assure supplies for the storehouses of the Lord.

### Preparing for catastrophe

Since the early beginnings, the program has moved beyond caring for the needy to the encouragement of preparedness on the part of families of the Church. No one knows when catastrophe might

strike—or sickness, or unemployment, or a disabling accident.

Last year the program helped families store 18 million pounds of basic foods against a possible time of need. Hopefully that time will never come. But the good, wholesome, basic food so stored brings peace of mind and also the satisfaction of obedience to counsel.

### Humanitarian aid

Now there has been added another element. It began some years ago when drought in Africa brought hunger and death to uncounted numbers. Members of the Church were invited to contribute to a great humanitarian effort to meet the needs of those terribly impoverished people. Your contributions were numerous and generous. The work has continued because there are other serious needs in many places. The outreach of this aid has become a miracle. Millions of pounds of food, medical supplies, blankets, tents, clothing, and other materials have staved off famine and desolation in various parts of the world. Wells have been dug; crops have been planted; lives have been saved. Let me give you an example.

Neil Darlington is a chemical engineer who worked for a large industrial company in Ghana. Eventually he retired.

He and his wife were then called as a missionary couple. They were sent to Ghana. Brother Darlington says, "In areas of famine, disease, and social unrest, we were there as representatives of the Church, extending a helping hand to the destitute, the hungry, the distressed."

In small villages they drilled new wells and repaired old ones. Those of us who have fresh, clean water in abundance can scarcely appreciate the circumstances of those who are without.

Can you picture this couple, devoted Latter-day Saint missionaries? They drill into the dry earth. Their drill reaches the water table below, and the miracle liquid

comes to the surface and spills over the dry and thirsty soil. There is rejoicing. There are tears. There is now water to drink, water with which to wash, water to grow crops. There is nothing more treasured in a dry land than water. How absolutely beautiful is water pouring from a new well.

On one occasion, when the tribal chiefs and the elders of the village gathered to thank them, Brother Darlington asked the chief if he and Sister Darlington could sing a song for them. They looked into the eyes of the dark-skinned men and women before them and sang "I Am a Child of God" as an expression of their common brotherhood.

This one couple, through their efforts, have provided water for an estimated 190,000 people in remote villages and refugee camps. Contemplate, if you will, the miracle of this accomplishment.

### **Service throughout the world**

And now, literally thousands of their kind—married couples, couples who otherwise might simply have lived out their lives in largely idle pursuits—have served and are serving in scores of ways and in scores of places. They have worked and continue to work in the impoverished areas of America. They have worked, and still do so, in India and Indonesia, in Thailand and Cambodia, in Russia and the Baltic nations. And so the work expands.

Joining with others, the Church has recently provided wheelchairs for some 42,000 disabled persons. Think of what this means to people who literally have had to crawl to get about. With the aid of selfless doctors and nurses, neonatal resuscitation training was provided to nearly 19,000 professionals in the year 2003 alone. The lives of thousands of babies will be spared as a consequence.

Last year some 2,700 individuals were treated for eye problems, and 300 local practitioners were trained in sight-saving

procedures. The blind have literally been made to see.

Where devastating floods have come, where earthquakes have created disaster, where hunger has stalked the land, wherever want has been created by whatever cause, representatives of the Church have been there. Some 98 million dollars in cash and in-kind assistance have been distributed in the past year, bringing such aid to a total of 643 million dollars in just 18 years.

I have been a firsthand witness to the effectiveness of our humanitarian efforts. In traveling the world, I have seen the recipients of your generosity. In 1998 I visited the areas of Central America which had been ravaged by Hurricane Mitch. Here the distribution of food and clothing was quickly organized, and the cleaning and rebuilding of devastated homes and shattered lives was a miracle to behold.

There is not time to go on recounting the reach of these great and significant programs. In extending help we have not asked whether those affected belong to the Church, for we know that each of earth's children is a child of God worthy of help in time of need. We have done what we have done largely with the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. We seek no commendation or thank-yous. It is compensation enough that when we help one of the least of these our Father's children, we have done it unto Him and His Beloved Son (see Matthew 25:40).

We shall go on in this work. There will always be a need. Hunger and want and catastrophes will ever be with us. And there will always be those whose hearts have been touched by the light of the gospel who will be willing to serve and work and lift the needy of the earth.

### **Perpetual Education Fund**

As a correlated effort we have established the Perpetual Education Fund. It has come about through your generous

contributions. It is now operating in 23 countries. Loans are extended to worthy young men and women for education. Otherwise they would be trapped in the stagnated poverty their parents and forebears have known for generations. Some 10,000 and more are now being assisted, and experience to this date indicates that with such training they are now earning three to four times what was previously possible.

### **Guidance from the Lord**

The Spirit of the Lord guides this work. This welfare activity is secular activity, expressing itself in terms of rice and

beans, of blankets and tents, of clothing and medicine, of employment and education for better employment. But this so-called secular work is but an outward expression of an inward spirit—the Spirit of the Lord, of whom it was said, He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

May heaven prosper this great program, and may heaven’s blessing rest upon all who serve therein, I humbly pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.”

Elder Craig C. Christensen offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth session of the 174th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 4, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. The choir sang “How Firm a Foundation” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this morning to this, the fourth general session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities for broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “How Firm a Foundation” and will now favor us with “There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Walter F. González of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “How Lovely Are the Messengers.”

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The choir sang “There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today.”

Elder Walter F. González offered the invocation.

The choir sang “How Lovely Are the Messengers.”

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### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” At the conclusion of the singing, we shall hear from Sister Julie B. Beck, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

## President James E. Faust

### Serious consequences of missed messages

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I greet you in the spirit of fellowship and love. We live in the marvelous age of the information highway. The amount of information sent by e-mail, fax, cellular phones, and other means is phenomenal. In fact, there is a glut of messages. The volume is so vast that it is easy to miss a vital message, and missing messages can have serious consequences.

For example, in wartime missed messages between commanders and soldiers at the front have resulted in great confusion and serious loss of life. In World War I the 308th Infantry was ordered to the front in a desperate attempt to take and hold part of the Argonne Forest at any cost. The battle was so fierce that the supporting troops on the right and the left of one battalion withdrew, and the battalion was surrounded and isolated. Because headquarters lost communication with them, they became known as the Lost Battalion.

The battalion communicated with headquarters by carrier pigeons that flew from the battalion’s location to headquarters with messages. However, as soon as these pigeons were released, they were shot down by the opposing forces. The Lost Battalion’s own artillery, not knowing where they were, opened fire on their position and inflicted heavy casualties. The battalion ran out of food and water, but they held their ground and did not surrender despite their great losses. Finally one carrier pigeon called Cher Ami, even

though it was shot, got through to headquarters carrying the message that identified the battalion’s location. The survivors of the battalion were rescued because that one crucial message got through.<sup>1</sup>

### Missing messages from God

Serious consequences result whenever we miss important messages, especially if these messages are from God. Throughout the world’s history, God has sent messages in various ways. Moses was tending his father-in-law’s sheep in the desert when he came upon “a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.”<sup>2</sup> He was curious and wanted to know why the bush was not consumed.<sup>3</sup> As Moses turned to see, “God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.”<sup>4</sup> God told him, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”<sup>5</sup> God chose to speak with Moses out of a burning bush. He told Moses that He had a work for him to do—specifically to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt “unto a land flowing with milk and honey.”<sup>6</sup>

The word of the Lord came only once through a bush that burned but was not consumed. The prophet Elijah had a different experience. He waited as “the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a

fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”<sup>7</sup>

Messages are more commonly manifested by the still, small voice, which speaks to all of us through the scriptures, modern prophets, and personal revelation.

Sometimes we don’t want to hear messages from God. For example, the word of the Lord called Jonah to go to Nineveh and declare repentance. But Jonah ignored the message and ran away to Joppa, where he boarded a ship to Tarshish to get away from the presence of the Lord. However, the Lord caused a mighty tempest to come upon the sea. The mariners were frightened, and in an effort to appease the Lord, they threw Jonah into the sea. A great fish swallowed Jonah, and he was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Jonah prayed for forgiveness and deliverance, and the fish vomited him onto dry land. The second time the word of the Lord came to Jonah, he listened and went to call the people of Nineveh to repentance.<sup>8</sup>

### **How to attune ourselves to inspiration**

Some of us may need something startling, like a burning bush experience, to awaken our senses. In such an experience, the essential nature of something—a person, a situation, an object—is suddenly perceived. We understand this to be inspiration. To be able to perceive by inspiration the common and ordinary things of life in their true meaning is a special gift. Many people fail to perceive inspiration because God’s “great power . . . looks small unto the understanding of men”<sup>9</sup> or because they are “less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven.”<sup>10</sup>

I learned at a young age that inspiration can come to any of us. When I was in junior high school I was taking a difficult class where most of what was being taught went over my head. One day the teacher asked me a question. I didn’t understand the question, let alone the answer. Out of

nowhere a response came into my mind, which I repeated to the teacher. It was the right answer, but I knew it had not come from me.

So how can we recognize inspiration when it comes? Enos stated, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.”<sup>11</sup> The voice of the spirit of revelation is not necessarily audible, but it gives divine confirmation through our thoughts and feelings. As we are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.”<sup>12</sup> We must cultivate our sensitivity to that divine voice.

My first radio was a crystal set. It was hard to tune to the frequency of a particular radio station. I had to literally scratch the receiving wire whisker over the top of the rough crystal to find the right pinpoint, a little valley or peak on the crystal where the signal was received. Just a millimeter off on either side of that point and I would lose the signal and get scratchy static. Over time, with patience and perseverance, good eyesight, and a steady hand, I learned to find the signal point on the crystal without too much difficulty.

So it is with inspiration. We must attune ourselves to the inspiration from God and tune out the scratchy static. We have to work at being tuned in. Most of us need a long time to become tuned in. When I was a newly called General Authority, President Marion G. Romney, who was in his 70s at the time, told us, “I know when I am working under the Spirit and when I am not.” To be able to recognize when one is being guided by the Spirit is a supernal gift.

In terms of modern communication, crystal radio sets helped us emerge from the dark ages of communication. With advanced technology, cellular phones are used for much of the communication in our time. Occasionally, however, we find

dead spots where the signal coming to a cell phone fails. This can happen when the cell phone user is in a tunnel or a canyon or when there is other interference.

So it is with divine communication. The still, small voice, though still and small, is very powerful. It “whispereth through and pierceth all things.”<sup>13</sup> But like my old crystal set, the message may be there but we fail to pick it up. Perhaps something in our lives prevents us from hearing the message because we are “past feeling.”<sup>14</sup> We often put ourselves in spiritual dead spots—places and situations that block out divine messages. Some of these dead spots include anger, pornography, transgression, selfishness, and other situations that offend the Spirit.

### **Heeding messages from parents**

Messages come to us individually and directly from a divine source and through our presiding officers in the Church. Also of great importance are the messages that come to us from our parents and grandparents. Parental messages may not be wanted. But with experience and the passage of time, we come to realize that inspired messages from our father and mother are messages of love. To follow parental counsel is one way of fulfilling the commandment “Honour thy father and thy mother.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Heeding messages from the Lord**

One message missed by so many in our time is the word of the Lord commanding us to “keep [ourselves] unspotted from the world.”<sup>16</sup> We are told that many are called “but few are chosen,” and the reason is that “their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world.”<sup>17</sup>

The Savior’s transcendent message in the Sermon on the Mount is of burning-bush importance to all of us: “But seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.”<sup>18</sup> This mes-

sage needs to penetrate into our hearts and souls. As we accept this message, we are taking our personal stand in this life. Regular temple attendance will help us to constantly seek to build up the kingdom of God. Now with 117 temples in the world, never before have so many had access to the sacred houses of the Lord.

Another very important message is the need to strengthen and safeguard our families. Far too many families are breaking up. This heartbreaking trend has an endless train of consequences. Happiness in marriage begins with husband and wife living together in love, kindness, and mutual respect, walking righteously and humbly before the Lord. It is contingent on being faithful to all vows and covenants. When families do break up for whatever reason, the parents need to try especially hard to sustain and help innocent family members.

Another vital message is that we be honest with the Lord, honest with ourselves, and honest with all others. We need to pay an honest tithe, live within our means, and save for a rainy day. Debt is bondage because “the borrower is [the] servant [of] the lender.”<sup>19</sup> Some debt may be necessary, such as to acquire a home and get an education. The Lord’s counsel on the subject is to “pay the debt . . . [and] release thyself from bondage.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Importance of worthiness**

God gives us messages of instruction or encouragement to enable us to do His will. Often this is to prepare us for a specific task. This was the case with Moses in the message of the burning bush. We should keep our lives in order so that when we receive a burning bush type of message telling us what the Lord wants us to do, we will be able to respond. We need to be sure we are in a position to recognize it and pursue it.

In our day we are bombarded by messages from many sources, both profane and spiritual. How can we determine the ones



that are most vital to us? I suggest that we may look at the source of the messages and the motivation behind them. The Lord has given us a guide through the prophet Alma: “Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil.”<sup>21</sup> We must strive to be worthy so that we do not miss the profound messages that come from God. Ultimately these messages include the sum total of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Heeding messages from living prophets

It has been my great privilege to have met and had some acquaintance with more than half of the Presidents of the Church since the Prophet Joseph. I met President Heber J. Grant when I was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. I felt a love for him, as I have for all of the Presidents since. I have wanted to live in harmony with their counsel.

In the nine years that President Thomas S. Monson and I have served as counselors to President Gordon B. Hinckley, I have come to know and feel absolutely and unequivocally that President Hinckley is the inspired President and prophet for our time. I testify that he has known and received and will continue to

receive the mind and will of the Lord for this people and the whole world. We should always be looking for and heeding the prophetic messages that come from the current President of the Church. That we may do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Buck Private McCollum, *History and Rhymes of the Lost Battalion* (1939).
2. Exodus 3:2.
3. See Exodus 3:3.
4. Exodus 3:4.
5. Exodus 3:5.
6. Exodus 3:8.
7. 1 Kings 19:11–12.
8. See Jonah 1–3.
9. Ether 3:5.
10. 3 Nephi 2:1.
11. Enos 1:10.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
14. See 1 Nephi 17:45.
15. Exodus 20:12.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–35.
18. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; see also Matthew 6:33.
19. Proverbs 22:7.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:35.
21. Alma 5:40.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Satan's efforts centered on fathers

As we take a long, hard look at the world today, it is becoming increasingly evident that Satan is working overtime to enslave the souls of men. His main target is the fundamental unit of society—the family.

During the past few decades, Satan has waged a vigorous campaign to belittle and demean this basic and most important of all organizations. His success is becoming increasingly evident—the grim facts are

seen, reported, and heard about daily and involve the collapse of many family units. With the decay of the family, we see the terrible effects on our society—increased crime, behavior disorders, poverty, drug abuse, and the list continues to grow and grow.

It appears to me that the crosshairs of Satan's scope are centered on husbands and fathers. Today's media, for example, have been relentless in their attacks—ridiculing and demeaning husbands and fathers in their God-given roles.

## Portrayals of fathers in the scriptures

It may be useful to counter the portrayal of husbands and fathers in the media with the scriptures. There we have so many great role models.

*The Father and the Savior.* In the New Testament we have a glimpse of the Savior's relationship with the Father. One of the most vivid of these glimpses is in the garden just before His betrayal:

"[Jesus] kneeled down, and prayed,

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."<sup>1</sup>

*Moses and Jethro.* We have the example in Exodus of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, observing how he was governing the children of Israel:

"And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

"And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: . . .

"And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.

"Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone."<sup>2</sup>

Then Jethro taught Moses how to delegate this responsibility by calling able men who would fear God and letting them judge as rulers in Israel:

"And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."<sup>3</sup>

*Alma.* In the Book of Mormon we have the account of Alma, the son of Alma, being numbered among the rebellious and

doing all manner of iniquity. Alma the father prayed with much faith that his son would come to a knowledge of the truth—a prayer which was answered in a very special way:

"And now it came to pass that while he was going about to destroy the church of God, . . . the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder . . . ;

"And so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.

"Nevertheless he cried again, saying: Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people.

"And again, the angel said: Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith."<sup>4</sup>

When Alma the Younger recovered from this experience, he was a changed man.

## Alternate family formations will not work

Satan, in his carefully devised plan to destroy the family, seeks to diminish the role of fathers. Increased youth violence, youth crime, greater poverty and economic insecurity, and the failure of increasing numbers of children in our schools offer clear evidence of lack of a positive influence of fathers in the homes.<sup>5</sup> A family needs a father to anchor it.

Surely we have learned by now, from the experience over centuries, that the

basic family provides the most stable and secure foundation for society and is fundamental to the preparation of young people for their future responsibilities. We should have learned by now that alternate styles of family formations have not worked and never will work. This was stated plainly by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”:

“We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. . . .

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed *only* between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. . . .

“ . . . By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. . . .

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or

offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Roles of fathers**

Given such urgent warnings about the future of our Father in Heaven’s children, fathers and mothers must search their souls to be certain they are following the Lord’s direction in building up eternal families. Focusing on fathers, what does the Lord expect us to do?

Once a family has been established, the father’s roles include the following:

#### *1. The father is the head in his family.*

“Fatherhood is leadership, the most important kind of leadership. It has always been so; it always will be so. Father, with the assistance and counsel and encouragement of your eternal companion, you preside in the home. It is not a matter of whether you are most worthy or best qualified, but it is a matter of [divine] appointment.”<sup>7</sup>

Your leadership in the home must include leading in family worship.

“You preside at the meal table, at family prayer. You preside at family home evening; and as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, you see that your children are taught correct principles. It is your place to give direction relating to all of family life.

“You give father’s blessings. You take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline. As a leader in your home you plan and sacrifice to achieve the blessing of a unified and happy family. To do all of this requires that you live a family-centered life.”<sup>8</sup>

As President Joseph F. Smith said: “Brethren, there is too little religious devotion, love, and fear of God, in the home; too much worldliness, selfishness, indiffer-

ence, and lack of reverence in the family, or it never would exist so abundantly on the outside. Then, the home is what needs reforming. Try today, and tomorrow, to make a change in your home.”<sup>9</sup>

Remember, brethren, that in your role as leader in the family, your wife is your companion. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: “In this Church the man neither walks ahead of his wife nor behind his wife but at her side. They are coequals.”<sup>10</sup> Since the beginning, God has instructed mankind that marriage should unite husband and wife together in unity.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there is not a president or a vice president in a family. The couple works together eternally for the good of the family. They are united together in word, in deed, and in action as they lead, guide, and direct their family unit. They are on equal footing. They plan and organize the affairs of the family jointly and unanimously as they move forward.

### 2. *The father is a teacher.*

President Joseph F. Smith’s counsel applies today: “Do not let your children out to specialists . . . , but teach them by your own precept and example, by your own fireside. Be a specialist yourself in the truth.”<sup>12</sup>

“When you recognize the importance of teaching your children, you become humble, because at once you realize that this is accomplished by precept and example. You cannot be one thing and effectively teach another. You must live and study and pray for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. You must purify and organize your life so that your example and leadership reflect the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“You must plan your day as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, earnestly seeking your own welfare and the welfare of your family before other cares blind you to these first responsibilities. As we have been taught by living prophets, ‘No other success in life can compensate for failure

in the home’ (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5; quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42).”<sup>13</sup>

### 3. *The father is the temporal provider.*

President Ezra Taft Benson expressed it clearly: “The Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.” “Sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband . . . [for the] convenience[s] that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered.”<sup>14</sup>

Fathers, by divine decree, you are to preside over your family units. This is a sobering responsibility and the most important one you will ever assume, for it is an eternal responsibility. You place the family in its proper priority. It’s the part of your life that will endure beyond the grave. I testify that the following statement is true:

“The position which men occupy in the family, and especially those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, is one of first importance and should be clearly recognized and maintained in the order and with the authority which God conferred upon man in placing him at the head of his household.

“. . . There is no higher authority in matters relating to the family organization, and especially when that organization is presided over by one holding the higher priesthood, than that of the father. . . . The patriarchal order is of divine origin and will continue throughout time and eternity. There is then a particular reason why men, women, and children should understand this order and this authority in the households of the people of God, and seek to make it what God intended it to be, a qualification and preparation for the high-

est exaltation of His children. In the home the presiding authority is always vested in the father, and in all home affairs and family matters there is no other authority paramount.”<sup>15</sup>

### Prophetic counsel about fathers

Now, I have used several quotes which I have not identified. I have done it for a purpose. They will be clearly noted in the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines in the coming May editions. I invite you to study them and review these conference messages. They are wonderful magazines and surely should be in every home. Then the spirit of this conference can live all year long in the pages of these magazines.

May we heed the voice of the prophets, who, from the beginning of time, have warned us about the importance of fathers in the home. May we determine more fully to fulfill our duties and responsibilities that the Lord has given to us as fathers in Zion is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Luke 22:41–43.
2. Exodus 18:14–15, 17–18.
3. Exodus 18:22.
4. Mosiah 27:10–14.
5. See David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), introduction, 25–48; David Popenoe, *Life without Father* (1996), 52–78.
6. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; italics added.
7. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Father, Consider Your Ways* (pamphlet, 1973); reprinted in *Ensign*, June 2002, 16.
8. *Ensign*, June 2002, 16.
9. “Worship in the Home,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1903, 138.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 49.
11. See Genesis 2:24.
12. *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1903, 138.
13. *Ensign*, June 2002, 14.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 61, 60–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 49.
15. Joseph F. Smith, “The Rights of Fatherhood,” *Juvenile Instructor*, Mar. 1, 1902, 146.

## Elder Dennis E. Simmons

### “But if not . . .”

As a young man, I returned home from an eighth-grade basketball tournament dejected, disappointed, and confused. I blurted out to my mother, “I don’t know why we lost—I had faith we’d win!”

I now realize that I did not then know what faith is.

Faith is not bravado, not just a wish, not just a hope. True faith is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—confidence and trust in Jesus Christ that leads a person to follow Him.<sup>1</sup>

Centuries ago, Daniel and his young associates were suddenly thrust from security into the world—a world foreign and intimidating. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and

worship a golden image set up by the king, a furious Nebuchadnezzar told them that if they would not worship as commanded, they would immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. “And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”<sup>2</sup>

The three young men quickly and confidently responded, “If it be so [if you cast us into the furnace], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and *he will deliver us out of thine hand.*” That sounds like my eighth-grade kind of faith. But then they demonstrated that they fully understood what faith is. They continued, “*But if not, . . . we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*”<sup>3</sup> That is a statement of true faith.

They knew that they could trust God—even if things didn't turn out the way they hoped.<sup>4</sup> They knew that faith is more than mental assent, more than an acknowledgment that God lives. Faith is total trust in Him.

Faith is believing that although we do not understand all things, He does. Faith is knowing that although our power is limited, His is not. Faith in Jesus Christ consists of complete reliance on Him.

### **Mortality is a time of testing**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew they could always rely on Him because they knew His plan and they knew that He does not change.<sup>5</sup> They knew, as we know, that mortality is not an accident of nature. It is a brief segment of the great plan<sup>6</sup> of our loving Father in Heaven to make it possible for us, His sons and daughters, to achieve the same blessings He enjoys, if we are willing.

They knew, as we know, that in our premortal life, we were instructed by Him as to the purpose of mortality: "We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."<sup>7</sup>

So there we have it—it's a test. The world is a testing place for mortal men and women. When we understand that it's all a test, administered by our Heavenly Father, who wants us to trust in Him and to allow Him to help us, we can then see everything more clearly.

His work and His glory, He told us, is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>8</sup> He has already achieved godhood. Now His only objective is to help us—to enable us to return to Him and be like Him and live His kind of life eternally.

Knowing all this, it was not difficult for those three young Hebrews to make their decision. They would follow God; they would exercise faith in Him. He would deliver them, *but if not*—and we know the rest of the story.

### **Meeting challenges with faith**

The Lord has given us agency, the right and the responsibility to decide.<sup>9</sup> He tests us by allowing us to be challenged. He assures us that He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our ability to withstand.<sup>10</sup> But we must understand that great challenges make great men. We don't seek tribulation, but if we respond in faith, the Lord strengthens us. The *but if not*s can become remarkable blessings.

The Apostle Paul learned this significant lesson and declared, after decades of dedicated missionary work, "We glory in tribulations . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed."<sup>11</sup>

He was assured by the Savior, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."<sup>12</sup>

Paul responded: "Most gladly therefore will I . . . glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. . . . I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."<sup>13</sup> When Paul met his challenges the Lord's way, his faith increased.

### **Faithfulness of ancient Saints**

"*By faith* Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."<sup>14</sup> Abraham, because of his great faith, was promised posterity greater in number than the stars in the heavens and that that posterity would come through Isaac. But Abraham immediately complied with the Lord's command. God would keep His promise, *but if not* in the manner Abraham expected, he still trusted Him completely.

Men accomplish marvelous things by trusting in the Lord and keeping His commandments—by exercising faith even when they don't know how the Lord is shaping them.

“*By faith* Moses . . . refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. . .

“*By faith* he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. . .

“*By faith* they passed through the Red sea as by dry land. . .

“*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down.”<sup>15</sup>

Others “*through faith* subdued kingdoms, . . . obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight.”<sup>16</sup>

But in the midst of all those glorious outcomes hoped for and expected by the participants, there were always the *but if not*:

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, . . . bonds and imprisonment:

“They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about . . . being destitute, afflicted, tormented; . . .”<sup>17</sup>

“God having provided some better things for them through their sufferings, for without sufferings they could not be made perfect.”<sup>18</sup>

Our scriptures and our history are replete with accounts of God’s great men and women who believed that He would deliver them, *but if not*, they demonstrated that they would trust and be true.

He has the power, but it’s our test.

### Have faith and do all we can

What does the Lord expect of us with respect to our challenges? He expects us to do all we can do. He does the rest. Nephi said, “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”<sup>19</sup>

We must have the same faith as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Our God will deliver us from ridicule and persecution, *but if not*. . . . Our God will deliver us from sickness and disease, *but if not*. . . . He will deliver us from loneliness, depression, or fear, *but if not*. . . . Our God will deliver us from threats, accusations, and insecurity, *but if not*. . . . He will deliver us from death or impairment of loved ones, *but if not*, we will trust in the Lord.

Our God will see that we receive justice and fairness, *but if not*. . . . He will make sure that we are loved and recognized, *but if not*. . . . We will receive a perfect companion and righteous and obedient children, *but if not, we will have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that if we do all we can do, we will, in His time and in His way, be delivered and receive all that He has*.<sup>20</sup> I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Faith,” 80; see also Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21; Ether 12:6.
2. Daniel 3:15.
3. Daniel 3:17–18; italics added.
4. See Mosiah 7:33.
5. See Alma 7:20; 3 Nephi 24:6; Mormon 9:19; Moroni 8:18.
6. See 2 Nephi 11:5; Alma 12:25; Doctrine and Covenants 84:35–38.
7. Abraham 3:24–25.
8. Moses 1:39.
9. See 2 Nephi 2:27; Helaman 14:30; Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
10. See 1 Corinthians 10:13; Alma 13:28.
11. Romans 5:3–5.
12. 2 Corinthians 12:9.
13. 2 Corinthians 12:9–10.
14. Hebrews 11:17; italics added.
15. Hebrews 11:24–27, 29–30; italics added.
16. Hebrews 11:33–34; italics added.
17. Hebrews 11:36–37.
18. Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:40.
19. 2 Nephi 25:23.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:35–38.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## Sister Julie B. Beck

### A woman with a “mother heart”

I have often heard my father describe my mother as a woman with a “mother heart,” and that is true. Her mothering influence has been felt by many hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, and she has refined the role of nurturer to an art form. Her testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and strong sense of identity and purpose have guided her life.

She took longer than most women to find her husband, but during her single years she had devoted her life to progress. Though it was uncommon at the time, she was university educated and advancing in a career. Following her marriage, children arrived in quick succession, and in a short span of years she was the mother of a large family. All the knowledge she had acquired, all her natural abilities and gifts, all her skills were channeled into an organization that had no earthly bounds. As a covenant-keeping daughter of God, she had prepared all her life for motherhood.

### What is a mother heart?

What is a mother heart and how is one acquired? We learn about some of those qualities in the scriptures. To paraphrase Proverbs: “Who can find a . . . woman [with a mother heart]? for her price is far above rubies. . . . She . . . worketh willingly with her hands. . . . With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. . . . She stretcheth out her hand to the poor. . . . Strength and honour are her clothing. . . . She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:10, 13, 16, 20, 25–27). A woman with a mother heart has a testimony of the restored gospel, and she teaches the principles of the gospel without equivocation. She is keeping sacred covenants made in holy temples.

Her talents and skills are shared unselfishly. She gains as much education as her circumstances will allow, improving her mind and spirit with the desire to teach what she learns to the generations who follow her.

If she has children, she is a “goodly parent” (1 Nephi 1:1) who lives and teaches standards of behavior exactly in line with the teachings of the living prophets. She teaches her “children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). Rather than listening to the voices and partial truths of the world, she knows that gospel standards are based on eternal, unchangeable truths. She believes that to be “primarily responsible for the nurture of [her] children” is a vital, dignified, and “sacred responsibilit[y]” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). To nurture and feed them physically is as much an honor as to nurture and feed them spiritually. She is “not weary in well-doing” and delights to serve her family, because she knows that “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

### Potential for eternal motherhood

Oh, that every girl and woman would have a testimony of her potential for eternal motherhood as she keeps her earthly covenants. “Each is a beloved . . . daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine . . . destiny” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). As spirit daughters of God, women “received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth” on the earth (D&C 138:56). They were among the “noble and great ones” (D&C 138:55) who “shouted for joy” (Job 38:7) at the creation of the earth because they would be given a physical body with the opportunity to be proven in a mortal sphere (see Abraham 3:25). They wished to work side by side with righteous men to accomplish



eternal goals that neither can attain independently.

Female roles did not begin on earth, and they do not end here. A woman who treasures motherhood on earth will treasure motherhood in the world to come, and “where [her] treasure is, there will [her] heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). By developing a mother heart, each girl and woman prepares for her divine, eternal mission of motherhood. “Whatever principle of intelligence [she] attain[s] unto in this life, it will rise with [her] in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through [her] diligence and obedience than another, [she] will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:18–19).

In my experience I have seen that some of the truest mother hearts beat in the breasts of women who will not rear their own children in this life, but they know that “all things must come to pass in their time” and that they “are laying the foundation of a great work” (D&C 64:32–33). As they keep their covenants, they are investing in a grand, prestigious future because they know that “they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26).

### **Mothers are involved in a great work**

I was recently at a park where I met a group of women with mother hearts. They were young, covenant-keeping women. They were bright and had obtained advanced degrees from respected universities. Now they were devoting their considerable gifts to planning dinner that evening and sharing housekeeping ideas. They were teaching two-year-olds to be kind to one another. They were soothing babies, kissing bruised knees, and wiping tears.

I asked one of those mothers how it came about that she could transfer her talents so cheerfully into the role of mother-

hood. She replied, “I know who I am, and I know what I am supposed to do. The rest just follows.” That young mother will build faith and character in the next generation one family prayer at a time, one scripture study session, one book read aloud, one song, one family meal after another. She is involved in a great work. She knows that “children are an heritage of the Lord” and “happy is the [woman] that hath [a] quiver full of them” (Psalm 127:3, 5). She knows that the influence of righteous, conscientious, persistent, daily mothering is far more lasting, far more powerful, far more influential than any earthly position or institution invented by man. She has the vision that, if worthy, she has the potential to be blessed as Rebekah of old to be “the mother of thousands of millions” (Genesis 24:60).

### **The great influence of righteous women**

Covenant-keeping women who have mother hearts know that whether motherhood comes early or late; whether they are blessed with a “quiver full” of children here in mortality or not; whether they are single, married, or left to carry the responsibility of parenthood alone—in holy temples they are “endowed with power from on high” (D&C 38:32), and with that endowment they receive the promised blessings and are “persuaded of them, and embraced them” (Hebrews 11:13).

Every girl and woman who makes and keeps sacred covenants can have a mother heart. There is no limit to what a woman with a mother heart can accomplish. Righteous women have changed the course of history and will continue to do so, and their influence will spread and grow exponentially throughout the eternities. How grateful I am to the Lord for trusting women with the divine mission of motherhood. Like Mother Eve, I am “glad” (Moses 5:11) to know these things. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Following Brother Packer's remarks, the choir will sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," with soloist Liriel Domiciano.

It will then be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, who will be our concluding speaker at this session of conference.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Faith in Every Footstep." The benediction then will be offered by Elder James M. Dunn of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### We need not fear for children's future

A few weeks ago our youngest son and his wife and family stopped to see us. The first one out of the car was our two-year-old grandson. He came running to me with his arms outstretched, shouting, "Gwampa! Gwampa! Gwampa!"

He hugged my legs, and I looked down at that smiling face and those big, innocent eyes and thought, "What kind of a world awaits him?"

For a moment I had that feeling of anxiety, that fear of the future that so many parents express to us. Everywhere we go fathers and mothers worry about the future of their children in this very troubled world.

But then a feeling of assurance came over me. My fear of the future faded.

That guiding, comforting Spirit, with which we in the Church are so familiar, brought to my remembrance what I already knew. The fear of the future was gone. That bright-eyed, little two-year-old can have a good life—a very good life—and so can his children and his grandchildren, even though they will live in a world where there is much of wickedness.

They will see many events transpire in the course of their lifetime. Some of these shall tax their courage and extend their faith. But if they seek prayerfully for help

and guidance, they shall be given power over adverse things. Such trials shall not be permitted to stand in the way of their progress but instead shall act as stepping-stones to greater knowledge.

As a grandfather and as one of the Twelve, I will give you some counsel, some caution, and a lot of encouragement. I could do this much better if the grandmother in our family, my wife of 57 years, were standing beside me. Mothers know much more about life than fathers do, but I will do the best I can.

We do not fear the future for ourselves or for our children.

### Warning from the Book of Mormon

We live in dangerously troubled times. The values that steadied mankind in earlier times are being tossed away.

We must not ignore Moroni's words when he saw our day and said, "Ye [must] awake to a sense of your awful situation" (Ether 8:24).

We cannot take lightly this warning from the Book of Mormon:

"The Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him . . . , doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their

God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

“And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with *death* and with *terror*, and with *famine* and with all manner of *pestilence*, they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:1–3; italics added).

Have you noticed that word *terror* in that prophetic Book of Mormon warning?

The moral values upon which civilization itself must depend spiral downward at an ever-increasing pace. Nevertheless, I do not fear the future.

World War I ended only six years before I was born. When we were children, the effects of the war were everywhere present. World War II came only 15 years later. And dark clouds were already gathering.

We had the same anxious feelings that many of you do now. We wondered what the future held for us in an unsettled world.

### **Protect children from spiritual diseases**

When I was a boy, childhood diseases appeared regularly in every community. When someone had chicken pox or measles or mumps, the health officer would visit the home and place a quarantine sign on the porch or in the window to warn everyone to stay away. In a large family like ours, those diseases would visit by relay, one child getting it from another, so the sign might stay up for weeks.

We could not blockade ourselves inside our homes or stay hidden away to avoid those terrible contagions. We had to go to school, to employment, to church—to life!

Two of my sisters were stricken with very severe cases of measles. At first they seemed to recover. A few weeks later, Mother glanced out of the window and saw Adele, the younger of the two, lean-

ing against a swing. She was faint and weak with a fever. It was rheumatic fever! It came as a complication from measles. The other sister also had the fever.

There was little that could be done. In spite of all of the prayers of my parents, Adele died. She was eight years old.

While Nona, two years older, recovered, she had fragile health for most of her life.

When I was in the seventh grade, in a health class, the teacher read an article. A mother learned that the neighbor children had chicken pox. She faced the probability that her children would have it as well, perhaps one at a time. She determined to get it all over with at once.

So she sent her children to the neighbor's to play with their children to let them be exposed, and then she would be done with it. Imagine her horror when the doctor finally came and announced that it was not chicken pox the children had; it was smallpox.

The best thing to do then and what we must do now is to avoid places where there is danger of physical or spiritual contagion.

We have little concern that our grandchildren will get the measles. They have been immunized and can move freely without fear of that.

While in much of the world measles has virtually been eradicated, it is still the leading cause of vaccine-preventable death in children.

From money generously donated by Latter-day Saints, the Church recently donated a million dollars to a cooperative effort to immunize the children of Africa against measles. For one dollar, one child can be protected.

### **Inoculation from spiritual diseases**

Parents now are concerned about the moral and spiritual diseases. These can have terrible complications when standards and values are abandoned. We must all take protective measures.

With the proper serum, the physical body is protected against disease. We can also protect our children from moral and spiritual diseases.

The word *inoculate* has two parts: *in*—“to be within”—and *oculate* means “eye to see.”

When children are baptized and confirmed (see D&C 20:41, 43; 33:15), we place an *eye within them*—the “unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:26). With the Restoration of the gospel came authority to confer this gift.

The Book of Mormon gives us the key: “Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. . . . Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you [and your children as well] all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

If you will accept it in your mind and cradle it in your feelings, a knowledge of the restored gospel and a testimony of Jesus Christ can spiritually immunize your children.

### **The family is the best protection**

One thing is very clear: the safest place and the best protection against the moral and spiritual diseases is a stable home and family. This has always been true; it will be true forever. We must keep that foremost in our minds.

The scriptures speak of “the shield of faith wherewith,” the Lord said, “ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

This shield of faith is best fabricated in a cottage industry. While the shield can be polished in classes in the Church and in activities, it is meant to be handcrafted in the home and fitted to each individual.

The Lord said, “Take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand” (D&C 27:15).

### **Have faith; do not be fearful**

Our young people in many ways are much stronger and better than we were. They and we should not be afraid of what is ahead.

Encourage our young people. They need not live in fear (see D&C 6:36). Fear is the opposite of faith.

While we cannot erase wickedness, we can produce young Latter-day Saints who, spiritually nourished, are immunized against evil influences.

As a grandfather who has lived a long time, I counsel you to have faith. Things have a way of working out. Stay close to the Church. Keep your children close to the Church.

### **Study the doctrines of the gospel**

In Alma’s day “the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it . . . had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.

### **Put your homes in order**

Find happiness in ordinary things, and keep your sense of humor.

Nona recovered from measles and rheumatic fever. She lived long enough to benefit from open-heart surgery and enjoyed years of much improved health. Others spoke of her newly acquired energy. She said, “I have a Cadillac engine in a Model T frame.”

Keep your sense of humor!

Do not be afraid to bring children into the world. We are under covenant to provide physical bodies so that spirits may enter mortality (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). Children are the future of the restored Church.

Put your homes in order. If Mother is working outside of the home, see if there are ways to change that, even a little. It may be very difficult to change at the present time. But analyze carefully and be prayerful (see D&C 9:8–9). Then expect to have inspiration, which is revelation (see D&C 8:2–3). Expect intervention from power from beyond the veil to help you move, in due time, to what is best for your family.

### Remember the Atonement

Alma called the plan of salvation “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8; see also 2 Nephi 11:5; Alma 12:25; 17:16; 34:9; 41:2; 42:5, 11–13, 15, 31; Moses 6:62).

Each of us came into mortality to receive a mortal body and to be tested (see Abraham 3:24–26).

Life will not be free from challenges, some of them bitter and hard to bear. We may wish to be spared all the trials of life, but that would be contrary to the great plan of happiness, “for it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). This testing is the source of our strength.

As an innocent child, my sister Adele’s life was cruelly interrupted by disease and suffering. She and all the others so taken continue the work of the Lord beyond the veil. She will not be denied anything essential for her eternal progression.

We also lost an infant granddaughter. She was named Emma, after my mother. We receive comfort from the scriptures:

“Little children need no repentance, neither baptism. . . . Little children are alive in Christ” (Moroni 8:11–12).

Remember the Atonement of Christ. Do not despair or count as forever lost those who have fallen to the temptations of Satan. They will, after the debt is paid to “the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:26) and after the healing which attends complete repentance takes place, receive a salvation.

### Follow Church leaders

Follow the leaders who are called to preside over you, for the promise is given: “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place” (D&C 124:45).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will go forward “until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2) and the great Jehovah announces that His work is done (see *History of the Church*, 4:540). The Church is a safe harbor. We will be protected by justice and comforted by mercy (see Alma 34:15–16). No unhallowed hand can stay the progress of this work (see D&C 76:3).

We are not blind to the conditions in the world.

The Apostle Paul prophesied of “perilous times” in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1), and he warned, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Isaiah promised, “In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee” (Isaiah 54:14).

The Lord Himself encouraged, “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of

me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Wasn't that absolutely magnificent? Thank you, Liriel Domiciano and the choir. What a great declaration of faith—"I know that my Redeemer lives." Thank you again for that stirring and wonderful music.

May I first say to all the Church, and to others, thank you for your great kindness to Sister Hinckley and me. You have been and are so gracious and generous. We are touched by all you do for us. If all the world were treated as we are treated, what a different world it would be. We would care for one another in the Spirit of the Master, who reached out to comfort and heal.

### **These are perilous times**

Now, my brothers and sisters, President Packer has spoken to you as a grandfather. I should like to pick up a thread from the tapestry he has woven. I too am now an old man, older even than he, if you can imagine that. I have been around for a long time, I have traveled far, and I have seen much of this world. In hours of quiet reflection, I wonder why there is so much of trouble and suffering almost everywhere. Our times are fraught with peril. We hear frequently quoted the words of Paul to Timothy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:1). He then goes on to describe the conditions that will prevail. I think it is plainly evident that these latter days are indeed perilous times that fit the conditions that Paul described (see 2 Timothy 3:2–7).

But peril is not a new condition for the human family. Revelation tells us that "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7–9).

What a perilous time that must have been. The Almighty Himself was pitted against the son of the morning. We were there while that was going on. That must have been a desperately difficult struggle, with a grand, triumphal victory.

Concerning those desperate times, the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7).

Why were we then happy? I think it was because good had triumphed over evil and the whole human family was on the Lord's side. We had turned our backs on the adversary and aligned ourselves with the forces of God, and those forces were victorious.

But having made that decision, why should we have to make it again and again after our birth into mortality?

I cannot understand why so many have betrayed in life the decision they once made when the great war occurred in heaven.

## War between good and evil has continued

But it is evident that the contest between good and evil, which began with that war, has never ended. It has gone on, and on, and on to the present.

I think our Father must weep because so many of His children through the ages have exercised the agency He gave them and have chosen to walk the road of evil rather than good.

Evil was manifest early in this world when Cain slew Abel. It increased until in the days of Noah, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

"And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5–6).

He commanded Noah to build an ark "wherein few, that is, eight souls" would be saved (1 Peter 3:20).

The earth was cleansed. The floods receded. Righteousness was again established. But it was not long until the family of humanity, so very many of them, returned to the old ways of disobedience. The inhabitants of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, are examples of the depravity to which men sank. And "God [utterly] destroyed the cities of the plain" in a summary and final desolation (Genesis 19:29).

Isaiah thundered: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Isaiah 59:2–3).

It was so with the other prophets of the Old Testament. The burden of their message was a denunciation of wickedness. And the peril of those times was not peculiar to the Old World. The Book of Mormon documents that in the Western

Hemisphere the armies of the Jaredites fought to the death. The Nephites and the Lamanites also fought until thousands had died and Moroni was forced to wander alone for the safety of his own life (see Moroni 1:3). His great and final plea, directed toward those of our day, was a call to righteousness:

"And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing" (Moroni 10:30).

## Apostasy after the Savior's death

When the Savior walked the earth, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), but He also denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, speaking of them as "whited sepulchres" (see Matthew 23:27). He lashed out at the money changers in the temple, saying, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Luke 19:46). This too was a time of great peril. Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, which, in its governance, was ironfisted, oppressive, and clouded over with evil.

Paul's letters cried out for strength among the followers of Christ, lest they fall into the ways of the wicked one. But a spirit of apostasy ultimately prevailed.

Ignorance and evil enveloped the world, resulting in what is known as the Dark Ages. Isaiah predicted, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2). For centuries, disease was rampant and poverty reigned. The Black Death killed some 50 million people during the 14th century. Was not this a season of terrible peril? I wonder how humanity survived.

But somehow, in that long season of darkness a candle was lighted. The age of Renaissance brought with it a flowering of learning, art, and science. There came a movement of bold and courageous men

and women who looked heavenward in acknowledgment of God and His divine Son. We speak of it as the Reformation.

### **The dawning of a brighter day**

And then, after many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season.

But there was also evil. And one manifestation of that evil was persecution. There was hatred. There were drivings and forced marches in the time of winter.

It was as Charles Dickens described in the opening lines of his *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, . . . it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Notwithstanding the great evil of these times, what a glorious season it has been and now is. A new day has come in the work of the Almighty. That work has grown and strengthened and moved across the earth. It has now touched for good the lives of millions, and this is only the beginning.

This great dawning has also resulted in a tremendous outpouring of secular knowledge upon the world.

Think of the increased longevity of life. Think of the wonders of modern medicine. I stand amazed. Think of the flowering of education. Think of the miraculous advances in travel and communication. Man’s ingenuity knows no end when the God of heaven inspires and pours out light and knowledge.

There is still so much of conflict in the world. There is terrible poverty, disease, and hatred. Man is still brutal in his inhumanity to man. Yet there is this glorious dawn. The “Sun of righteousness” has come “with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2). God and His Beloved Son have revealed Themselves. We know Them. We worship Them “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We love Them. We honor Them and seek to do Their will.

The keys of the everlasting priesthood have turned the locks of the prisons of the past.

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;  
Lo, Zion’s standard is unfurled!  
The dawning of a brighter day, . . .  
Majestic rises on the world.

[“The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1]

Perilous times? Yes. These are perilous times. But the human race has lived in peril from the time before the earth was created. Somehow, through all of the darkness, there has been a faint but beautiful light. And now with added luster it shines upon the world. It carries with it God’s plan of happiness for His children. It carries with it the great and unfathomable wonders of the Atonement of the Redeemer.

How grateful we are to the God of heaven for His beneficent care of His children in providing for them, through all the perils of eternity, the opportunity of salvation and the blessing of exaltation in His kingdom, if only they will live in righteousness.

### **We have a great responsibility**

And, my brothers and sisters, this places upon each of us a grand and consuming responsibility. President Wilford Woodruff said in 1894:

“The Almighty is with this people. We shall have all the revelations that we



will need, if we will do our duty and obey the commandments of God. . . . While I . . . live I want to do my duty. I want the Latter-day Saints to do their duty. Here is the Holy Priesthood. . . . Their responsibility is great and mighty. The eyes of God and all the holy prophets are watching us. This is the great dispensation that has been spoken of ever since the world began. We are gathered together . . . by the power and commandment of God. We are doing the work of God. . . . Let us fill our mission” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 3:258).

This is our great and demanding challenge, my brothers and sisters. This is the choice we must constantly make, just as generations before us have had to choose. We must ask ourselves:

Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
Now is the time to show.  
We ask it fearlessly:  
Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
[“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*,  
no. 260]

Do we really comprehend, do we understand the tremendous significance of that which we have? This is the summation of the generations of man, the concluding chapter in the entire panorama of the human experience.

### **Live as true followers of Christ**

But this does not put us in a position of superiority. Rather, it should humble us. It places upon us an unforgiving responsibility to reach out with concern for all others in the Spirit of the Master, who taught, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself” (Matthew 19:19). We must cast out self-righteousness and rise above petty self-interest.

We must do all that is required in moving forward the work of the Lord in building His kingdom in the earth. We can never compromise the doctrine which has come through revelation, but we can live and work with others, respecting their beliefs and admiring their virtues, joining hands in opposition to the sophistries, the quarrels, the hatred—those perils which have been with man from the beginning.

Without surrendering any element of our doctrine, we can be neighborly, we can be helpful, we can be kind and generous.

We of this generation are the end harvest of all that has gone before. It is not enough to simply be known as a member of this Church. A solemn obligation rests upon us. Let us face it and work at it.

We must live as true followers of the Christ, with charity toward all, returning good for evil, teaching by example the ways of the Lord, and accomplishing the vast service He has outlined for us.

May we live worthy of the glorious endowment of light and understanding and eternal truth which has come to us through all the perils of the past. Somehow, among all who have walked the earth, we have been brought forth in this unique and remarkable season. Be grateful, and above all be faithful. This is my humble prayer, as I bear witness of the truth of this work, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Faith in Every Footstep.”

Elder James M. Dunn offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 174th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 4, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 174th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating

in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for the session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Oh, What Songs of the Heart.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders M. Russell Ballard and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. They will be followed by Elder Clate W. Mask of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.”

Elder Robert F. Orton offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Oh, What Songs of the Heart.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### **A grandson's tragic death**

This past January our family suffered the tragic loss of our grandson Nathan in an airplane crash. Nathan had served in the Russian-speaking Baltic Mission. He loved the people and knew it was a privilege to serve the Lord. Three months after I officiated at his eternal marriage to his sweetheart, Jennifer, this accident took his life. Nathan's being taken so suddenly from our mortal presence has turned each of our hearts and minds to the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. While it is impossible for me to put into words the full meaning of the Atonement of Christ, I pray that I can explain what His Atonement means

to me and our family and what it might also mean to you and yours.

### **Reality of the Atonement**

The Savior's precious birth, life, Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane, suffering on the cross, burial in Joseph's tomb, and glorious Resurrection all became a renewed reality for us. The Savior's Resurrection assures all of us that someday we too will follow Him and experience our own resurrection. What peace, what comfort this great gift is which comes through the loving grace of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind.

Because of Him we know we can be with Nathan again.

There is no greater expression of love than the heroic Atonement performed by the Son of God. Were it not for the plan of our Heavenly Father, established before the world began, in a very real sense, all mankind—past, present, and future—would have been left without the hope of eternal progression. As a result of Adam's transgression, mortals were separated from God (see Romans 6:23) and would be forever unless a way was found to break the bands of death. This would not be easy, for it required the vicarious sacrifice of one who was sinless and who could therefore take upon Himself the sins of all mankind.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ courageously fulfilled this sacrifice in ancient Jerusalem. There, in the quiet isolation of the Garden of Gethsemane, He knelt among the gnarled olive trees, and in some incredible way that none of us can fully comprehend, the Savior took upon Himself the sins of the world. Even though His life was pure and free of sin, He paid the ultimate penalty for sin—yours, mine, and everyone's who has ever lived. His mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish were so great they caused Him to bleed from every pore (see Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18). And yet Jesus suffered willingly so we might all have the opportunity to be washed clean—through having faith in Him, repenting of our sins, being baptized by proper priesthood authority, receiving the purifying gift of the Holy Ghost by confirmation, and accepting all other essential ordinances. Without the Atonement of the Lord, none of these blessings would be available to us, and we could not become worthy and prepared to return to dwell in the presence of God.

The Savior later endured the agony of inquisition, cruel beatings, and death by crucifixion on the cross at Calvary. Recently there has been a great deal of commentary about this, none of which has made clear the singular point that no one

had the power to take the Savior's life from Him. He gave it as a ransom for us all. As the Son of God, He had the power to alter the situation. Yet the scriptures clearly state that He yielded Himself to scourging, humiliation, suffering, and finally crucifixion because of His great love toward the children of men (see 1 Nephi 19:9–10).

### **Gratitude for the Savior's sacrifice**

The Atonement of Jesus Christ was an indispensable part of our Heavenly Father's plan for His Son's earthly mission and for our salvation. How grateful we should be that our Heavenly Father did not intercede but rather withheld His fatherly instinct to rescue His Beloved Son. Because of His eternal love for you and for me, He allowed Jesus to complete His foreordained mission to become our Redeemer. The gift of resurrection and immortality is given freely through the loving grace of Jesus Christ to all people of all ages, regardless of their good or evil acts. And to those who choose to love the Lord and who show their love and faith in Him by keeping His commandments and qualifying for the full blessings of the Atonement, He offers the additional promise of exaltation and eternal life, which is the blessing of living in the presence of God and His Beloved Son forever.

We often sing a hymn that expresses what I feel when I consider the Savior's benevolent, atoning sacrifice:

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus  
offers me,

Confused at the grace that so fully he  
proffers me.

I tremble to know that for me he was  
crucified,

That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he  
bled and died.

["I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193]

Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, is not dead. He lives—the

resurrected Son of God lives—that is my testimony, and He guides the affairs of His Church today.

### **God is literally our Father**

In the spring of 1820, a pillar of light illuminated a grove of trees in upstate New York. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This experience began the restoration of powerful doctrinal truths that had been lost for centuries. Among those truths that had been dimmed by the darkness of apostasy was the stirring reality that we are all the spirit sons and daughters of a loving God who is our Father. We are part of His family. He is not a father in some allegorical or poetic sense. He is literally the Father of our spirits. He cares for each one of us.

Though this world has a way of diminishing and demeaning men and women, the reality is we are all of royal, divine lineage. In that unprecedented appearance of the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove, the very first word spoken by the Father of us all was the personal name of Joseph. Such is our Father's personal relationship with each of us. He knows our names and yearns for us to become worthy to return to live with Him.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith came the Restoration of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ has once again revealed, through His chosen prophet, the ordinances and the priesthood authority to administer them for the salvation of all who will believe.

### **God weeps over His wayward children**

Another prophet in another time was shown “the nations of the earth” (Moses 7:23). “And the Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world” (Moses 7:67). Enoch saw also that Satan “had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness;

and he [Satan] looked up and laughed” (Moses 7:26).

With all that Enoch beheld, there was one thing that seemed to capture his attention above everything else. Enoch saw God look “upon the residue of the people, and he wept” (Moses 7:28). The sacred record then has Enoch asking God over and over: “How is it that thou canst weep? . . . How is it thou canst weep?” (Moses 7:29, 31).

The Lord answered Enoch: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands . . . ; and unto thy brethren have I . . . also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood” (Moses 7:32–33).

Enoch saw the conditions of these latter days. He and other early prophets knew that only as we accept the Atonement in our lives and strive to live the gospel can we meet the challenges of life and find peace, joy, and happiness. Coming to understand this great gift is an individual pursuit for each child of God.

### **The eternal value of each soul**

Brothers and sisters, I believe that if we could truly understand the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would realize how precious is *one* son or daughter of God. I believe our Heavenly Father's everlasting purpose for His children is generally achieved by the small and simple things we do for one another. At the heart of the English word *atonement* is the word *one*. If all mankind understood this, there would never be anyone with whom we would not be concerned, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or social or economic standing. We would strive to emulate the Savior and would never be unkind, indifferent, disrespectful, or insensitive to others.

If we truly understood the Atonement and the eternal value of each soul, we would seek out the wayward boy and girl and every other wayward child of God. We would help them to know of the love Christ has for them. We would do all that we can to help prepare them to receive the saving ordinances of the gospel.

Surely, if the Atonement of Christ was foremost in the minds of ward and branch leaders, no new or reactivated member would ever be neglected. Because every soul is so precious, leaders will counsel together to see that each one is taught the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **The Atonement is for every child of God**

When I think of Nathan and how precious he is to us, I can see and feel more clearly how our Heavenly Father must feel about all of His children. We do not want God to weep because we did not do all we could to share with His children the revealed truths of the gospel. I pray that every one of our youth will seek to know the blessings of the Atonement and that they will strive to be worthy to serve the Lord in the mission field. Surely many more senior couples and others whose health will permit would eagerly desire to serve the Lord as missionaries if they would ponder over the meaning of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who said, "If . . . you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be *one* soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15; italics added). Not only that, but great shall be the *Lord's joy* in the soul that repenteth, for precious unto Him is the *one*.

Brothers and sisters, our Heavenly Father has reached out to us through the Atonement of our Savior. He invites all to "come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption" (Omni 1:26). He has taught us that it is through our

faithful adherence to gospel principles, through receiving the saving ordinances that have been restored, through continual service, and by enduring to the end that we can return to His sacred presence. What possible thing in the whole world is remotely as important as to know this?

Sadly, in today's world a person's importance is often judged by the size of the audience before which he or she performs. That is how media and sports programs are rated, how corporate prominence is sometimes determined, and often how governmental rank is obtained. That may be why roles such as father, mother, and missionary seldom receive standing ovations. Fathers, mothers, and missionaries "play" before very small audiences. Yet, in the eyes of the Lord, there may be only *one size* of audience that is of lasting importance—and that is just *one*, each *one*, you and me, and each one of the children of God. The irony of the Atonement is that it is infinite and eternal, yet it is applied individually, one person at a time.

### **Come to the Savior one by one**

There is a level at which the child's hymn "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) harmonizes with the music of eternity. We are children of God. Each one of us is precious to the point of bringing the Lord God Almighty to a fulness of joy if we are faithful or to tears if we are not.

As the resurrected Savior said to the Nephites, so He might say to us today:

"Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now . . . my joy is full.

"And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:20–21; italics added).

Brothers and sisters, never, never underestimate how precious is the *one*. Remember always the simple admonition of the Lord: "If ye love me, keep my com-

mandments” (John 14:15). Always strive to live worthy of the sacred, full blessings of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our sorrow over the separation from our dear Nathan has come the peace that only the Savior and Redeemer can give. Our family has turned to Him one by one, and we now sing with greater appreciation and understanding:

Oh, it is wonderful that he should care  
for me  
Enough to die for me!  
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!  
[“I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193]

My dear brothers and sisters, may you give to others and receive for yourselves every blessing the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ offers, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Teach children to keep commandments

As Paul prophesied, we live in “perilous times.”<sup>1</sup> “Satan [has been going] about, leading away the hearts of the people,”<sup>2</sup> and his influence is increasing. But no matter how evil the world becomes, our families can be at peace. If we do what’s right, we will be guided and protected.

The hymn often sung by our pioneer ancestors tells us what to do: “Gird up your loins; fresh courage take. / Our God will never us forsake.”<sup>3</sup> That courage and faith is what we need as parents and families in these latter days.

Father Lehi had such courage. He loved his family and rejoiced that some of his children kept the Lord’s commandments. But he must have been heartbroken when his sons Laman and Lemuel “partook not of the fruit” representing the love of God. “He exceedingly feared for [them]; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Every parent faces moments of such fear. However, when we exercise our faith by teaching our children and doing what we can to help them, our fears will diminish. Lehi girded up his loins, and with faith “he did exhort [his children] with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them.” And “he

bade them to keep the commandments of the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

### No family has reached perfection

We too must have the faith to teach our children and bid them to keep the commandments. We should not let their choices weaken our faith. Our worthiness will not be measured according to their righteousness. Lehi did not lose the blessing of feasting at the tree of life because Laman and Lemuel refused to partake of its fruit. Sometimes as parents we feel we have failed when our children make mistakes or stray. Parents are never failures when they do their best to love, teach, pray, and care for their children. Their faith, prayers, and efforts will be consecrated to the good of their children.

The Lord’s desire for us as parents is that we keep His commandments. He has said: “[Teach] your children light and truth, according to the commandments. . . . Set in order your own house. . . . See that [you] are more diligent and concerned at home.”<sup>6</sup>

I want to remind all of us today that no family has reached perfection. All families are subject to the conditions of mortality. All of us are given the gift of agency—to choose for ourselves and to learn from the consequences of our choices.

Any of us may experience a spouse, a child, a parent, or a member of our extended family suffering in one way or another—mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually—and we may experience these tribulations ourselves at times. In short, mortality is not easy.

### **The gospel protects families**

Each family has its own special circumstances. But the gospel of Jesus Christ addresses every challenge—which is why we must teach it to our children.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states:

“Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.”<sup>7</sup>

Fulfilling these obligations is the key to protecting our families in these last days.

Moses counseled, “And thou shalt teach [these words] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>8</sup> Our families should be in our thoughts continually.

### **Example of Moses’s mother**

Moses understood the need for constant teaching, for he grew up in difficult times. At the time Moses was born, Pharaoh had declared that every Hebrew male infant in Egypt should be cast into the river. But Moses’s parents took seriously their parental duties.

The scriptures record, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, . . . and [his parents] were

not afraid of the king’s commandment.”<sup>9</sup> When Moses grew too old to be concealed, his mother, Jochebed, constructed an ingenious basket of bulrushes, waterproofed it with slime and pitch, and placed her son inside. She directed the tiny vessel down the river to a safe place—to where the Pharaoh’s daughter bathed.

Leaving nothing to chance, Jochebed also sent along an inspired helper, her daughter Miriam, to keep watch. When Pharaoh’s daughter, the princess, found the baby, Miriam bravely offered to call a Hebrew nurse. That nurse was Jochebed, Moses’s mother.<sup>10</sup> Because of her faithfulness, Moses’s life was spared. In time he learned who he really was, and he “forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.”<sup>11</sup>

I join with faithful parents everywhere in declaring that we know who we are, we understand our responsibilities as parents, and we do not fear the wrath of the prince of darkness. We trust in the light of the Lord.

Like Jochebed, we raise our families in a wicked and hostile world—a world as dangerous as the courts of Egypt ruled by Pharaoh. But like Jochebed, we also weave around our children a protective basket—a vessel called “the family”—and guide them to safe places where our teachings can be reinforced in the home and at church.

Ultimately we guide them to the greatest of all houses of learning—the holy temple, where one day they can kneel, surrounded by their faithful family members, to be sealed for time and all eternity to a worthy companion. What they learned from us they will teach their children, and the work of eternal families will go on.

Along the way, at times when our children are away from us, the Lord provides inspired “Miriams” to watch over them—special third-party helpers such as priesthood and auxiliary leaders, teachers, extended family, and worthy friends.

Sometimes the Spirit prompts us as parents to seek special help beyond ourselves through such resources as doctors and qualified counselors. The Spirit will direct when and how such help should be obtained.

### **Principles to strengthen families**

But the greatest help for our families comes through the gospel—from our Heavenly Father, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in the doctrines and principles, and through the priesthood. May I share with you five important elements of parenting that will assist us in strengthening our families.

#### *Hold family councils*

*Hold family councils.* Sometimes we are afraid of our children—afraid to counsel with them for fear of offending them. There are priceless blessings to be obtained from counseling together with our families, showing a genuine interest in the lives of our family members. Occasionally family councils may involve all family members as part of a family home evening or other special gatherings. But we should regularly counsel with each of our children individually.

Without this one-on-one counseling together with our children, they are prone to believe that Dad and Mom, or Grandpa and Grandma, don't understand or care about the challenges they are facing. As we listen with love and refrain from interrupting, the Spirit will help us learn how we can be of help to our children and teach them.

For example, we may teach them that they can choose their actions but not the consequences of those actions. We can also gently help them understand what the consequences of *their* actions may be in their *own* lives.

#### *Leave the door to our hearts open*

Sometimes when our teachings aren't heeded and when our expectations are not met, we need to remind ourselves to *leave the door to our hearts open*.

In the parable of the prodigal son, we find a powerful lesson for families and especially parents. After the younger son "came to himself,"<sup>12</sup> he decided to go home.

How did he know his father wouldn't reject him? Because he knew his father. Through the inevitable misunderstandings, conflicts, and follies of the son's youth, I can visualize his father being there with an understanding and compassionate heart, a soft answer, a listening ear, and a forgiving embrace. I can also imagine his son knowing he could come home because he knew the kind of home that was awaiting him, for the scriptures say, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."<sup>13</sup>

I testify that our Heavenly Father leaves the door open. I also testify that it is never too late to open the door between us and our children with simple words such as "I love you," "I am sorry," and "Please forgive me." We can begin now to create a home they will want to return to—not only now but in the eternities.

We can also help our obedient children leave the door of forgiveness open by expressing our love and appreciation to them and by helping them rejoice in the repentance of their siblings.

#### *Liken the scriptures unto ourselves*

With the door to our hearts open, we should learn how to *liken the scriptures to our lives*.

We often talk about teaching our children from the scriptures, but how do we do that?



Several years ago I was teaching our young son about the life and experiences of the brother of Jared. Although the story was very interesting, he was not engaged. I then asked what the story meant to him personally. It means so much when we ask our children, “What does it mean to you?” He said, “You know, it’s not that different from what Joseph Smith did in the grove when he prayed and got an answer.”

I said, “You’re about Joseph’s age. Do you think a prayer like his would be helpful to you?” Suddenly we weren’t talking about a long-ago story in a faraway land. We were talking about our son—about his life, his needs, and the way prayer could help him.

As parents we have the responsibility to help our children to “lik[e] all scriptures [indeed, every part of the gospel of Jesus Christ] unto us [and unto our children], . . . for [the] profit and learning [of our families].”<sup>14</sup>

#### *Take advantage of teaching moments*

Are we likening all of our children’s gospel experiences to the real needs in their lives? Are we teaching them about the gift of the Holy Ghost, repentance, the Atonement, the sacrament, and the blessing of sacrament meeting as they meet the challenges in their lives? There is not enough time in formal meetings to teach our children everything they need to know. Therefore, we must *take advantage of everyday teaching moments*.

These moments are priceless. They come when we are working, playing, and struggling together. When they come, the Spirit of the Lord can help us know what to say and help our children accept our teaching.

#### *Trust the Good Shepherd*

What a joy and blessing to have the Spirit in our homes! And what a blessing it is to invite it through prayer, studying

the scriptures, speaking kindly, and showing appreciation to one another! Let us prepare our teaching moments by praying as Alma prayed for his son, “with much faith”<sup>15</sup> and all the energy of our souls; by fasting, searching the scriptures, repenting of our sins, and allowing the Holy Ghost to fill our hearts with love, forgiveness, and compassion. And then it will fill our homes. Then let us *trust the Good Shepherd*.

Moses’s mother, Jochebed, guided her son down the river with faith in the “Shepherd . . . of [our] souls.”<sup>16</sup> As parents we too can trust the Good Shepherd to guide and direct us. Isaiah promised that He “shall gently lead”<sup>17</sup> all those who bear responsibility for the young.

He will help us trust and honor the principles of agency, opposition, and the Atonement, even when our children make unwise decisions. Through His Spirit, He will help us teach our children to meet every challenge, trial, and tribulation in life by remembering who they are—children of God. We will be inspired with ways to help them “put on the whole armour of God”<sup>18</sup> so they can withstand the “fiery darts of the adversary”<sup>19</sup> with the “shield of faith”<sup>20</sup> and “the sword of the Spirit.”<sup>21</sup> As our children are spiritually armed and strengthened, He will bless them to endure faithfully to the end and return home, worthy to stand and live in their Heavenly Father’s presence forever.

Through it all, we will sorrow to see our family members suffer the slings and arrows of mortality. But we will stand all amazed at the love our Savior offers them. Because of Him, the buffetings need not defeat and destroy them but can soften, strengthen, and sanctify them.

#### **Jesus Christ is mighty to save**

To parents and families throughout the world, I testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save. He is the Healer, the Redeemer, the rescuing Shepherd

who will leave the ninety and nine to find the one. If we are seeking the salvation of special “ones” in our own families, I bear testimony that they are within His reach. We assist Him in reaching them by faithfully living the gospel, being sealed in the temple, and living true to the covenants we make there.

Parents can take great comfort in the words of Elder Orson F. Whitney relating the teachings of Joseph Smith:

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.”<sup>22</sup>

I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ gave His life, making possible the salvation and exaltation of all the families of the earth. With all the feeling of a ten-

der parent, I express my love and the love of our Heavenly Father to you and your family.

May we gather our loved ones around us, “gird up [our] loins; [and] fresh courage take. Our God will never us forsake.” With faith, courage, and love, families will truly be together forever. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. 3 Nephi 2:3.
3. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
4. 1 Nephi 8:35–36.
5. 1 Nephi 8:37–38.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:42–43, 50.
7. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. Deuteronomy 6:7.
9. Hebrews 11:23.
10. See Exodus 2:3–10; see also Jerrie W. Hurd, *Our Sisters in the Bible* (1983), 36–37.
11. See Hebrews 11:24–27.
12. Luke 15:17.
13. Luke 15:20.
14. 1 Nephi 19:23.
15. Mosiah 27:14.
16. 1 Peter 2:25.
17. Isaiah 40:11.
18. See Ephesians 6:11, 13; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:15.
19. 1 Nephi 15:24; Doctrine and Covenants 3:8; see also Ephesians 6:16.
20. Ephesians 6:16; Doctrine and Covenants 27:17.
21. Ephesians 6:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:18.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.

## Elder Clate W. Mask Jr.

### Traveling through mud slides

Years ago my adventurous son Jeff and I found ourselves on an old bus bouncing along on a dirt road in Central

America at 1:00 a.m. We took the early, early bus because it was the only bus that day. A half hour later, the driver stopped for two missionaries. When they got on, we asked them where in the world they

were going so early. Zone conference! And they were determined to do whatever it took to get there. At 2:00 a.m. two more elders boarded the bus and enthusiastically hugged their fellow missionaries. This scene repeated itself every half hour as the bus climbed the remote mountain road. By 5:00 a.m. we had 16 of the Lord's finest as fellow passengers and were basking in the Spirit they brought on board.

Suddenly we screeched to a halt. A massive mud slide had buried the road. Jeff said, "What do we do now, Dad?" Our friends Stan, Eric, and Allan had the same concern. Just then the zone leader shouted, "Let's go, elders. Nothing is going to stop us!" And they scrambled off the bus! We looked at each other and said, "Follow the elders," and we all sloshed through the mud slide, trying to keep up with the missionaries. There happened to be a truck on the other side, so we all hopped aboard. After a mile we were stopped by yet another mud slide. Once again the elders plowed through, with the rest of us close behind. But this time there was no truck. Boldly the zone leader said, "We will be where we are supposed to be even if we have to walk the rest of the way." Years later, Jeff told me how those missionaries and this photo inspired and motivated him tremendously as he served the Lord in Argentina.

Although we overcame the mud slides, we were spotted with mud. The missionaries were somewhat nervous about standing before their president on zone conference day when he and his wife would be carefully checking their appearance.

### **Becoming cleansed through Atonement**

As you and I slosh through the mud slides of life, we can't help getting a few mud spots on us along the way either. And we don't want to stand before the Lord looking muddy.

When the Savior appeared in ancient America, He said, "Repent, all ye ends of

the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

Alma warns us about some of the ways we become spotted with mud: "For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us" (Alma 12:14).

Alma also said:

"Ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain. . . .

" . . . How will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness?" (Alma 5:21-22).

He also tells us about "all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white" (Alma 5:24).

He then asks us how we are doing as we cross through the mud slides of life: "Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, . . . that your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ?" (Alma 5:27).

Because of repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, our garments can be spotless, pure, fair, and white. Moroni pleads, "O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day" (Mormon 9:6).

### **All people can come unto Christ**

In 1 Samuel we read, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; . . . for man looketh on the out-

ward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

The Nephites were looking on the outward appearance of the Lamanites, for Jacob declared, "Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, which is the word of God, that ye revile no more against them because of the darkness of their skins" (Jacob 3:9).

Our Father knows and loves His children all over the world, from Boston to Okinawa, from San Antonio to Spain, from Italy to Costa Rica. In Ghana, President Gordon B. Hinckley recently thanked the Lord "for the brotherhood that exists among us, that neither color of skin nor land of birth can separate us as Thy sons and daughters" (Accra Ghana Temple dedicatory prayer, in "Brotherhood Exists," *Church News*, Jan. 17, 2004, 11).

We invite men and women everywhere, whatever language or culture, to "come unto [Christ] and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . [for] all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33).

We come to this world in many colors, shapes, sizes, and circumstances. We don't have to be rich, tall, thin, brilliant, or beautiful to be saved in the kingdom of God—only pure. We need to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. And we can all choose to do that regardless of where we live or what we look like.

### Righteousness of the children of Lehi

When the four sons of Mosiah taught the gospel to the wild, ferocious Lamanites, a mighty change of heart occurred:

"As many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.

"For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against

God any more, neither against any of their brethren" (Alma 23:6–7).

Today many of their descendants are reading about this in their own copies of the Book of Mormon and are choosing to follow Christ. I love meeting the children of Lehi in spotless white in the numerous temples in the Mexico South Area, where I am currently serving. I feel as President Gordon B. Hinckley did at the dedication of the Guatemala City temple:

"Thou kind and gracious Father, our hearts swell with gratitude for thy remembrance of the sons and daughters of Lehi, the many generations of our fathers and mothers who suffered so greatly and who walked for so long in darkness. Thou hast heard their cries and seen their tears. Now there will be opened to them the gates of salvation and eternal life" (Guatemala City Guatemala Temple dedicatory prayer, in "Their Cries Heard, Their Tears Seen," *Church News*, Dec. 23, 1984, 4).

I have seen humble descendants of Lehi come down from the mountains to that temple and openly weep as they stood there in awe. One gave me an *abrazo* and asked me to take that hug of love, appreciation, and brotherhood back to all those beloved missionaries who brought them the gospel and to all the Saints whose tithing faithfulness has brought temple blessings within reach. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can all stand spotless, pure, and white before the Lord.

### The Savior loves us

With great gratitude I lift my voice with Nephi: "And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children [and our grandchildren] may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

My wife and I love this scripture so much that she painted it on a wall in our

living room, below a beautiful white porcelain *Christus*. They are a constant reminder for us to live Christ-centered lives.

One day our son was reading the scriptures with his family. Our seven-year-old grandson Clatie read, “‘And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ’—Hey, that’s what Granny and Grandpa have on their wall!” Now that’s one of his favorite scriptures.

On another occasion we were at the visitors’ center on Temple Square with these same grandchildren. Two-year-old Ashley was tired and wanted to leave. Sister Mask asked her if she wanted to see a big Jesus like the one on our wall. She asked, “Is He as big as me?” “Even bigger,” Sister Mask replied. When that tiny, little girl looked up at the majestic *Christus*, she ran and stood at the feet and gazed up reverently for several minutes. When her father indicated it was time to go, she said, “No, no, Daddy. He loves me and wants to give me hugs!”

The road of life is strewn with spiritual mud slides. Whatever our sins and imperfections, may we attack them with

the same missionary zeal that those elders attacked their mud slides. And may we thank our Father daily for sending us His Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive us our mud spots so that we may stand spotless before Him. Ashley was right. He does love us and will say to us at that great day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

I bear witness that He lives and He loves us. He is our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elders W. Douglas Shumway and Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## **Elder W. Douglas Shumway**

### **Today’s assault on marriage and family**

Shortly after I was married, my three brothers and I were sitting in my father’s office for a business meeting. At the conclusion of our meeting, as we stood to leave, Dad stopped, turned to us, and said: “You boys are not treating your wives as you should. You need to show them more kindness and respect.” My father’s words penetrated my soul.

Today we are witnessing an unending assault on marriage and the family. They seem to be the adversary’s prime targets for belittlement and destruction. In a society where marriage is often shunned, par-

enthood avoided, and families degraded, we have the responsibility to honor our marriages, nurture our children, and fortify our families.

### **Honoring marriage**

Honoring marriage requires spouses to render love, respect, and devotion to one another. We have been given sacred instruction to “love thy wife with all thy heart, and . . . cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22).

The prophet Malachi taught: “The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou

hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. . . . Therefore take heed . . . and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Malachi 2:14–15). To live our life with the wife of our youth, keeping covenants, acquiring wisdom, and sharing love now and throughout eternity is a privilege indeed.

I am reminded of the expression, “When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists” (Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* [1953], 42–43).

Marriage is meant to be and must be a loving, binding, harmonious relationship between a man and a woman. When a husband and a wife understand that the family is ordained of God and that marriage can be filled with promises and blessings extending into the eternities, separation and divorce would seldom be a consideration in the Latter-day Saint home. Couples would realize that the sacred ordinances and covenants made in the house of the Lord provide the means whereby they can return to the presence of God.

### Nurturing children

Parents have been given the sacred duty to “bring . . . up [children] in the nurture . . . of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Our responsibility, then, not only is for the well-being of our spouse but extends to the watchful care of our children, for “children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3). We can make the choice to nurture our children accordingly and “teach [them]

to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). As parents we must regard our children as gifts from God and be committed to making our homes a place to love, train, and nurture our sons and daughters.

President Thomas S. Monson reminds us: “The mantle of leadership is not the cloak of comfort, but the role of responsibility. . . . ‘Youth needs fewer critics and more models [to follow].’ One hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of a car we drove, what kind of a house we lived in, how much we had in the bank account, nor what our clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because we were important in the life of a boy or a girl” (*Pathways to Perfection* [1973], 131).

### Infinite worth of our sons and daughters

Although life sometimes makes us weary, impatient, or too busy for our children, we must never forget the infinite worth of what we have in our homes—our sons and our daughters. The task at hand, a business engagement, or a new automobile are all of benefit but pale in value when compared to the worth of a young soul.

John Gunther, a father who lost his young son to brain cancer, urged those who still have sons and daughters to “embrace them with a little added rapture and a keener awareness of joy” (*Death Be Not Proud: A Memoir* [1949], 259).

President Harold B. Lee told of a great educator, Horace Mann, who “was the speaker at the dedication of a . . . boys’ school. . . . In his talk he said, ‘This school has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars; but if this school is able to save one boy, it is worth all that it cost.’ One of his friends came up to [Mr. Mann] at the close of the meeting and said, ‘You let your enthusi-

asm get away with you, didn't you? You . . . said that if this school, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, were to save just one boy, it was worth all that it cost? You surely don't mean that.'

"Horace Mann looked at him and said, 'Yes, my friend. It would be worth it if that one boy were my son; it would be worth it' " (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 64–65; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 61).

Loving, protecting, and nurturing our children are among the most sacred and eternally important things we will do. Worldly belongings will vanish, today's number-one movie or song will be irrelevant tomorrow, but a son or a daughter is eternal.

### **Cultivating family relationships**

"The family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Therefore parents and children must work together in unity to fortify family relationships, cultivating them day in and day out.

I have a brother who was associated with a large university. He told of a student athlete who was an outstanding hurdler. The young man was blind. Rex asked him, "Don't you ever fall?" "I have to be exact," the athlete responded. "I measure each time before I jump. One time I didn't, and I nearly killed myself." The young man then spoke of the countless hours his father had devoted over the years teaching, helping, and showing him how to hurdle until he became one of the best. How could this young man fail with a team like that—a father and a son.

Young men and women, you can be a great influence for good in your homes as you help to achieve worthy family objectives. I shall never forget the family home evening years ago in which the name of

each member of our family was placed in a hat. The name you picked from the hat would be your "secret friend" for the week. You can imagine the love that filled my heart when I came home that Tuesday after work to sweep out the garage, as I had earlier promised, and found it cleanly swept. There was a note attached to the garage door which read, "Hope you had a good day—your secret friend." And on Friday night, as I turned down my bed, I uncovered an Almond Joy, my favorite candy bar, wrapped carefully in scotch tape and plain white paper, with a note: "Dad, I love you a lot! Thanks, your secret friend." Then to top it off, after returning home from a late meeting Sunday evening, I found the dining room table beautifully set, and written on the napkin by my place were the words "SUPER DAD" in big bold letters and in parentheses, "Your secret friend." Hold your family home evenings, for this is where the gospel is taught, a testimony is gained, and the family is fortified.

### **The gospel guides us in our families**

Although the adversary seeks to destroy the key elements necessary for a happy marriage and a righteous family, let me assure you that the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the tools and teachings necessary to combat and conquer the assailant in this war. If we will but honor our marriages by imparting more love and selflessness to our spouses; nurture our children through gentle persuasion and the expert teacher we call example; and fortify the spirituality of our families through consistent family home evening, prayer, and scripture study, I testify to you that the living Savior, Jesus Christ, will guide us and grant us victory in our efforts to achieve an eternal family unit. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Bruce C. Hafen

### The Restoration's unique doctrine of the Atonement

In recent years we Latter-day Saints have been teaching, singing, and testifying much more about the Savior Jesus Christ. I rejoice that we are rejoicing more.

As we “talk [more] of Christ,”<sup>1</sup> the gospel’s doctrinal fullness will come out of obscurity. For example, some of our friends can’t see how our Atonement beliefs relate to our beliefs about becoming more like our Heavenly Father. Others *mistakenly* think our Church is moving toward an understanding of the relationship between grace and works that draws on Protestant teachings. Such misconceptions prompt me to consider today the Restoration’s unique Atonement doctrine.

### God’s plan is developmental

The Lord restored His gospel through Joseph Smith because there had been an apostasy. Since the fifth century, Christianity taught that Adam and Eve’s Fall was a tragic mistake, which led to the belief that humankind has an inherently evil nature. That view is wrong—not only about the Fall and human nature, but about the very purpose of life.

The Fall was not a disaster. It wasn’t a mistake or an accident. It was a deliberate part of the plan of salvation. We are God’s spirit “offspring,”<sup>2</sup> sent to earth “innocent”<sup>3</sup> of Adam’s transgression. Yet our Father’s plan subjects us to temptation and misery in this fallen world as the price to comprehend authentic joy. Without tasting the bitter, we actually *cannot* understand the sweet.<sup>4</sup> We require mortality’s discipline and refinement as the “next step in [our] development” toward becoming like our Father.<sup>5</sup> But growth means growing pains. It also means learning from our mistakes in a continual process made possible by the Savior’s grace, which He extends both during and “*after all we can do.*”<sup>6</sup>

Adam and Eve learned constantly from their often harsh experience. They knew how a troubled family feels. Think of Cain and Abel. Yet because of the Atonement, they could *learn from their experience without being condemned by it*. Christ’s sacrifice didn’t just erase their choices and return them to an Eden of innocence. That would be a story with no plot and no character growth. His plan is *developmental*—line upon line, step by step, grace for grace.

So if you have problems in your life, don’t assume there is something wrong with you. Struggling with those problems is at the very core of life’s purpose. As we draw close to God, He will show us our weaknesses and through them make us wiser, stronger.<sup>7</sup> If you’re seeing more of your weaknesses, that just might mean you’re moving nearer to God, not farther away.

### The Savior’s grace helps us grow

One early Australian convert said: “My past life [was] a wilderness of weeds, with hardly a flower Strewed among them. [But] now . . . the weeds have vanished, and flowers Spring up in their place.”<sup>8</sup>

We grow in two ways—removing negative weeds and cultivating positive flowers. The Savior’s grace blesses both parts—if we do our part. First and repeatedly we must uproot the weeds of sin and bad choices. It isn’t enough just to *mow* the weeds. Yank them out by the roots, repenting fully to satisfy the conditions of mercy. But being forgiven is only part of our growth. We are not just paying a debt. Our purpose is to become celestial beings. So once we’ve cleared our heartland, we must continually plant, weed, and nourish the seeds of divine qualities. And then as our sweat and discipline stretch us to meet His gifts, “the flow’rs of grace appear,”<sup>9</sup> like hope and meekness. Even a tree of life can take root in this heart-garden, bearing fruit so sweet that it lightens all our bur-



dens “through the joy of his Son.”<sup>10</sup> And when the flower of charity blooms here, we will love others with the power of Christ’s own love.<sup>11</sup>

### **We must give all we have, as Christ did**

We need grace both to overcome sinful weeds and to grow divine flowers. We can do neither one fully by ourselves. But grace is not cheap. It is very expensive, even very *dear*. How much does this grace cost? Is it enough simply to believe in Christ? The man who found the pearl of great price gave “*all that he had*”<sup>12</sup> for it. If we desire “all that [the] Father hath,”<sup>13</sup> God asks all that we have. To qualify for such exquisite treasure, in whatever way is ours, we must give the way Christ gave—every drop He had: “How exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.”<sup>14</sup> Paul said, “*If so be that we suffer with him*,” we are “joint-heirs with Christ.”<sup>15</sup> All of His heart; all of our hearts.

What possible pearl could be worth such a price—for Him and for us? This earth is not our home. We are away at school, trying to master the lessons of “the great plan of happiness”<sup>16</sup> so we can return home and *know what it means to be there*. Over and over the Lord tells us why the plan is worth our sacrifice—and His. Eve called it “the joy of our redemption.”<sup>17</sup> Jacob called it “that happiness which is prepared for the saints.”<sup>18</sup> Of necessity the plan is full of thorns and tears—His and ours. But because He and we are so totally in this together, our being “at one” with Him in overcoming all opposition will itself bring us “incomprehensible joy.”<sup>19</sup>

Christ’s Atonement is at the very core of this plan. Without His dear, dear sacrifice, there would be no way home, no way to be together, no way to be like Him. He gave us all *He* had. Therefore, “how great is *his* joy”<sup>20</sup> when even one of us “gets it”—when we look up from the weed patch and turn our face to the Son.

Only the restored gospel has the fullness of these truths! Yet the adversary is

engaged in one of history’s greatest cover-ups, trying to persuade people that this Church knows least—when in fact it knows most—about how our relationship with Christ makes true Christians of us.

### **Giving *almost* everything is not enough**

If we must give all that we have, then our giving only *almost* everything is not enough. If we *almost* keep the commandments, we *almost* receive the blessings. For example, some young people assume they can romp in sinful mud until taking a shower of repentance just before being interviewed for a mission or the temple. In the very act of transgression, some plan to repent. They mock the gift of mercy that true repentance allows.

Some people want to keep one hand on the wall of the temple while touching the world’s “unclean things”<sup>21</sup> with the other hand. We must put both hands on the temple and hold on for dear life. One hand is not even *almost* enough.

The rich young man had given *almost* everything. When the Savior told him he must sell *all* his possessions, that wasn’t just a story about riches.<sup>22</sup> We can have eternal life if we want it, but only if there is *nothing else* we want more.

So we must willingly give everything, because God Himself can’t make us grow against our will and without our full participation. Yet even when we utterly spend ourselves, we lack the power to create the perfection only God can complete. Our *all* by itself is still only *almost* enough—until it is finished by the *all* of Him who is the “finisher of our faith.”<sup>23</sup> At that point, our imperfect but consecrated *almost* is enough.

### **Observing our covenants by sacrifice**

My friend Donna grew up desiring to marry and raise a large family. But that blessing never came. Instead she spent her adult years serving the people in her ward with unmeasured compassion and counseling disturbed children in a large school

district. She had crippling arthritis and many long, blue days. Yet she always lifted and was always lifted by her friends and family. Once when teaching about Lehi's dream, she said with gentle humor, "I'd put myself in that picture on the strait and narrow path, still holding to the iron rod but collapsed from fatigue right on the path." In an inspired blessing given just before her death, Donna's home teacher said the Lord "accepted" her. Donna cried. She had never felt her single life was acceptable. But the Lord said those who "observe their covenants *by sacrifice* . . . are accepted of me."<sup>24</sup> I can envision Him walking the path from the tree of life to lift Donna up with gladness and carry her home.

Consider others who, like Donna, have consecrated themselves so fully that, for them, *almost* is enough:

Many missionaries in Europe and similar places who never stop offering their bruised hearts despite continual rejection.

Those handcart pioneers who said they came to know God in their extremities and the price they paid to know Him was a privilege to pay.

A father who reached his outermost limits but still couldn't influence his daughter's choices; he could only crawl toward the Lord, pleading like Alma for his child.

A wife who encouraged her husband despite his years of weakness, until the seeds of repentance finally sprouted in his heart. She said, "I tried to look at him the way Christ would look at me."

A husband whose wife suffered for years from a disabling emotional disorder, but to him it was always "our little challenge"—never just "her illness." In the realm of their marriage, he was afflicted in her afflictions,<sup>25</sup> just as Christ in His infinite realm was afflicted in our afflictions.<sup>26</sup>

### **"We shall be like him"**

The people in 3 Nephi 17 had survived destruction, doubt, and darkness just to get to the temple with Jesus. After listen-

ing to Him for hours in wonder, they grew too weary to comprehend Him. As He prepared to leave, they tearfully looked at Him with such total desire that He stayed and blessed their afflicted ones and their children. They didn't even understand Him, but they wanted to be *with Him* more than they wanted any other thing. So He stayed. Their *almost* was enough.

*Almost* is especially enough when our own sacrifices somehow echo the Savior's sacrifice, however imperfect we are. We cannot really feel charity—Christ's love for others—without at least tasting His suffering for others, because the love and the suffering are but two sides of a single reality. When we really are afflicted in the afflictions of other people, we may enter "the fellowship of his sufferings"<sup>27</sup> enough to become joint-heirs with Him.

May we not shrink when we discover, paradoxically, how dear a price we must pay to receive what is, finally, a gift from Him. When the Savior's all and our all come together, we will find not only forgiveness of sin, "we shall see him as he is," and "we shall be *like him*."<sup>28</sup> I love Him. I want to be with Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 25:26.
2. See Acts 17:28.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:38.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:39.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 207.
6. 2 Nephi 25:23; italics added.
7. See Ether 12:27.
8. Martha Maria Humphreys, in Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia* (1991), 158.
9. "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227.
10. Alma 33:23.
11. See Moroni 7:48.
12. Matthew 13:46; italics added; see also Alma 22:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.

14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15.
15. Romans 8:17; italics added.
16. Alma 42:8.
17. Moses 5:11.
18. 2 Nephi 9:43.
19. Alma 28:8.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 18:13; italics added.
21. Alma 5:57.
22. See Matthew 19:16–22.
23. Hebrews 12:2; see also Moroni 6:4.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8; italics added.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 30:6.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:53.
27. Philippians 3:10.
28. Moroni 7:48; 1 John 3:2; italics added.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### A time of great challenges, opportunities

Excellent suggestions to combat the deteriorating world environment have been given in this conference. As a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley put world conditions and our opportunities into crystal-clear perspective. Two of his recent comments to priesthood and auxiliary leaders illustrate that prophetic vision. First, regarding the challenge we face:

“The traditional family is under heavy attack. I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters.”<sup>1</sup>

Now concerning our extraordinary opportunities:

“Who in the earlier days could have dreamed of this season of opportunity in which we live? . . . The Church is in wonderful condition. . . . It will grow and strengthen. . . . It is our opportunity and our challenge to continue in this great undertaking, the future of which we can scarcely imagine.”<sup>2</sup>

### Much evil and darkness in the world

You have a choice. You can wring your hands and be consumed with concern for the future, or you can choose to use the counsel the Lord has given to live with

peace and happiness in a world awash with evil. If you choose to concentrate on the dark side, this is what you will see. Much of the world is being engulfed in a rising river of degenerate filth, with the abandonment of virtue, righteousness, personal integrity, traditional marriage, and family life. Sodom and Gomorrah were the epitome of unholy life in the Old Testament. It was isolated then; now that condition is spread over the world. Satan skillfully manipulates the power of all types of media and communication. His success has greatly increased the extent and availability of such degrading and destructive influences worldwide. In the past, some effort was required to seek out such evil. Now it saturates significant portions of virtually every corner of the world. We cannot dry up the mounting river of evil influences, for they result from the exercise of moral agency divinely granted by our Father. But we can and must, with clarity, warn of the consequences of getting close to its enticing, destructive current.

### Plan of happiness blesses all who live it

Now the brighter side. Despite pockets of evil, the world overall is majestically beautiful, filled with many good and sincere people. God has provided a way to live in this world and not be contaminated by the degrading pressures evil agents spread throughout it. You can live a vir-

tuous, productive, righteous life by following the plan of protection created by your Father in Heaven: His plan of happiness. It is contained in the scriptures and in the inspired declarations of His prophets. He clothed your intelligence with spirit and made it possible for you to enjoy the wonder of a physical body. When you use that body in the way He has decreed, you will grow in strength and capacity, avoid transgression, and be abundantly blessed.

When God, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith in that sublime vision in the Sacred Grove, They began to place on earth again that plan of happiness and all required to sustain it. Part of that restoration included additional sacred scriptures to complement the treasured record of the Bible. These precious scriptures are contained in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Our Father knew of our day. He prepared the scriptures and provided continuing divine guidance to sustain us. That help will ensure that you can live with peace and happiness amid increasing evil.

Consider these verses:

“All things must come to pass in their time. [God knew the challenges we would face when He gave this counsel.]

“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

“Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”<sup>3</sup>

That is a priceless promise. As you continue to center your mind and heart in Him, He will help you have a rich and full life no matter what happens in the world around you.

Paul wisely taught, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”<sup>4</sup>

We should emulate Joshua: “Choose [ye] this day whom ye will serve; . . . as

for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus taught: “Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days.”<sup>6</sup> “He who is faithful shall overcome all things, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>7</sup>

Finally this pattern of success: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, . . . that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

I know that the plan of happiness can lift and bless those who live it anywhere.

### **Taking the gospel to Quiriza, Bolivia**

On Christmas Eve 37 years ago, in the light of a full moon, I climbed a small hill in the isolated village of Quiriza, Bolivia. Four young elders and I had spent the day crossing over a mountain pass on a treacherous road. Then we struggled up a riverbed to see if the teachings of the Savior would help a destitute people. What we saw was discouraging—undernourished children, adults subsisting on meager crops, some with eyes glazed from seeking refuge in alcohol and drugs. I looked at the tiny, barren village below—a cluster of adobe, thatched-roof houses beaten by the harsh environment. The only evidence of life was barking dogs searching for food. There was no electricity, telephone, running water, roads, proper sanitation, or doctors there. It seemed so hopeless. Yet a solemn prayer confirmed that we should be there. We found a humble people who embraced the restored gospel with determination to live it. They did that under harsh conditions where severe poverty, alcohol, drugs, witchcraft, and immorality were in plentiful supply.

Under the guidance of exceptional missionaries, the people learned to work hard to cultivate the fields. They produced

a harvest of nutritious vegetables and raised rabbits for better protein. But the best lessons came from beloved missionaries who taught them of a God who loved them, of a Savior who gave His life that they might succeed. Their physical appearance began to change. The light of truth radiated from their happy faces. As devoted, loving emissaries of the Lord, missionaries patiently taught truth to a willing people. Wives and husbands learned how to live in harmony, teach truth to their children, pray, and sense the guidance of the Spirit.

I watched a six-year-old boy who had carefully observed our first baptismal service act out with his younger sister what he had seen. He carefully arranged her hands, raised his tiny arm to the square, mumbled words, gently lowered her into a depression in the sun-baked earth, led her to a rock where he confirmed her, then shook her hand.

The youth learned most quickly. They became obedient to the light of truth taught by the missionaries and in time by their own parents. Through their faith and obedience, I have seen how in one generation, youth baptized in that village have overcome a seemingly hopeless future. Some have been missionaries, graduated from universities, and been sealed in the temple. Through their diligence and obedience, they have found purpose and success in life despite an early harsh physical and evil-saturated environment. If it can be done in Quiriza, Bolivia, it can be done anywhere.

### **Violating commandments leads to tragedy**

Have you noticed how Satan works to capture the mind and emotions with flashing images, blaring music, and the stimulation of every physical sense to excess? He diligently strives to fill life with action, entertainment, and stimulation so that one cannot ponder the consequences of his

tempting invitations. Think of it. Some are tempted to violate the most basic commandments of God because of seductive actions portrayed as acceptable. They are made to seem attractive, even desirable. There seems to be no serious consequence, but rather apparent lasting joy and happiness. But recognize that those performances are controlled by scripts and actors. The outcome of decisions made is likewise manipulated to be whatever the producer wants.

Life is not that way. Yes, moral agency allows you to choose what you will, but you cannot control the outcome of those choices. Unlike the false creations of man, our Father in Heaven determines the consequences of your choices. Obedience will yield happiness, while violation of His commandments will not.

Consider the lives of those who create what for some are captivating images of life. They generally turn to the most vicious of the destructive influences they depict so appealingly in the media. They may be wealthy, but they are miserable and without conscience. Truly the statement of Alma, an inspired prophet and compassionate father, is borne out in their lives: "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>9</sup>

If you are ever tempted to experiment with the alluring offerings of Lucifer, first calmly analyze the inevitable consequences of such choices, and your life will not be shattered. You cannot ever sample those things that are forbidden of God as destructive of happiness and corrosive to spiritual guidance without tragic results.

If you have become entangled in sin from poor choices, please decide to come back now. You know how to begin. Do it now. We love you. We need you. God will help you.

### **God will guide you to happiness**

As a young man or woman, though life may seem difficult now, hold on to that

iron rod of truth. You are making better progress than you realize. Your struggles are defining character, discipline, and confidence in the promises of your Father in Heaven and the Savior as you consistently obey Their commandments. You are so important. You are so needed. There are so few willing to make the sacrifice you are making to live righteously. You can develop the sensitivity, love, and kindness to gain supreme happiness within the covenant of an eternal marriage. You will bless your children with insight the world can never give them. Your example will set the course for their successful life as the world becomes even more difficult. You are needed to strengthen the growing kingdom of the Lord and to be role models for so many who lack the light of truth you have.

Avoid worldly wickedness. Know that God is in control. In time, Satan will completely fail and be punished for his perverse evil. God has a specific plan for your life. He will reveal parts of that plan to you as you look for it with faith and consistent obedience. His Son has made you free—not from the consequences of your acts, but free to make choices. God’s eternal purpose is for you to be successful in this mortal life. No matter how wicked the world becomes, you can earn that blessing. Seek and be attentive to the personal guidance given to you through the Holy Spirit. Continue to be worthy to receive it. Reach out to others who stumble and are perplexed, not certain of what path to follow.

Your security is in God your Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. As one of His Apostles authorized to bear witness of Him, I solemnly testify that I know that

the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. He is your hope, your Mediator, your Redeemer. Through obedience, let Him guide you to peace and happiness amid increased evil in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 3, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 4, 7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 64:32–34.
4. Romans 12:21.
5. Joshua 24:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 24:8.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 75:16.
8. Moroni 10:32.
9. Alma 41:10.

#### President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake, the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. The music has been wonderful. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Lord, I Would Follow Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Daryl H. Garn of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Resolve to stand a little taller

My brothers and sisters, it’s about over. As we conclude this historic confer-

ence, the words of Rudyard Kipling’s immortal “Recessional” come to mind:

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart.

Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,  
 An humble and a contrite heart.  
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget, lest we forget.  
 ["God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,"  
*Hymns*, no. 80]

As we return to our homes, may we carry with us the spirit of this great convocation. May what we have heard and experienced remain with us as a residual of love and peace, an attitude of repentance, and a resolve to stand a little taller in the radiant sunlight of the gospel.

May our testimonies of the great foundation principles of this work, which have been burnished more brightly, shine forth from our lives and our actions.

May a spirit of love, of peace, of appreciation for one another increase in our homes. May we be prospered in our labors and become more generous in our sharings. May we reach out to those about us in friendship and respect.

May our prayers become expressions of thanks to the Giver of all good and of love for Him who is our Redeemer.

### **Appreciation for Sister Hinckley**

Now, my brothers and sisters, I reluctantly desire a personal indulgence for a moment. Some of you have noticed the absence of Sister Hinckley. For the first time in 46 years, since I became a General Authority, she has not attended general conference. Earlier this year we were in Africa to dedicate the Accra Ghana Temple. On leaving there we flew to Sal, a barren island in the Atlantic, where we met with members of a local branch. We then flew to St. Thomas, an island in the Caribbean. There we met with a few others of our members. We were on our way home when she collapsed with weariness. She's had a difficult time ever since. She's now 92, a little

younger than I am. I guess the clock is winding down, and we do not know how to rewind it.

It is a somber time for me. We've been married for 67 years this month. She is the mother of our five gifted and able children, the grandmother of 25 grandchildren and a growing number of great-grandchildren. We've walked together side by side through all of these years, coequals and companions through storm and sunshine. She has spoken far and wide in testimony of this work, imparting love, encouragement, and faith wherever she's gone. Women have written letters of appreciation from all over the world. We continue to hope and pray for her and express from the depths of our hearts our appreciation for all who have attended her and looked after her and for your great faith and prayers in her behalf. Now, as we go to our homes, I feel to say:

God be with you till we meet again;  
 By his counsels guide, uphold you. . . .  
 When life's perils thick confound you,  
 Put his arms unfailing round you. . . .  
 Keep love's banner floating o'er you;  
 Smite death's threat'ning wave before  
 you.

God be with you till we meet again.  
 ["God Be with You Till We Meet  
 Again," *Hymns*, no. 152]

Every man, woman, and child, boy and girl, should leave this conference a better individual than he or she was when it began two days ago. I leave my blessing and my love with each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Daryl H. Garn offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake. Vanja Watkins directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a priesthood choir from the

Orem and Salt Lake institutes. Douglas Brenchley, Don Keaton, and Ryan Eggett directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-fourth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 2 and 3, 2004**



Official Report  
of the  
One Hundred Seventy-fourth  
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The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

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October 2 and 3, 2004

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# Report of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 2004, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3, 2004. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 2, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the priesthood and the Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David

E. Sorensen, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, John H. Groberg, and Robert C. Oaks

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this session.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We’re also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” and will now favor us with “The Morning Breaks.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “The Morning Breaks.”

Elder Keith Crockett offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **Two new members of the Twelve**

As we open this great conference, we note the absence of Elders David B. Haight and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Each of them served long and very effectively. We mourn their passing. We greatly miss them. We extend our love to their dear ones. We are confident that they are carrying on this great work on the other side of the veil.

We recognize that in the natural course of events there are recurring vacancies which make necessary filling these as they are created. After fasting and prayer, we have called Elder Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf and Elder David Allan Bednar to fill these vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We present their names to you this morning. You may not know them, but you will soon get acquainted

with them. Those of you who feel you can sustain them in this sacred calling will please signify by the uplifted hand. Any who may be opposed?

Their names will be included in the sustaining of all of the authorities later in the conference. Now we ask these Brethren to take their places on the stand with members of the Twelve. They will speak to us Sunday morning, and you will get to know them better.

### **Church continues to grow, to bless lives**

Now in opening the conference I wish to comment briefly on the condition of the Church. It continues to grow. It is touching the lives of more and more people every year. It is spreading far and wide over the earth.

#### *The building of temples and meetinghouses*

To accommodate this growth we must, of necessity, continue to build houses of worship. We now have, at some stage, 451 meetinghouses of various sizes under construction in many parts of the earth. This tremendous building program is phenomenal. I know of nothing to equal it. Our structures are beautiful. They add to the ambience of any community in which they stand. They are well maintained. We have had long experience in constructing houses of worship, and out of that vast experience we are producing better buildings than have ever previously been constructed in the Church. They combine beauty with great utility. If they look much the same, it is because that is intended. By following tried and tested patterns we save millions of dollars while meeting the needs of our people.

We continue to build temples. We recently broke ground for a new temple in Sacramento, California, the seventh in that state, where we have the second largest membership of any state in the United States.

The temples in the Salt Lake City area are extremely busy and at times are overloaded. For this reason, we have determined to build a new temple in the Salt Lake Valley. The location of the site will be announced shortly. It may appear that we are unduly favoring this area. But temple attendance is such that we must accommodate those who wish to come. And if the present growth trends continue, we shall probably need yet another.

We are also pleased to announce that we will construct another temple in Idaho, where we have the third largest membership in the United States. Plans are going forward for one in Rexburg. Now we are also planning to build another in the city of Twin Falls. This temple will serve thousands of our members who live between Idaho Falls and Boise.

Temples are now under construction in Aba, Nigeria; Helsinki, Finland; Newport Beach and Sacramento, California; and San Antonio, Texas. We are replacing the temple which was destroyed by fire in Samoa.

When those which have thus far been announced are dedicated, we shall have 130 working temples. Others will be constructed as the Church continues to grow.

#### *Construction on and around Temple Square*

We are now working on a major undertaking in Salt Lake City. It is imperative that we preserve the environment around Temple Square. This makes necessary a very large construction project. Tithing funds will not be used for this construction. The income from Church businesses, rents on the property, and other such sources make this possible.

We must do extensive work on the Salt Lake Tabernacle to make it seismically safe. This marvelous structure has been used for 137 years this month. The time has come when we must do something to preserve it. It is one of the unique

architectural masterpieces in the entire world and a building of immense historical interest. Its historical qualities will be carefully preserved, while its utility, comfort, and safety will be increased. We are grateful that we have this Conference Center, where we can meet for such gatherings as this. I now ask myself, "What would we do without it?"

#### *Educational and missionary programs*

I am pleased to report that the Perpetual Education Fund continues to grow, as does the number of those who are the beneficiaries of this wonderful undertaking.

We are strengthening our missionary program. We are striving to bring a greater measure of spirituality into the work of our vast body of missionaries.

Our educational program continues to grow, extending its influence wherever the Church is established.

#### *New publication of the Book of Mormon*

The Book of Mormon was recently included as one of the 20 most influential books ever published in America. We are now joining hands with a commercial publisher to enlarge the distribution of this sacred volume, this second witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### *Greater faith and vitality than ever before*

And so, brothers and sisters, I might continue. Suffice it to say that I believe the Church is in better condition than it has

been at any time in its entire history. I have been around now for nearly 95 years of that history, and I have seen much of it firsthand. I am satisfied that there is greater faith, there is a broader measure of service, and there is a more general measure of integrity among our youth. There is greater vitality in all aspects of the work than we have ever seen before. Let us glory in this wonderful season of the work of the Lord. Let us not be proud or arrogant. Let us be humbly grateful. And let us, each one, resolve within himself or herself that we will add to the luster of this magnificent work of the Almighty, that it may shine across the earth as a beacon of strength and goodness for all the world to look upon, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

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#### **President Monson**

The choir just sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

We shall now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder John H. Groberg of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Following the singing, we shall hear from Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

#### **An affection stronger than death**

On behalf of my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, may I be the first to welcome Elders Dieter Uchtdorf

and David Bednar to their new callings and the sweet association that lies ahead of them. When the original Twelve were called in this dispensation, they were told

that their appointment was “calculated to create for you an affection for each other, stronger than death.”<sup>1</sup> We already have such affection for you, brethren, for your wives, and for your families. We say with one heart and one voice, “Welcome, dear friends.”

In the spirit of President Hinckley’s tender remarks, may I also express that same “affection . . . stronger than death” and the deep personal loss felt by all of us in the passing of our beloved David B. Haight and Neal A. Maxwell. To those two brethren and their sweet Ruby and Colleen, respectively, we say that we love you, we reverence your service, and we honor the exemplary lives you have lived. Each of us considers it the greatest of privileges to know you and to have served at your side. You are precious to us forever.

### **A foundation of apostles and prophets**

In light of such significant transitions in the rolling forth of this work, I wish to say something this morning of the apostleship and the importance of its perpetuation in the true Church of Jesus Christ. In so doing I speak not of the men who hold that office but rather of the office itself, a calling in the holy Melchizedek Priesthood which the Savior Himself has designated for the watch care of His people and the witnessing of His name.

In order to establish a church that would continue under His direction even after He was taken from the earth, Jesus “went . . . into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”<sup>2</sup>

Later on, Paul would teach that the Savior, knowing the inevitability of His death, had done this to give the Church a “foundation of . . . apostles and prophets.”<sup>3</sup> These brethren and the other offi-

cers of the Church would serve under the direction of the resurrected Christ.

Why? Among other reasons, so “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus the apostolic and prophetic foundation of the Church was to bless in all times, but *especially* in times of adversity or danger, times when we might feel like children, confused or disoriented, perhaps a little fearful, times in which the devious hand of men or the maliciousness of the devil would attempt to unsettle or mislead. Against such times as come in our modern day, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are commissioned by God and sustained by you as prophets, seers, and revelators, with the President of the Church sustained as *the* prophet, seer, and revelator, the *senior* Apostle, and as such the only man authorized to exercise all of the revelatory and administrative keys for the Church.

In New Testament times, in Book of Mormon times, and in modern times these officers form the foundation stones of the true Church, positioned around and gaining their strength from the chief cornerstone, “the rock of our Redeemer, who is [Jesus] Christ, the Son of God,”<sup>5</sup> He who is the great “Apostle and High Priest of our profession,” to use Paul’s phrase.<sup>6</sup> Such a foundation in Christ was and is always to be a protection in days “when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you.” In such days as we are now in—and will more or less always be in—the storms of life “shall have no power over you . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>7</sup>

## Recognizing the need for Apostles

Three weeks ago I was at a stake conference in the lovely little mountain community of Prescott, Arizona. Following the delightful events of that weekend, a sister silently slipped me a note as she and others came by to shake hands and say good-bye. With some hesitation I share a portion of it with you this morning. Please focus on the doctrine this sister teaches, not the participants in the exchange.

“Dear Elder Holland, thank you for the testimony you bore in this conference of the Savior and His love. Forty-one years ago I prayed earnestly to the Lord and told Him I wished I had lived on earth when the Apostles walked upon it, when there had been a true Church, and when Christ’s voice was still heard. Within a year of that prayer, Heavenly Father sent two LDS missionaries to me, and I found that all those hopes could be realized. Perhaps some hour when you are tired or troubled, this note will help you remember why hearing your voice and shaking your hand is so important to me and to millions just like me. Your sister in love and gratitude, Gloria Clements.”

Well, Sister Clements, your very tender note recalled for me a similar hope and almost the same language once used in my own family. In the tumultuous years of the first settlements in this nation, Roger Williams, my volatile and determined 10th great-grandfather, fled—not entirely of his own volition—from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and settled in what is now the state of Rhode Island. He called his headquarters Providence, the very name itself revealing his lifelong quest for divine interventions and heavenly manifestations. But he never found what he felt was the true New Testament church of earlier times. Of this disappointed seeker the legendary Cotton Mather said, “Mr. Williams [finally] told [his followers] ‘that being himself misled, he had [misled them,’ and] he was now satisfied that there was none upon

earth that could administer baptism [or any of the ordinances of the gospel], . . . [so] he advised them therefore to *forego* all . . . and wait for the coming of *new* apostles.”<sup>8</sup> Roger Williams did not live to see those longed-for new Apostles raised up, but in a future time I hope to be able to tell him personally that his posterity did live to see such.

## Recognizing the need for revelation

Anxiety and expectation regarding the need for divine direction were not uncommon among those religious reformers who set the stage for the restoration of the gospel. One of the most famous of the New England preachers, Jonathan Edwards, said, “It seems to me a[n] . . . unreasonable thing, to suppose that there should be a God . . . that has so much concern [for us], . . . and yet that he should never speak, . . . that there should be no word [from him].”<sup>9</sup>

Later the incomparable Ralph Waldo Emerson rocked the very foundations of New England ecclesiastical orthodoxy when he said to the Divinity School at Harvard:

“It is my duty to say to you that the need was never greater [for] new revelation than now.” “The doctrine of inspiration is lost. . . . Miracles, prophecy, . . . the holy life, exist as ancient history [only]. . . . Men have come to speak of . . . revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead. . . . It is the office of a true teacher,” he warned, “to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.”<sup>10</sup>

In essence, Mr. Emerson was saying, “If you persist in handing out stones when people ask for bread, they will eventually stop coming to the bakery.”<sup>11</sup>

## The principle of present revelation

Consider these stunning indictments from the towering figures of American history, to say nothing of the prayers of a



Gloria Clements, and it highlights in bold relief the powerful message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, especially to those of you who meet our missionaries. Prophets? Seers? Revelators? The events of 1820 and 1830, and the events of nearly two centuries that have followed, declare that revelations and those who receive them are not “long ago given and done.”

In the very year Mr. Emerson gave his Divinity School address implicitly pleading for such, Elder John Taylor, a young English immigrant to this country, was called to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, a prophet, a seer, a revelator. In that calling Elder Taylor once said in sympathy with honest seekers of truth:

“Whoever heard of true religion without communication with God? To me the thing is the most absurd that the human mind could conceive of. I do not wonder,” said Brother Taylor, “[that] when the people generally reject the principle of present revelation, . . . skepticism and infidelity prevail to such an alarming extent. I do not wonder,” he continued, “that so many men treat religion with contempt, and regard it as something not worth the attention of intelligent beings, for without revelation religion is a mockery and a farce. . . . *The principle of present revelation . . . is the very foundation of our religion.*”<sup>12</sup>

### Joseph Smith’s legacy of revelation

The principle of present revelation? The very foundation of our religion? Let me return from those foundations to the present, the here and now, the 21st century. For one and all—ecclesiastics, historians, and laymen alike—the issue is still the same. Are the heavens open? Does God reveal His will to prophets and apostles as in days of old? That they are and that He does is the unflinching declaration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to all the world. And in that declaration lies the significance of Joseph

Smith, the Prophet, for nearly 200 years now.

His life asked and answered the question “Do you believe God speaks to man?” In all else that he accomplished in his brief 38½ years, Joseph left us above all else the resolute legacy of divine revelation—not a single, isolated revelation without evidence or consequence, and not “a mild sort of inspiration seeping into the minds of all good people” everywhere, but specific, documented, ongoing directions from God. As a good friend and faithful LDS scholar has succinctly put it:

“At a time when the origins of Christianity were under assault by the forces of Enlightenment rationality, Joseph Smith [unequivocally and singlehandedly] returned modern Christianity to its origins in revelation.”<sup>13</sup>

### Expression of gratitude and testimony

We do “thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days,”<sup>14</sup> because many of those days will be wind-blown and tempest-tossed. We give thanks for that morning in the spring of 1820 when the Father and the Son appeared in glory to a 14-year-old boy. We give thanks for that morning when Peter, James, and John came to restore the keys of the holy priesthood and all the offices in it. And in our generation we give thanks for the morning of September 30, 1961, 43 years ago this weekend, when (then) Elder Gordon B. Hinckley was called to the apostleship, the 75th man in this dispensation to be so named. And so it goes down to a day such as this, and so it will go continually until the Savior comes.

In a world of unrest and fear, political turmoil and moral drift, I testify that Jesus is the Christ—that He is the living Bread and living Water—still, yet, and always the great Shield of safety in our lives, the mighty Stone of Israel, the Anchor of this, His living Church. I testify of His prophets, seers, and revelators, who constitute

the ongoing foundation of that Church, and bear witness that such offices and such oracles are at work now, under the guidance of the Savior of us all, in and for our very needful day. Of these truths and of the divinity of this work I bear witness. Of them I *am* a witness, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 2:197.
2. Luke 6:12–13.
3. See Ephesians 2:19–20.
4. Ephesians 4:14.
5. Helaman 5:12.
6. Hebrews 3:1.
7. Helaman 5:12.
8. *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1853), 2:498.

9. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The “Miscellanies” 501–832*, ed. Ava Chamberlain (2000), 89–90.
10. *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (1940), 75, 71, 80.
11. Louis Cassels, quoted in Howard W. Hunter, “Spiritual Famine,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 64.
12. “Discourse by John Taylor,” *Deseret News*, Mar. 4, 1874, 68; italics added.
13. See Richard L. Bushman’s essay “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century” in *Believing History* (2004). These citations are from page 274, but the essay should be read in its entirety.
14. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.

## Elder John H. Groberg

### The power of God’s love

What is it about true love that touches every heart? Why does the simple phrase “I love you” evoke such universal joy?

Men give various reasons, but the real reason is that every person who comes to earth is a spirit son or daughter of God. Since all love emanates from God, we are born with the capacity and the desire to love and to be loved. One of the strongest connections we have with our premortal life is how much our Father and Jesus loved us and how much we loved Them. Even though a veil was drawn over our memory, whenever we sense true love, it awakens a longing that cannot be denied.

Responding to true love is part of our very being. We innately desire to reconnect here with the love we felt there. Only as we feel God’s love and fill our hearts with His love can we be truly happy.

God’s love fills the immensity of space; therefore, there is no shortage of love in the universe, only in our willingness to do what is needed to feel it. To do this, Jesus

explained we must “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . soul, . . . strength, and . . . mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27).

### Obedience helps us find lasting love

The more we obey God, the more we desire to help others. The more we help others, the more we love God, and on and on. Conversely, the more we disobey God and the more selfish we are, the less love we feel.

Trying to find lasting love without obeying God is like trying to quench thirst by drinking from an empty cup—you can go through the motions, but the thirst remains. Similarly, trying to find love without helping and sacrificing for others is like trying to live without eating—it is against the laws of nature and cannot succeed. We cannot fake love. It must become part of us. The prophet Mormon explained:

“Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found



possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love” (Moroni 7:47–48).

### **Feeling God’s love in times of adversity**

God is anxious to help us feel His love wherever we are. Let me give an example.

#### *A devastating hurricane*

As a young missionary I was assigned to a small island of about 700 inhabitants in a remote area of the South Pacific. To me the heat was oppressive, the mosquitoes were terrible, the mud was everywhere, the language was impossible, and the food was—well, “different.”

After a few months our island was struck by a powerful hurricane. The devastation was massive. Crops were ruined, lives were lost, housing was blown away, and the telegraph station—our only link to the outside world—was destroyed. A small government boat normally came every month or two, so we rationed our food to last four or five weeks, hoping the boat would come. But no boat came. Every day we became weaker. There were acts of great kindness, but as the sixth and seventh weeks passed with very little food, our strength slipped noticeably. My native companion, Feki, helped me in every way he could, but as the eighth week commenced, I had no energy. I just sat under the shade of a tree and prayed and read scriptures and spent hours and hours pondering the things of eternity.

#### *Feeling the depth of God’s love*

The ninth week began with little outward change. However, there was a great inward change. I felt the Lord’s love more deeply than ever before and learned firsthand that His love “is the most desirable

above all things . . . yea, and the most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:22–23).

I was pretty much skin and bones by now. I remember watching, with deep reverence, my heart beating, my lungs breathing, and thinking what a marvelous body God has created to house our equally marvelous spirit! The thought of a permanent union of these two elements, made possible through the Savior’s love, atoning sacrifice, and Resurrection, was so inspiring and satisfying that any physical discomfort faded into oblivion.

When we understand who God is, who we are, how He loves us, and what His plan is for us, fear evaporates. When we get the tiniest glimpse of these truths, our concern over worldly things vanishes. To think we actually fall for Satan’s lies that power, fame, or wealth is important is truly laughable—or would be were it not so sad.

I learned that just as rockets must overcome the pull of gravity to roar into space, so we must overcome the pull of the world to soar into the eternal realms of understanding and love. I realized my mortal life might end there, but there was no panic. I knew life would continue, and whether here or there didn’t really matter. What did matter was how much love I had in my heart. I knew I needed more! I knew that our joy now and forever is inextricably tied to our capacity to love.

#### *Being transformed by God’s love*

As these thoughts filled and lifted my soul, I gradually became aware of some excited voices. My companion Feki’s eyes were dancing as he said, “Kolipoki, a boat has arrived, and it is full of food. We are saved! Aren’t you excited?” I wasn’t sure, but since the boat had come, that must be God’s answer, so yes, I was happy. Feki gave me some food and said, “Here, eat.” I hesitated. I looked at the food. I looked at Feki. I looked into the sky and closed my eyes.

I felt something very deep. I was grateful my life here would go on as before; still, there was a wistful feeling—a subtle sense of postponement, as when darkness closes the brilliant colors of a perfect sunset and you realize you must wait for another evening to again enjoy such beauty.

I wasn't sure I wanted to open my eyes, but when I did I realized that God's love had changed everything. The heat, the mud, the mosquitoes, the people, the language, the food were no longer challenges. Those who had tried to harm me were no longer my enemies. Everyone was my brother or sister. Being filled with God's love is the most joyous of all things and is worth every cost.

#### *The sacrament reminds us of God's love*

I thanked God for this choice time and for the many reminders of His love—the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the birth of a child, the smile of a friend. I thanked Him for scriptures, for the privilege of prayer, and for that most marvelous reminder of His love—the sacrament.

I learned that as we sing the sacrament hymns with real intent, phrases like “How great the wisdom and the love” or “Dearly, dearly has he loved! And we must love him too” will swell our hearts with love and gratitude (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195; “There Is a Green Hill Far Away,” *Hymns*, no. 194). As we sincerely listen to the sacrament prayers, phrases such as “always remember him,” “keep his commandments,” “have his Spirit to be with them” will fill our hearts with an overwhelming desire to be better (see D&C 20:77, 79). Then when we partake of the bread and the water with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, I know we can feel and even hear those most wonderful words “I love you. I love you.”

I thought I would never forget these feelings, but the pull of the world is strong and we tend to slip. But God continues to love us.

#### **Power of true love knows no barriers**

Several months after I regained my strength, we were caught in another violent storm, only this time at sea. The waves became so big they flipped our small boat over, throwing the three of us into the raging, churning ocean. When I found myself in the middle of a tumultuous sea, I was surprised, scared, and a little upset. “Why has this happened?” I thought. “I’m a missionary. Where is my protection? Missionaries aren’t supposed to swim.”

But swim I must if I wished to stay alive. Every time I complained, I found myself underwater, so it didn’t take long to quit complaining. Things are how they are, and complaining doesn’t help. I needed every ounce of energy to keep my head above water and make it to shore. Having earned my Eagle Scout Award, I was a pretty confident swimmer, but over time the wind and the waves began to sap my strength. I never quit trying, but there came a time when my muscles simply would move no more.

I had a prayer in my heart, but still I began to sink. As I was going down for what could have been the last time, the Lord infused into my mind and heart a deep feeling of love for a very special person. It was as though I could see and hear her. Even though she was 8,000 miles away, the power of that love came rushing across those miles and, penetrating time and space, reached down and pulled me up—lifted me from the depths of darkness, despair, and death and brought me up to light and life and hope. With a sudden burst of energy I made it to shore, where I found my shipmates. Never underestimate the power of true love, for it knows no barriers.

When filled with God's love, we can do and see and understand things that we could not otherwise do or see or understand. Filled with His love, we can endure pain, quell fear, forgive freely, avoid con-

tention, renew strength, and bless and help others in ways surprising even to us.

### **Partake of the Savior's unlimited love**

Jesus Christ was filled with unfathomable love as He endured incomprehensible pain, cruelty, and injustice for us. Through His love for us, He rose above otherwise insurmountable barriers. His love knows no barriers. He invites us to follow Him and partake of His unlimited love so we too may rise above the pain and cruelty and injustice of this world and help and forgive and bless.

I know He lives. I know He loves us. I know we can feel His love here and now. I know His voice is one of perfect mildness

which penetrates to our very center. I know He smiles and is filled with compassion and love. I know He is full of gentleness, kindness, mercy, and desire to help. I love Him with all my heart. I testify that when we are ready, His pure love instantly moves across time and space, reaches down, and pulls us up from the depths of any tumultuous sea of darkness, sin, sorrow, death, or despair we may find ourselves in and brings us into the light and life and love of eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## **Elder Dale E. Miller**

### **True conversion brings peace, healing**

Here at Church headquarters we hold many committee meetings, and early this year in one of those meetings, Elder Neal A. Maxwell was listening attentively to a presentation concerning the development of local leaders. Near the end of the meeting, Elder Maxwell asked, "Is there more that we can do to help bishops bring peace and healing to the Saints?" I was interested in knowing more of his concern, so just prior to his passing and in the privacy of his office, Elder Maxwell expanded on the doctrines associated with obtaining peace and healing. He gave encouragement to my sharing these remarks with Church members.

Elder Maxwell was and remains a wonderful example of selfless love. His concerns for others were bone deep, especially for those with physical and emotional pains. Walking out of his office, one could not help but be more committed to being Christlike. He set a standard for us all. He loved the Savior. He was indeed a true Apostle and disciple. We miss him.

He gave wonderful insights on how total peace and healing come only through full conversion of the soul. He commented on having learned years earlier from President Marion G. Romney concerning the steps to a complete conversion. He quoted from a 1963 general conference talk in which President Romney quoted the Savior's words to Peter: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). President Romney commented:

"It would appear that membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted, as we are here using the term, and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion, on the other hand, is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 24; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, 1066).

## Examples of true conversion

Conversion does not normally come all at once, even though the scriptures give us dramatic accounts. It comes in stages, until a person becomes at heart a new person. Being “born again” is the scriptural term. It is a change of both how we think and how we feel (see Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 23–24).

### *Conversion of Enos*

In the Book of Mormon we read of Enos, whose soul hungered to know more of his father’s teachings concerning eternal life. After a day and night of continuous prayer, he had a voice come to him that said, “Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.” Enos writes, “I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away” (Enos 1:5–6).

### *Conversion of Alma the Younger*

We have the account of the prophet Alma the Younger recounting his conversion experience to his son Helaman. He told of coming to a dramatic realization of his past sins and mistakes, confessing his rebellion against his God. He then remembered his father, Alma, foretelling of the coming of one Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus would come to atone for the sins of the world. I quote:

“Now, as my *mind* caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my *heart*: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.”

Alma experienced eternal pain and guilt but realized that an escape was made possible through the Atonement. Alma continues:

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more;

yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (see Alma 36:12–20; italics added).

Alma found his soul healed through the knowledge that Jesus would come and take away all his sins. As his soul became healed, he found peace within himself. Alma was so captured by the effects of this conversion experience that he repeated the sensations to Helaman:

“Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and *again I say unto you, my son*, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy” (Alma 36:21; italics added).

He was teaching a pattern to his son of lasting peace and joy, just as Enos’s father had done. There is a pattern here of fathers teaching children about the Atonement and eternal life. It is a pattern for all fathers in our day.

### *What these accounts teach about conversion*

Several instructive points come to mind about Alma’s conversion:

1. Like Enos, he had a vivid awareness and remorse for past sins that had offended God.

2. Like Enos, he remembered his father’s teachings—the promise of atonement for sin, through Jesus Christ.

3. Like Enos, he personally pleaded in supplication for his soul.

4. Like Enos, he experienced the miracle of the Atonement to the degree that he could neither remember the pains from his sins nor feel guilt. The healing of his soul was complete. It was a cleansing experience both to the mind and the heart. Joy replaced bitterness. He became a new man, born again of the Spirit. And like

Enos, he immediately turned his attention to serving the Lord and his fellow beings.

### Conversion and covenants

Will the Lord do for us what He did for Enos and Alma?

C. S. Lewis put it this way: “[God] has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass. You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man [or woman] in the world” (*Mere Christianity* [1943], 131).

Are there scriptural accounts of this conversion working among the Saints? We have a number of examples. The account of the Saints in King Benjamin’s time will illustrate. We read the response of the Saints after listening to their king and prophet teach of the commandments and of the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

“And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we *believe all the words* which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we *know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts*, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. . . .

“*And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days*” (Mosiah 5:2, 5; italics added).

You will notice their words are very similar to the commitments you make in the baptismal covenant (see D&C 20:37).

The blessings and promises of conversion are received by covenant through baptism and confirmation and all the ordinances of the temple and the priesthood. Then by continued repentance and obedience and faithful keeping of the covenants made, the fruits of conversion grow and develop in one’s life. As conversion matures and is sustained through the work-

ings of the Holy Ghost, peace and healing come to the soul.

### How to recognize true conversion

Somebody once asked President Romney how one could know when he is converted. President Romney answered:

“He may be assured of it when by the power of the Holy Spirit his soul is healed. When this occurs, he will recognize it by the way he feels, for he will feel as the people of Benjamin felt when they received remission of sins. The record says, ‘. . . the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience. . . .’ (Mosiah 4:3.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 25).

Peter describes what happens in a full conversion: We become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4; see also verses 1–3, 5–9).

It is through this total conversion experience that we truly come to personally know and feel the character and greatness of God. It is the means whereby we become not only servants of the Lord but His friends as well. To the Saints of the early restoration period, the Lord defined His relationship with them: “And again I say unto you, my friends, for from henceforth I shall call you friends” (D&C 84:77).

### Coming to know God is part of conversion

In last October’s general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught us and gave us his feelings regarding the grandeur and character of God (see Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 73–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 70–73). He spoke of the eternal importance of knowing God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. He quoted the familiar verse from the Savior’s intercessory prayer: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

He also quoted the not-so-familiar statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God.” “I want you all to know Him, and to be familiar with Him” (*History of the Church*, 6:305).

Knowing God and becoming His friend comes with the conversion process. Enos found it. King Benjamin’s subjects found it. Alma found it. It is available to all who will repent and obey the commandments. This conversion is an intimate and intensely personal experience. It is about relationships. It involves awakening the Spirit of Christ, which is in all men and women (see D&C 84:45–46; 88:11). It involves awakening within us the feelings of the Holy Ghost, leading us to a testimony of truth. It involves receiving the Holy Ghost after accepting the covenant of baptism. The gift of the Holy Ghost guides us and comforts us in our discipleship, bringing us near to the Savior. The Savior,

in turn, is our Advocate with the Father, and through our faithfulness He will bring us to the Father to become joint heirs with Him (see John 14:6; Romans 8:17; D&C 45:3–5).

### **Prophets lead to peace and healing**

We have a rich treasure of marvelous teachings and thoughts left to us by the holy prophets. They are truly God’s messengers leading His children to salvation and eternal life.

Their testimonies serve to strengthen our faith. Please listen to their words and testimonies. They will help to lead you toward peace and healing to your soul.

It is my personal witness that the Spirit of the Lord is real and unmistakable. I testify that the Father and the Son are knowable and love you. I feel that love through the power of the Spirit. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **Peace of conscience and peace of mind**

In these times of increasing uncertainty there is so much heartache, anguish, and suffering throughout the world that could be avoided by understanding and applying truth. For many, relief and happiness can come by understanding the relationship between peace of conscience and peace of mind and by living the principles upon which both of these blessings are founded.

God wants each of His children to enjoy the transcendent blessing of peace of conscience.<sup>1</sup> A tranquil conscience invites freedom from anguish, sorrow, guilt, shame, and self-condemnation. It provides a foundation for happiness. It is a condition of immense worth, yet there are few on earth that enjoy it. Why? Most often

because the principles upon which peace of conscience is founded are either not understood or not adequately followed. My life has been so richly endowed from peace of conscience that I would share insights on how it can be obtained.

Peace of conscience is the essential ingredient to your peace of mind. Without peace of conscience, you can have no real peace of mind. Peace of conscience relates to your inner self and is controlled by what you personally do. Peace of conscience can come only from God through a righteous, obedient life. It cannot exist otherwise.

On the other hand, peace of mind is most often affected by external forces such as concern for a wayward child, economic pressures, real or imagined offenses, deteriorating world conditions, or more to do



than sufficient time to do it. An unsettled mind is temporary, transitory.

Peace of mind is restored by resolving the external forces that disturb it. Not so with a troubled conscience, for it is unrelenting, ever present, a constant reminder of the need to correct your past mistakes, to resolve an offense to another, or to repent of transgression. Oh, a disturbed conscience can be temporarily masked by physical stimulation of the mind and body where one yields to the temptations of alcohol, drugs, pornography, and worse—all this at the cost of an increased appetite for false efforts to calm an aching conscience, with the risk of incurring unrelenting addictions. There is a better way to restore peace of conscience.

The ability to have an unsettled conscience is a gift of God to help you succeed in this mortal life. It results principally from the influence of the Light of Christ on your mind and heart. The Light of Christ is that divine power or influence that emanates from God through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> It gives light and life to all things. It prompts all rational individuals throughout the earth to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong. It activates your conscience.<sup>3</sup> Its influence can be weakened through transgression and addiction and restored through proper repentance. The Light of Christ is not a person. It is a power and influence that comes from God and, when followed, can lead a person to qualify for the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost.<sup>4</sup>

It is well to remember that even with peace of conscience you can have temporary periods when your peace of mind is interrupted by external concerns. Your understanding of the causes can relieve much of the pressure they generate. As your personal life conforms to the teachings of the Lord, you can seek His help in resolving the troubling issues. Thus your faith in the Lord and in His teachings will yield peace of mind. Your efforts will be

stepping-stones to greater personal growth as Spirit-guided solutions are found. In addition, as they are resolved, such challenges can often bring blessings to others when their needs have caused the disturbed feelings in your mind.

In summary, you can regain peace of conscience by repenting of personal transgressions that cause you internal turmoil. Then peace of mind can be secured by resolving the external pressures that cause you temporary anxiety, worry, and distress. Yet try as you might, you will not find enduring happiness until, through repentance, you satisfy personally broken law to restore peace to a troubled conscience.

### **Principles for finding peace of conscience**

Whether you are one who recognizes a need to repent and are finding it difficult to do so or one who wonders if you have repented enough to be fully forgiven, it may be helpful to review some fundamental principles upon which peace of conscience is founded.

#### *Repent of sins*

Broken law from sin or transgression causes anguish of mind and heart from an offended conscience. Knowing that all of His spirit children save His Only Begotten, Jesus Christ, would unintentionally or intentionally violate His laws, our Eternal Father provided a means to correct the consequences of such acts. Whether the violation be great or small, the solution is the same: full repentance through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement with obedience to His commandments.

When needed, full repentance will require action on your part. If you are not familiar with the classic steps to repentance, such as *confession and abandonment of sin, restitution, obedience, and seeking forgiveness*, talk to a bishop or study a source such as President Spencer W. Kim-

ball's masterly work *The Miracle of Forgiveness*.

### *Forgive others*

In addition to fulfilling those requirements, the return of your peace of conscience will be hastened by giving careful attention to another step that is sometimes not recognized. The Savior has made it clear that to receive forgiveness you must forgive others their offenses against you.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

"And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds."<sup>5</sup>

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."<sup>6</sup>

If as an innocent victim you have been seriously wronged, don't harbor feelings of hatred, anger at what appears to be unjust. Forgive the offender even when you are innocent. To do that may require an enormous effort on your part. Such forgiveness is most difficult, but it is the sure path to peace and healing. If there is discipline required for a serious transgression against you, leave that to the Church and civil authorities. Don't burden your own life with thoughts of retribution. The Lord's mill of justice grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly well. In the Lord's economy, no one will escape the consequences of unresolved violation of His laws. In His time and in His way, full payment will be required for unrepented evil acts.

### *Seek forgiveness through Jesus Christ*

I testify that of all the necessary steps to repentance, the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that

forgiveness comes in and through Jesus Christ. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. You will be helped as you exercise faith in Christ.<sup>7</sup> That means you trust Him and His teachings. Satan would have you believe that serious transgression cannot be entirely overcome. I testify that the Savior gave His life so that through repentance the effects of all sin can be put behind you, save the shedding of innocent blood and the denial of the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup>

The fruit of true repentance is God's forgiveness, which opens the door to receive all of the covenants and ordinances provided on this earth and to enjoy the resulting blessings. When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities. How marvelous the promise of the Lord: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>9</sup> The Lord is and ever will be faithful to His words.

### **A suggested way to come back**

If you have a troubled conscience from broken laws, I plead, please come back. Come back to the cool, refreshing waters of personal purity. Come back to the warmth and security of Father in Heaven's love. Come back to the serenity and peace of conscience that come from living the commandments of God.

May I suggest a way back? You can begin alone and proceed at your own pace. I invite you to carefully study the Book of Mormon. There are many scriptures that show how others have overcome barriers to repentance. For example, Alma speaks to Shiblon:

"I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.



“And now, my son, I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world.”<sup>10</sup>

From this scripture you can see that suffering does not bring forgiveness. That comes through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings so that His gift of redemption can work its miracle. He invites:

“Behold, I have come . . . to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive . . . ; therefore repent, and come unto me . . . and be saved.”<sup>11</sup>

Apply what the Book of Mormon teaches you. Ponder the verses that speak of the Savior. Seek prayerfully to know Him. Ask your Father in Heaven to strengthen your faith in His Son and give you the power to obey His commandments. When ready, seek the aid of a caring bishop to help you complete the process of repentance. Then you can have peace of conscience and the assurance that the Lord has forgiven you.

Please come back. Don’t wait until all is in perfect order. We will walk beside you. We love you. Please come back.

### **Forgive yourself after repenting of sins**

Now if you are one who cannot forgive yourself for serious past transgressions—even when a judge in Israel has assured that you have properly repented—if you feel compelled to continually condemn yourself and suffer by frequently recalling the details of past errors, I plead with all of my soul that you ponder this statement of the Savior:

“He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins . . . , he will confess them and forsake them.”<sup>12</sup>

To continue to suffer when there has been proper repentance is not prompted by the Savior but the master of deceit, whose goal is to bind and enslave you. Satan will press you to continue to relive the details of past mistakes, knowing that such thoughts make forgiveness seem unattainable. In this way Satan attempts to tie strings to the mind and body so that he can manipulate you like a puppet.

I testify that when a bishop or stake president has confirmed that your repentance is sufficient, know that your obedience has allowed the Atonement of Jesus Christ to satisfy the demands of justice for the laws you have broken. Therefore, you are now free. Please believe it. To continually suffer the distressing effects of sin after adequate repentance, while not intended, is to deny the efficacy of the Savior’s Atonement in your behalf.

When memory of prior mistakes encroached upon Ammon’s mind, he turned his thoughts to Jesus Christ and the miracle of forgiveness. Then his suffering was replaced with joy, gratitude, and thanksgiving for the Savior’s love and forgiveness.<sup>13</sup> Please, go and do likewise. Do it now so that you can enjoy peace of conscience and peace of mind with all their attendant blessings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Mosiah 4:2–3.
2. See Topical Guide, “Light of Christ,” 290.
3. See Moroni 7:16.
4. See John 1:9; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46–47.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10–11.
6. Mark 11:25–26.
7. See 2 Nephi 9:22–24; Alma 11:40.
8. Unpardonable: see Hebrews 6:4–8; Alma 39:6; Doctrine and Covenants 76:31–38; 132:27. Unforgivable: see Doctrine and Covenants 42:18.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
10. Alma 38:8–9.
11. 3 Nephi 9:21–22.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
13. See Alma 26:17–20.

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The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

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### **President Monson**

The choir has just sung “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Let Us Anew.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder D. Rex Gerratt of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President James E. Faust**

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, President Hinckley has reminded us that the “golden years” are filled with more lead than gold! That is why I am sitting down as I speak to you today. I am recovering from a slipped disk, which caused a pinched nerve in my back. I have been told that in time I can expect a full recovery.

I express my profound appreciation for the blessings that have come to the world through the magnificent service of our departed Brethren, Elders Neal A. Maxwell and David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Our loss is great. We welcome Brother Uchtdorf and Brother Bednar, men of strength and faith, into the sweet councils of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

### **A message of hope for those who suffer**

I humbly pray this morning that I may be understood and not misunderstood. In an increasingly unjust world, to survive and even to find happiness and joy, no matter what comes, we must make our stand unequivocally with the Lord. We need to try to be faithful every hour of every day so

that our foundation of trust in the Lord will never be shaken. My message is one of hope and counsel for those who may wonder about the seemingly unfair distribution of pain, suffering, disaster, and heartache in this life. Some may ask:

“Why was I born with physical or mental limitations?”

“What did I do to deserve this heartache?”

“Why did my father have to suffer so much following a cruel, disabling stroke? He was such a righteous man and was always faithful and true to the Lord and His Church.”

“Why did I have to lose my mother twice—once to the ravages of Alzheimer’s disease and, secondly, to death? She was such an angel.”

“Why did the Lord let our little baby girl die? She was so precious, and we loved her so much.”

“Why hasn’t the Lord answered our prayers the way we wished?”

“Life isn’t fair. We know some people who have done some very bad things, and yet they seem to have everything they want or need.”

### Why do the good suffer?

Dr. Arthur Wentworth Hewitt suggested some reasons why the good suffer as well as the wicked:

“First: I don’t know. Second: We may not be as innocent as we think. Third: . . . I believe it is because He loves *us* so much more than He loves our happiness. How so? Well, if on a basis of strict personal return here and now, all the good were always happy and all the bad suffered disaster (instead of often quite the reverse), this would be the most subtle damnation of character imaginable.”<sup>1</sup>

President Kimball gave this insightful explanation:

“If pain and sorrow and total punishment immediately followed the doing of evil, no soul would repeat a misdeed. If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil—all would do good and not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency. . . . There would also be an absence of joy, success, resurrection, eternal life, and godhood.”<sup>2</sup>

Our love of God must be pure, without selfish intent. The pure love of Christ must be the motive in our devotion.

### Keep an eternal perspective

Now all this suffering might indeed be unfair if everything ended at death, but it doesn’t. Life is not like a one-act play. It has three acts. We had a past act, when we were in the premortal existence; and now we have a present act, which is mortality; and we will have a future act, when we return to God.<sup>3</sup> As Jesus promised, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.”<sup>4</sup> We were sent into mortality to be tested and tried. As the Lord explained to Abraham, “We will prove them herewith, to see if

they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>5</sup>

Our past and present sufferings cannot, as Paul said, “be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”<sup>6</sup> in the eternities. “For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory.”<sup>7</sup> So tribulation is useful in the sense that it is helpful to get into the celestial kingdom.

### Opposite responses to adversity

Some, because they lack faith or understanding of the eternal plan, become bitter and lose hope. One such was a 19th-century writer who achieved both success and wealth with his dazzling wit and writing style. His wife came from a religious family, and he wanted to have faith in God but wasn’t really sure God existed. Then he was hit by a series of crushing blows. In 1893 a national financial crisis left him deeply in debt. His oldest daughter died while he was on a speaking tour. His wife’s health failed, and she died in 1904. His youngest daughter died in 1909. His own health declined. His writing, which had formerly been so full of sparkle, now reflected his bitterness. He became progressively depressed, cynical, and disillusioned and remained so until his death in 1910. With all his brilliance, he lacked the inner strength to deal with adversity and simply resigned himself to his misfortunes.

It’s not so much what happens to us but how we deal with what happens to us. That reminds me of a passage from *Alma*. After a long war, “many had become hardened,” while “many were softened because of their afflictions.”<sup>8</sup> The same circumstances produced opposite responses. The writer who lost so much was not able to draw from the well of faith. Each of us needs to have our own storehouse of faith

to help us rise above the troubles that are part of this mortal probation.

### **Faith sustains Thomas Giles in adversity**

Thomas Giles, a Welsh convert who joined the Church in 1844, also suffered much in his lifetime. He was a miner, and while he was digging coal in the mine, a large piece of coal hit him on the head and inflicted a wound nine inches long. The doctor who examined him said the injured man would not live longer than 24 hours. But then the elders came and administered to him. He was promised that he would get well, and that “even if he would never see again, he would live to do much good in the Church.” Brother Giles did indeed live but was blind the rest of his life. Within a month of his injury, “he was out traveling through the country attending to his ecclesiastical duties.”

In 1856 Brother Giles and his family immigrated to Utah, but before he left his homeland, the Welsh Saints presented him with a harp, which he learned to play skillfully. At Council Bluffs he joined a handcart company and headed west. “Though blind he pulled a handcart from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake City.” While crossing the plains his wife and two children died. “His sorrow was great and his heart almost broken, but his faith did not fail him. In the midst of his grief he said as did one of old, ‘The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’”<sup>9</sup> When Brother Giles arrived in Salt Lake City, President Brigham Young, who had heard his story, loaned Brother Giles a valuable harp until his own arrived from Wales. Brother Giles “traveled from settlement to settlement in Utah, . . . gladdening the hearts of the people with his sweet music.”<sup>10</sup>

### **We must make our stand with the Lord**

How we use our God-given moral agency explains why some things happen

in our lives. Some of our choices have unforeseen results, which may be good or bad. But often we know in advance that some of our choices will have detrimental or even harmful consequences. I call these “informed choices” because we know our acts will have disastrous results. These informed choices include illicit sexual relations and the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Such poorly informed choices may prevent a person from going on a mission or receiving temple blessings. We may make incorrect informed decisions because the lures of the world distort reality and make us vulnerable. In dating relationships with the opposite sex, making a wrong choice early may limit making the right choice later.

So where should each of us make our stand? As we demonstrate our devotion to God by our daily acts of righteousness, He can know where we stand. For all of us this life is a time of sifting and refining. We all face trials. Individual members in the early days of the Church were tested and refined when they had to decide if they had the faith, like Brother Giles, to put their belongings in a wagon or a pioneer handcart and travel across the American plains. Some did not have the faith. Those who did traveled “with faith in every footstep.” In our time we are going through an increasingly difficult time of refining and testing. The tests are more subtle because the lines between good and evil are being eroded. Very little seems to be sacred in any of our public communication. In this environment we will need to make sure where we stand all of the time in our commitment to eternal truths and covenants.

### **Job’s faithfulness in adversity**

We learn much about dealing with suffering from “a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”<sup>11</sup> Satan obtained leave from the Lord to tempt and try Job.

Job was rich and had seven sons and three daughters, but his property and children were all destroyed. What effect did this have on Job? Said he, speaking of the Lord, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,”<sup>12</sup> and, “He also shall be my salvation.”<sup>13</sup> Job attested, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”<sup>14</sup> Job completely trusted the Lord to take care of all of the other concerns.

The way to find joy in this life is to resolve, like Job, to endure all for God and His work. By so doing we will receive the infinite, priceless joy of being with our Savior in the eternities. As we sing in one of our well-known hymns:

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for  
repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should  
endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!<sup>15</sup>

### **We do not know the wisdom of the Lord**

President Howard W. Hunter once said, “God knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see.”<sup>16</sup> None of us knows the wisdom of the Lord. We do not know in advance exactly how He would get us from where we are to where we need to be, but He does offer us broad outlines in our patriarchal blessings. We encounter many bumps, bends, and forks in the road of life that leads to the eternities. There is so much teaching and correction as we travel on that road. Said the Lord, “He that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.”<sup>17</sup> “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”<sup>18</sup>

As we live on earth, we must walk in faith, nothing doubting. When the journey becomes seemingly unbearable, we can take comfort in the words of the Lord: “I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy

tears: behold, I will heal thee.”<sup>19</sup> Some of the healing may take place in another world. We may never know why some things happen in this life. The reason for some of our suffering is known only to the Lord.

### **Trials can help prepare us for exaltation**

President Brigham Young offered the profound insight that at least some of our suffering has a purpose when he said:

“All intelligent beings who are crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives must pass through every ordeal appointed for intelligent beings to pass through, to gain their glory and exaltation. Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered to come upon the few, to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. . . . Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation.”<sup>20</sup>

We have much reason to hope. Joy can be ours if we are willing to sacrifice all for the Lord. Then we can look forward to the infinitely priceless possibility of overcoming all the challenges of this life. Then we will be with the Savior forever and, as President Brigham Young also said, “anticipate enjoying the glory, excellency and exaltation which God has prepared for the faithful.”<sup>21</sup>

God lives, Jesus is the Christ, President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, and this is a time for all of us to prepare to meet God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Excerpt from a letter.
2. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 77.
3. See Ecclesiastes 12:7.
4. John 14:2.
5. Abraham 3:25.
6. Romans 8:18.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 58:4.
8. Alma 62:41.
9. See Job 1:21.

10. See Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (1901–36), 2:507–8.
11. Job 1:1.
12. Job 13:15.
13. Job 13:16.
14. Job 19:25–26.
15. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 60.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 136:31.
18. Hebrews 12:6.
19. 2 Kings 20:5.
20. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 345.
21. “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, May 31, 1871, 197.

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The choir sang “Come, Let Us Anew.” Elder D. Rex Gerratt offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 174th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A Primary choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, provided the music. Jane Knudsen Poulsen directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 174th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Primary choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, under the direction of Jane Knudsen Poulsen, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Beautiful Savior.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Stephen A. West of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Beautiful Savior.” Elder Stephen A. West offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

Thank you, Elder West.

The choir will now sing a medley of Primary songs. Aren’t these children beautiful? They sing too.

Following the singing, the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church will be presented for your sustaining vote.

At the conclusion of the sustaining, it will be our pleasure to hear from Elders L. Tom Perry and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following their remarks, we will hear from Elder Ned B. Roueché of the Seventy.

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The choir sang a medley of “Jesus Once Was a Little Child,” “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story,” and “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf, and David Allan Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of his call to the Quorum of the Twelve, it is proposed that we release Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders E. Ray Bateman, Val R. Christensen, Keith Crockett, Merrill C. Oaks, Gordon T. Watts, and Stephen A. West. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it. Thank you.

We also extend a release to the following as Area Authority Seventies and express thanks for their diligent service: Juan A. Alvaradejo, Julio E. Alvarado, Modesto M. Amistad Jr., Horacio P. Araya, David A. Bednar, Robert K. Bills, Harold C. Brown, V. Francisco Chinchay, Armando Gaona, Eduardo A. Lamartine, Gary S. Matsuda, Julio E. Otay, Carlos L. Pedraja, Jorge A. Pedrero, João R. C. Martins Silva, Irajá B. Soárez, Héctor M. Verdugo, Jorge F. Zeballos. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Robert C. Oaks as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Andrew M. Ford as an Area Authority Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### The pattern of Church organization

“Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

“Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April” (D&C 21:2–3).

It was on this day that Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and members of the Smith and Whitmer families met in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, Seneca County, New York. After appropriate song and prayers, the revelations concerning the organization of the Church were read to the assembled people. These revelations set forth the order of the priesthood and the duties of the officers in the Church. Following this pattern, the Church organization of today has been built.

“According to previous commandment, the Prophet Joseph called upon the brethren present to know if they would accept himself and Oliver Cowdery as their teachers in the things of the kingdom of God; and if they were willing that they should proceed to organize the church according to the commandment of the Lord. To this they consented by unanimous vote” (B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:196).

And thus we have the pattern established in the very beginning. “And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith” (D&C 26:2).

### Sustaining new members of the Twelve

I find a special feeling surging through my whole being as I see the hands raised to the square to sustain the leadership of this Church. Today two new members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were sustained by the members of the Church

here in the Conference Center and also by those participating through television, Internet, and satellite in almost all corners of the earth.

Elder Uchtdorf and Elder Bednar, you have been sustained to fill the vacancies created by the deaths of Elder David B. Haight and Elder Neal A. Maxwell. As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I welcome you with open arms as you become part of this sacred calling which is ours.

Of course, today we miss our association with Elder Haight and Elder Maxwell. Elder Haight has been sitting by my side in these conferences for the past 28 years. Elder Maxwell has been next to him for a number of years. How I wish I had the enthusiastic spirit of Elder Haight or the word power of Elder Maxwell to express my feelings about this long association I have experienced with these two great brethren. They have added so much to my life. How I miss their continued association!

### Sacrifices of early members of the Twelve

We have a rich tradition of the work of the Twelve as we have traveled throughout the world proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, it was on Sunday, June 4, 1837, that the Prophet Joseph Smith approached Heber C. Kimball in the Kirtland Temple and whispered to him, saying, “Brother Heber, the Spirit of the Lord has whispered to me: ‘Let my servant Heber go to England and proclaim my Gospel, and open the door of salvation to that nation’” (quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [1945], 104).

The account of Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young leaving their homes for England certainly shows the sacrifice they were willing to make for the callings they had received. The account reads:



“September 14th, [1839], President Brigham Young left his home at Montrose to start on the mission to England. He was so sick that he was unable to go to the Mississippi [River], a distance of thirty rods, without assistance. After he had crossed the river he rode behind Israel Barlow on his horse to my house, where he continued sick until the 18th. He left his wife sick with a babe only three weeks old, and all his other children were sick and unable to wait upon each other. Not one soul of them was able to go to the well for a pail of water, and they were without a second suit to their backs, for the mob in Missouri had taken nearly all he had. On the 17th, Sister Mary Ann Young got a boy to carry her up in his wagon to my house, that she might nurse and comfort Brother Brigham” (quoted in *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 265).

Heber C. Kimball’s family were also ill. Charles Hubbard sent his boy with a team and wagon to help them on their way. Elder Kimball records:

“It appeared to me as though my very inmost parts would melt within me at leaving my family in such a condition, as it were almost in the arms of death. I felt as though I could not endure it. I asked the teamster to stop, and said to Brother Brigham, ‘This is pretty tough, isn’t it; let’s rise up and give them a cheer.’ We arose, and swinging our hats three times over our heads, shouted: ‘Hurrah, hurrah for Israel.’” Sister Young and Sister Kimball came to the door and waved a farewell which gave Brother Brigham and Brother Heber much comfort as they continued “without purse or scrip” toward England. (See *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 265–66.)

### Special witnesses of Jesus Christ

The Bible Dictionary states that *Apostle* “means ‘one sent forth.’ . . . The calling of an apostle is to be a special witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, particularly of his divinity and of his bod-

ily resurrection from the dead. . . . Twelve men with this high calling constitute an administrative council in the work of the ministry. . . . Today twelve men with this same divine calling and ordination constitute the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (“Apostle,” 612).

An Apostle today continues to be “one sent forth.” The conditions we face are different from those of the early Brethren as we make our journeys to fulfill our assignment. Our manner of travel to all corners of the earth is very different from that of the early Brethren. However, our assignment remains the same as that which was given by the Savior as He instructed His called Twelve to “go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20).

### Great blessing of belonging to a quorum

For you two new Brethren, I can promise you that there will be a new understanding of what it means to belong to a quorum. I wish the feeling and respect we have for our council could be transported to every quorum in the Church. Would you deacons, teachers, priests, elders, and high priests quorums listen for a moment to what I believe is one of the greatest blessings one can receive from being a bearer of the priesthood? That special blessing is belonging to a priesthood quorum.

President Stephen L. Richards, many years ago, gave us some wonderful counsel on Church government. His statement is as follows:

“The genius of our Church government is government through *councils*. . . . I see the wisdom, God’s wisdom, in creating councils: to govern his Kingdom. In the

spirit under which we labor, men can get together with seemingly divergent views and far different backgrounds, and under the operation of that spirit, by counseling together, they can arrive at an accord. . . . I have no hesitancy in giving you the assurance, if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 86).

### **A quorum is a class**

And what are the great benefits you will experience from belonging to a quorum? Again from Stephen L. Richards—he said, “A quorum is three things: first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118).

I see this genius so manifestly apparent in the functions of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We are a class as we study the doctrines of the kingdom together. Can you imagine what a special experience it would be to be in a quorum meeting and be taught gospel doctrine by Elders Ezra Taft Benson, Mark E. Petersen, LeGrand Richards, Howard W. Hunter, Bruce R. McConkie, David B. Haight, or Neal A. Maxwell? You will notice that I have used only those Brethren who have completed their earthly ministries in order not to be selective among our current Apostles. This same blessing can be yours in each of your quorums. The words of the Apostles, past and present, live in the scriptures, conference addresses, Church magazines, devotionals, and so forth. They are available to bring the power of the doctrine of the kingdom into your quorum’s class. Make of your quorum a class to increase your knowledge of the gospel of our Lord and Savior.

### **A quorum is a great brotherhood**

In our quorum we have a special brotherhood. We are there to lift, inspire,

and bless each other with the spirit of our calling. When one is burdened, there are 11 others anxious to help lift and share that burden. At times we rejoice together in feelings of accomplishment. We weep together in times of sorrow. We never feel as if we are facing a problem alone! There is always the counsel, support, help, and encouragement of our quorum members.

From the book *Priesthood and Church Government*, we have this statement on the brotherhood which should exist in every priesthood quorum:

“The Priesthood is a great brotherhood, held together by the eternal and immutable laws that constitute the framework of the Gospel. The feeling of brotherhood should permeate the quorum. It should be the first concern of a quorum to help all members who may be in need temporally, mentally, or spiritually. The spirit of brotherhood should be the directing force in all the plans and operations of the quorum. If this spirit be cultivated, wisely and persistently, no other organization will become more attractive to the man who holds the Priesthood” (Rudger Clawson, foreword to *A Guide for Quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood* [1930], 3; quoted in John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Priesthood and Church Government* [1939], 135).

We would encourage each priesthood quorum in the Church to cultivate such a brotherhood.

### **A quorum is a service unit**

Finally, the only purpose for our Quorum is to be of service. Perhaps our deep feelings of this responsibility could be characterized in an epistle dated October 26, 1886, by Wilford Woodruff, who was then serving as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles:

“I will say to the Apostles, our responsibility is very great. . . . What manner of men ought we to be? The whole earth is ripening in iniquity, and the Zion of God

should be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. We should humble ourselves before the Lord and be in a position to be filled with the spirit of our calling, with the Holy Ghost, and with the revelations of Jesus Christ, that we may know the mind and will of God concerning us, and be prepared to magnify our calling and bring to pass righteousness, and be valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ to the end. . . . There never was a time when the work of God required a more faithful testimony and labor from the Apostles and Elders than today” (“An Epistle,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 24, 1886, 712).

Make of each of your quorums a great service organization for the benefit of all your quorum members.

### **Learn your duty and act in all diligence**

Now this word of warning from the scriptures:

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which

he is appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand” (D&C 107:99–100).

And so I say to you two Brethren who have joined us in our quorum, and to all of you brethren who belong to the priesthood of God, may God bless each of us in our calls to serve. May our faith strengthen as we serve in righteousness, faithfully keeping the commandments. May our testimonies ever grow stronger as we seek to find the fountain of eternal truth. May the brotherhood that exists in our quorums be of comfort and strength and security as we pass through this mortal part of our existence. May the joy of gospel service ever abide in our hearts as we go forward to fulfill our duties and responsibilities as servants in our Father in Heaven’s kingdom is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Henry B. Eyring**

### **A testimony of priesthood keys**

In a chapel far from Salt Lake City, in a place where a member of the Quorum of the Twelve rarely goes, a father approached me. He led his young son by the hand. As they reached me, he looked down at the boy, called him by name, and said, nodding his head toward me, “This is an Apostle.” I could tell by the sound of the father’s voice that he was hoping his son would feel more than that he was meeting a dignified visitor. He hoped that his son would feel a conviction that priesthood keys were on the earth in the Lord’s Church. His son will need that conviction again and again. He will need it when he opens a letter from some future prophet he has never seen calling him to a mission. He

will need it when he buries a child or a wife or a parent. He will need it for courage to follow direction to serve. He will need it for the comfort that comes from trusting a sealing power that binds forever.

Missionaries will invite investigators to meet a bishop or branch president today with the same intent. They hope that the investigators will feel far more than that they have met a nice man or even a great man. They will be praying that the investigators will feel a conviction that this apparently ordinary man holds priesthood keys in the Lord’s Church. The investigators will need that conviction when they go into the waters of baptism. They will need it when they pay tithing. They will need that conviction when the bishop is inspired to give them a calling. They will need it

when they see him presiding in the sacrament meeting and when he nourishes them by teaching the gospel.

And so missionaries and fathers, and all of us who serve others in the true Church, want to help those we love gain a lasting testimony that the keys of the priesthood are held by the Lord's servants in His Church. I speak today to encourage all who labor to instill and strengthen that testimony.

### **Paul tries to build a testimony of keys**

It will help to recognize some things. First, God is persistent and generous in offering the blessings of priesthood power to His children. Second, His children must choose for themselves to qualify for and receive those blessings. And third, Satan, the enemy of righteousness, has from the beginning tried to undermine the faith necessary to receive the blessings made possible by priesthood power.

I learned about those realities from a wise teacher nearly 25 years ago. I spoke in an ancient theater in Ephesus. Bright sunlight flooded the ground where the Apostle Paul had stood to preach. My topic was Paul, the Apostle called of God.

The audience was hundreds of Latter-day Saints. They were arranged on the rows of stone benches the Ephesians sat upon more than a millennium before. Among them were two living Apostles, Elder Mark E. Petersen and Elder James E. Faust.

As you can imagine, I had prepared carefully. I had read the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, both those of Paul and his fellow Apostles. I had read and pondered Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

I tried my best to honor Paul and his office. After the talk, a number of people said kind things. Both of the living Apostles were generous in their comments. But later, Elder Faust took me aside and, with a smile and with softness in his voice, said, "That was a good talk. But you left out

the most important thing you could have said."

I asked him what that was. Weeks later he consented to tell me. His answer has been teaching me ever since.

He said that I could have told the people that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth.

That sent me back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I could see that Paul wanted the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord's Church. Paul was trying to build a testimony of those keys.

Paul testified to the Ephesians that Christ was at the head of His Church. And he taught that the Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood.

### **Loss and restoration of priesthood keys**

Despite the clarity and the power of his teaching and his example, Paul knew that an apostasy would come. He knew that apostles and prophets would be taken from the earth. And he knew that they would, in some great, future day, be restored. He wrote of that time to the Ephesians, speaking of what the Lord would do: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."<sup>1</sup>

Paul looked forward to the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the heavens would be opened again. It happened. John the Baptist came and conferred on mortals the priesthood of Aaron and the keys of the ministering of angels and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

Ancient apostles and prophets returned and conferred upon Joseph the

keys they held in mortality. Mortal men were ordained to the holy apostleship in February of 1835. Priesthood keys were given to the Twelve Apostles in the latter part of March 1844.

The Prophet Joseph Smith knew that his death was imminent. He knew that the precious priesthood keys and the apostleship must not be and would not be lost again.

One of the Apostles, Wilford Woodruff, left us this account of what happened in Nauvoo as the Prophet spoke to the Twelve:

“On that occasion the Prophet Joseph rose up and said to us: ‘Brethren, I have desired to live to see this temple built. I shall never live to see it, but you will. I have sealed upon your heads all the keys of the kingdom of God. I have sealed upon you every key, power, principle that the God of heaven has revealed to me. Now, no matter where I may go or what I may do, the kingdom rests upon you.’”<sup>2</sup>

Every prophet that followed Joseph, from Brigham Young to President Hinckley, has held and exercised those keys and has held the sacred apostleship.

### **Faith unlocks power of priesthood keys**

But just as in the time of Paul, the power of those priesthood keys for us requires our faith. We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.

And that depends upon our testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and leads His Church. We must also know for ourselves that the Lord restored His Church and the priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And we must have an assurance through the Holy Ghost, refreshed often, that those keys have been passed without interruption to the living prophet and that the Lord blesses and directs His people through the line of priest-

hood keys which reaches down through presidents of stakes and of districts and through bishops and branch presidents to us, wherever we are and no matter how far from the prophet and the apostles.

That is not easy today. It was not easy in the days of Paul. It has always been hard to recognize in fallible human beings the authorized servants of God. Paul must have seemed an ordinary man to many. Joseph Smith’s cheerful disposition was seen by some as not fitting their expectations for a prophet of God.

### **Efforts to undermine faith in keys**

Satan will always work on the Saints of God to undermine their faith in priesthood keys. One way he does it is to point out the humanity of those who hold them. He can in that way weaken our testimony and so cut us loose from the line of keys by which the Lord ties us to Him and can take us and our families home to Him and to our Heavenly Father.

Satan succeeded in undermining the testimony of men who had, with Joseph Smith, seen the heavens opened and heard the voices of angels. The evidence of their physical eyes and ears was not enough when they no longer could feel the testimony that the priesthood keys were still in place with Joseph.

The warning for us is plain. If we look for human frailty in humans, we will always find it. When we focus on finding the frailties of those who hold priesthood keys, we run risks for ourselves. When we speak or write to others of such frailties, we put them at risk.

We live in a world where finding fault in others seems to be the favorite blood sport. It has long been the basis of political campaign strategy. It is the theme of much television programming across the world. It sells newspapers. Whenever we meet anyone, our first, almost unconscious reaction may be to look for imperfections.

**Evidence of keys after a disaster in Idaho**

To keep ourselves grounded in the Lord's Church, we can and must train our eyes to recognize the power of the Lord in the service of those He has called. We must be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And we need to pray for the Holy Ghost to help us know that men who lead us hold this power. For me, such prayers are most often answered when I am fully engaged in the Lord's service myself.

It happened in the aftermath of a disaster. A dam in Idaho broke on a June day. A wall of water struck the communities below it. Thousands of people, mostly Latter-day Saints, fled their homes to go to safety.

I was there as the people faced the terrible task of recovery. I saw the stake president gather his bishops to lead the people. We were cut off in those first days from any supervision from outside. I was in the meeting of local leaders when a director from the federal disaster agency arrived.

He tried to take over the meeting. With great force he began to list the things that he said needed to be done. As he read aloud each item, the stake president, who was sitting near him, said quietly, "We've already done that." After that went on for five or ten minutes, the federal official grew silent and sat down. He listened quietly as the stake president took reports from the bishops and gave directions.

For the meeting the next day, the federal disaster official arrived early. He sat toward the back. The stake president began the meeting. He took more reports, and he gave instructions. After a few minutes, the federal official, who had come with all the authority and resources of his great agency, said, "President Ricks, what would you like us to do?"

He recognized power. I saw more. I recognized the evidence of keys and the faith that unlocks their power.

It happened again when a man and his wife arrived back in town just after the dam had broken. They didn't go to their home. They went first to find their bishop. He was covered in mud, leading his members in mucking out homes. They asked what he would have them do.

They went to work. Much later, they took a few minutes to check on their own house. It was gone. So they went back to work wherever their bishop asked them to help. They knew where to go to get the Lord's direction for service in His Church.

**Faith as keys are passed to new leaders**

I learned then as I have since how the stakes of Zion become places of safety. They become like a great family, united, caring for each other. It comes by simple faith.

By faith they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. As they continue to keep the commandments, that gift becomes constant. They can recognize spiritual things. It becomes easier to see the power of God working through the common people God calls to serve and lead them. Hearts are softened. Strangers become fellow citizens in the Lord's kingdom, united in loving bonds.

That happy condition will not last without a constant renewal of faith. The bishop we love will be released, as will the stake president. The Apostles we followed in faith will be taken home to the God who called them.

With those continual changes comes a great opportunity. We can act to qualify for the revelation that allows us to know that the keys are being passed by God from one person to another. We can seek to have that experience again and again. And we must, in order to receive the blessings God has for us and wants us to offer to others.

The answer to your prayer is not likely to be as dramatic as it was when some saw Brigham Young, as he spoke, take on



the appearance of the martyred Prophet Joseph. But it can be as sure. And with that spiritual assurance will come peace and power. You will know again that this is the Lord's true and living Church, that He leads it through His ordained servants, and that He cares about us.

If enough of us exercise that faith and receive those assurances, God will lift up those who lead us and so bless our lives and our families. We will become what Paul so wanted for those he served: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and

prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."<sup>3</sup>

I testify, I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that He lives. I know that He is the rock upon which this, His true Church, stands. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ephesians 1:10.
2. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, Sept. 2, 1889, 546; or *Ensign*, Apr. 2004, 30.
3. Ephesians 2:20.

## Elder Ned B. Roueché

### Rescuing a brother in Mexico

When I was a young missionary serving in Mexico, I was called to serve as branch president in a small town in the state of Veracruz. When my companion and I were reviewing the membership records of our little branch, we found the record of a brother who had been ordained a deacon but had not been attending the meetings.

We arranged to make a visit with him. While visiting him, we invited him to come to the meetings and serve in his priesthood responsibilities. The following Sunday he came but was not properly dressed and was unshaven. So we taught him about being clean and neat when he officiated in those sacred priesthood responsibilities, which included passing the sacrament. His life changed considerably as he served faithfully. That branch was my last assignment in the mission before returning home. When I was ready to leave the branch, this good brother came and put his arms around me, picked me up, and with a big hug swung me around. As he did, the tears rolled down his cheeks, and he said, "Thank you for coming and helping me."

### Nurture with constant, tender care

Sometimes we just lose our focus and drift away. Sometimes we have our feelings hurt or some other problem occurs. It all ends up the same, and we fail to claim the blessings that can be ours. Pride, distrust, deceit, discouragement, and many kinds of sin can be removed by a change in our hearts and by following the path that the Savior has shown us. He says, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23). The Savior has paid our ransom. He loves each of us and reaches out to all who will come and follow Him.

There is a flame of desire for good deep within each of us. When that flame is fed and nurtured with the eternal truths of the gospel and the testimony of the Spirit, it will respond and grow stronger and brighter until it leads us to the fulness of truth. The flame must be kindled by love and tender care, then followed by constant nourishing. It is like the gardener who raises beautiful flowers. The constant, tender care and nourishment over time brings beautiful blossoms that are enjoyed by all who see them.

## Forgive others

Forgiveness is also a key part of our return to happiness in our Father's kingdom. At one time or another we may become offended or wronged, and this can become a stumbling block that may take us away from our eternal goal, which is to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. The Savior taught us the pattern for forgiveness as He taught the Lord's Prayer. He said, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). We can see from this that to be forgiven, it is conditional upon us to forgive others. This at times can be difficult when the wounds are deep and have been endured for a long time.

However, in these latter days the Savior taught this principle even more clearly in these words:

"My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:8–10).

When we follow this counsel, it will help us to overcome even the toughest of trials.

When we forgive and let go of that which has weighed heavily on our hearts and taken us off the path, a great burden is lifted from our souls and we are free—free to move forward and progress in our pursuit of the gospel of Jesus Christ with an increase of love in our hearts. We will be blessed with an increase of enthusiasm for life, and our hearts will be lighter. A surge of spiritual energy will propel us forward in joy and happiness. The problems of the past will be cast away like old,

worn-out clothes. "And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep" (Alma 5:60).

## Come back and be filled with joy

It takes courage to come back when we have gotten off the Savior's path. I promise you that when you exercise that courage and take the steps necessary, you will find that there will be an outpouring of love. There are many who will rejoice with you, and the hand of fellowship will be extended. You will be nurtured, and your heart will be filled with joy.

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

"For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. . . .

"And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!" (D&C 18:10–11, 13).

## Reach out to those who have strayed

We are all brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father. We must reach out to those who for some reason have forgotten the path. We love you and invite you to come to the table and share in the spiritual banquet that the Lord has prepared for your joy and happiness. You will know of our Heavenly Father's love as you come with a heart that is willing, obedient, and ready to partake and serve. He knows you; He knows your needs and what faces you in the future. He has a perfect understanding of the feelings, suffering, and trials of each one of us. Because of that and the infinite Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, you will be able to face every challenge that comes to you in your sojourn here in this life.

We all have a great responsibility that has been placed on our shoulders by the Savior. He said, "Feed my sheep" (John



21:17). That includes searching out those who are not with us and extending to them our love and fellowship. They stood with us in our first estate. They have made sacred covenants through baptism, and perhaps even in the temple. They now need our help.

I pray that each of us can think about our families and our friends and acquaintances who are not enjoying the full blessings of the gospel. Think about those over whom you have a responsibility because of your calling. Ask yourself, "What can I do?" Heavenly Father will guide you as you seek His help. Then go and search them out and invite them to return and enjoy full fellowship and the wonderful message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them feel your love and hear your testimony. Help them to recall the feelings that they once knew of the eternal truths that will make their lives full of joy and happiness.

May we be anxiously engaged in gathering in His sheep who have gone astray so they can be safe in the fold. He "who is mighty to save" (2 Nephi 31:19) is the Good Shepherd, and He loves His sheep. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president. Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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## **Elder Ronald T. Halverson**

### **"You can know as surely as I know"**

A few weeks ago I was in a social gathering with a friend of many years—a friend who recently retired, is well educated, and has been very successful. He is recognized in his country as the leader in his field. As we sat next to one another at dinner, he turned to me and asked about the Church. This was somewhat surprising because I was aware that he, like many in the world today, had rationalized God out of existence. His question was earnest. It was apparently something he had been thinking about because it came without anything in the previous conversation that would have prompted it.

I responded by telling him of the Restoration—that God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith and that through him the priesthood and authority of God were re-

stored to the earth. I bore witness that I knew assuredly that what I had told him was true. There was a long pause as I watched him ponder what I had said. Then, knowing that he was internalizing what he had heard, I leaned over and said, "You can know as surely as I know that what I have borne witness to is true. If you will 'ask God, the Eternal Father, . . . with a sincere heart, . . . having faith in Christ, [I promise you that] he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost [you] may know the truth of all things.'"¹

He continued to ponder. Unfortunately we were interrupted by the other guests and that precious moment passed, but I knew that in his heart he was still internalizing what he had heard and felt. And I hope that an opportunity will come

again, for there is so much more that I would like to share with him. I know that he, like thousands or millions of others in the world today, is content with life as it is. As Nephi stated, they have been pacified and lulled away “into carnal security.”<sup>2</sup> They have been steeped in traditions and taught by the precepts of men.

As I have reflected on that moment, I have asked myself the question “What is the reward for following the philosophies of men?” The answer seems clear: the philosophies die with their civilizations and are left in the dust of the past without hope of eternal reward. I felt my friend had been touched by the Spirit of the Lord. Our Heavenly Father never gives up on us.

### How to know whether teachings are true

The Savior said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”<sup>3</sup> But we must have the desire to open the door, even if it shakes the very foundation of our past beliefs and way of life. And this applies to less-active members as well as those who are not yet members of the Church. I am reminded of the words of a hymn:

Know this, that ev’ry soul is free  
To choose his life and what he’ll be;  
For this eternal truth is giv’n:  
That God will force no man to heav’n.

He’ll call, persuade, direct aright,  
And bless with wisdom, love, and light,  
In nameless ways be good and kind,  
But never force the human mind.<sup>4</sup>

Our Father in Heaven will never take away our agency. We must seek after or desire to know our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. There is a way by which all of us can know whether or not the teachings of Jesus Christ are true. As Jesus answered

the skeptics at the Feast of Tabernacles, He said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>5</sup>

President David O. McKay said that this “is the most simple test to give knowledge to an individual of which the human mind can conceive. *Doing a thing, introducing it into your very being*, will convince you of whether it is good or whether it is bad. You may not be able to convince *me* of that which you know, but *you know it*, because *you have lived it*.”<sup>6</sup>

What is the Father’s will? “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears testimony to the world that the ‘will’ of God has been made manifest in this dispensation; that the principles of the gospel, the principles of life, have been revealed. [That] they are in harmony with the principles which Christ taught in the meridian of time”<sup>7</sup> and that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>8</sup>

### Learn by the Spirit, not just the mind

We live in a day of rationalization; people want to discount spiritual experiences, and they deny themselves revelation. What happened to the seeking mind, the open mind, the inquiring mind—one seeking to know truth and knowledge? We tend to rely on our own rational powers. The Lord wants us to be sensitive to the Spirit, and He has given us a pattern:

“And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations—

“Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

“He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.”<sup>9</sup>

## Blessings of knowing God and His Son

Why is it important for us to seek to know truth?

Jesus, our Redeemer, just before He crossed the brook of Cedron and was betrayed by Judas, offered the glorious prayer of intercession. He prayed to the Father for us. He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."<sup>10</sup>

To know God and His Son is eternal life. How can we learn to know God if we are unwilling to seek after Him and do His will? Eternal life is what we should desire more than anything else in this world.

One cannot study about Jesus Christ and His teachings without being affected and changed for good. As you develop a testimony of the Savior, you want to become like Him and to follow Him, and thus you enter the waters of baptism and make a sacred covenant with Him.

Our Savior is concerned for each one of us:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

"For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

"And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

"And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!"<sup>11</sup>

Because of His great love for us—a divine love—He wants us to experience the kind of joy that He, Himself, experiences. He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."<sup>12</sup> He will bless us with a genuine peace—mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, economically—"not [a peace] as the world giveth,"<sup>13</sup> but a "peace . . . which passeth all understanding."<sup>14</sup>

As one complies with the will of our Father in Heaven, there will come spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth and a reassurance through the Holy Spirit of Truth. That reassurance and joy can grow to a perfect knowledge. The Savior said, "If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal."<sup>15</sup>

## Come to know God by doing His will

To the less active, to the honest in heart, to my friend, and to the good people of the earth, I invite you to awake out of complacency and foolish contentment and come unto Christ and do whatever it takes to earnestly seek truth, to know God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. For "this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God."<sup>16</sup>

I bear my witness that as you do His will, you will feel close to Him and begin to know what eternal joy is and that eternal life is attainable. You will know that He does exist, that He is our Father, who lovingly reveals to us the reality of the Atonement and the Resurrection and the divinity of this great work. To this I bear my humble witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Moroni 10:4–5.
2. 2 Nephi 28:21.
3. Revelation 3:20.
4. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. John 7:17.
6. "What Is Eternal Life?" *Instructor*, Mar. 1968, 97.
7. David O. McKay, *Instructor*, Mar. 1968, 98.
8. Articles of Faith 1:3.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14–16.
10. John 17:3.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13.
12. John 15:11.
13. John 14:27.
14. Philippians 4:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
16. 2 Nephi 31:21.

## Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

### How has Relief Society blessed your life?

Looking back on his life, a man recently shared this tender story with me:

“When I was growing up, my father was less active in the Church. He struggled with alcohol—and in his darkest moods could become harsh and accusing. He normally didn’t object to Mom serving in the ward. She worked in Primary for 38 years, and during much of that time she also served in Young Women. She carried a heavy load. Her marriage was difficult, and I now know that she was discouraged at times, but I didn’t know it then.

“I didn’t realize until later that the sisters in our ward were her strength. She didn’t work in the Relief Society leadership, but she always attended the meetings, and she loved her friends there. I never thought of them as the ladies of Relief Society; they were simply Mom’s sisters. They cared about her and loved her. She had all brothers and all sons. She found the sisters she wanted and needed in our ward. I know she shared her feelings with them—feelings she couldn’t express anywhere else. None of that seemed ‘Relief Society’ to me then, but I understand now that it was.”<sup>1</sup>

This son’s memory of Relief Society touched my heart. Yes, Relief Society’s members are women, but Relief Society does not bless only the women; it blesses each one of us.

How has Relief Society blessed your life?

I asked this question of President Hinckley. He responded: “Relief Society has blessed my family and the family of

my dear wife for some seven generations. Since the earliest days of the Church, our mothers and daughters have been taught of their obligations to those in distress. They have been schooled in the finer points of homemaking, encouraged in their spiritual development, and guided in the realization of their full potential as women. Much of this has taken place in Relief Society and has then been brought home to bless the life of each member of my family.”<sup>2</sup>

I have my own sweet memories of playing under my grandmother’s quilting frames as she and her Relief Society sisters stitched. I was young, but I knew that this was part of Relief Society—blessing the lives of others. I was mentored with love for Relief Society by my mother and my grandmother. I love Relief Society—I think I always have. Relief Society has helped me know the Savior and has strengthened my love for Him and my Heavenly Father. My belonging to Relief Society has provided me with many opportunities to learn, love, serve, and be filled with the love of the Lord in my life as I strive to keep my covenants, exercise charity, and strengthen my family.

So I ask again, how many ways has Relief Society blessed your life?

### A fundamental part of the gospel

Visiting the Missionary Training Center in Brazil, I said to the missionaries, “Tell me what you know about Relief Society.” One elder said, “Casseroles!” Another added, “My mother and sister belong to it.” Finally, one declared, “It’s the Lord’s

organization for women.” He was right, but there’s more. Relief Society is “a *fundamental* part of the gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

The year 1842 was extremely difficult for the Prophet Joseph Smith. Former friends had turned on him. Other enemies wanted to abduct him from Nauvoo and blunt the growth of the Church. That same year he organized the Relief Society to care for the poor and needy and “to save souls.”<sup>4</sup> President J. Reuben Clark Jr. observed that amidst these trials, Joseph Smith “turned to the sisters for the consolation, for the uplift of which he stood in such sad need at that time.”<sup>5</sup> This is a moving and humbling thought: a prophet of God seeking the solace of his sisters—women to whom he had given the charge “charity never faileth.”<sup>6</sup> To me this has echoes of those women who mourned with the Savior on Golgotha.

Relief Society has blessed prophets’ lives. How has it blessed yours?

### **Relief Society strengthens home, family**

President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The defenses of the home and family are greatly reinforced when the wife and mother and daughters belong to Relief Society.”<sup>7</sup> Why? Because women are the heart of the home.

My belonging to Relief Society has renewed, strengthened, and committed me to be a better wife and mother and daughter of God. My heart has been enlarged with gospel understanding and with love of the Savior and what He’s done for me. So to you, dear sisters, I say, Come to Relief Society! It will fill your homes with love and charity; it will nurture and strengthen you and your families. Your home needs your righteous heart.

During a recent assignment to Peru, I visited the humble home of Brother and Sister Morales. It was filled with love. They are the parents of three children and have been members of the Church for four years. Sister Morales has learned much in

Relief Society. To help provide for their family and their missionary son, she took in washing and ironing. She helped with two children of a neighbor who had to leave home to work. She supported her husband, who is struggling with kidney failure and was serving in the elders quorum. They discussed the Heber J. Grant lessons together in preparation for his teaching the lesson.

I asked her, “Are you a visiting teacher?” With a smile on her face she responded, “Oh, yes, Sister Parkin. I visit four sisters. Two are less active, but I will love them back.”

Leaving their home, I noticed a hand-drawn sign above the door. It asked, “Did you read your scriptures today?” Relief Society is blessing this home, this ward, this neighborhood. How has it blessed you?

### **A blessing for new members and for sons**

Belonging to Relief Society is critical for newly baptized sisters and, by extension, their families. While serving with my husband as he presided over the England London South Mission, I met many new converts—like Gloria, a single mother. When she joined the Church, she joined Relief Society. It was a safe place where she could ask questions about her newfound faith. She heard women openly share their experiences, which led her to experiment upon the word of God.<sup>8</sup> She’s received her patriarchal blessing; she’s been to the temple; she serves in the Church. I think of President Hinckley’s counsel to me: “[Women] need to be together in an environment that bolsters faith.”<sup>9</sup> Relief Society provides such an environment.

I thought of the stripling warriors when I heard the son of a Relief Society sister say: “I have been blessed by the faith and example of my mother. By the time I became a priesthood holder, I had learned as much about home teaching from my mother’s visiting teaching efforts as by my

father's example of home teaching. . . . Her faith in the priesthood affects my faith and strengthens my desire to be [a] worthy . . . elder."<sup>10</sup>

### Participate with more vigor

Brothers and sisters, I am changed and blessed, I am better because of Relief Society. And I believe we all are.

I pray that mothers and daughters will participate with more vigor, that husbands will support their wives, and that both mothers and fathers will prepare their daughters for Relief Society. I encourage priesthood leaders to shepherd God's daughters, young and old, into Relief Society—one of the many miracles of the Restoration. As we take these steps, we will be overwhelmed with gratitude for this sacred organization.

Because Relief Society is divinely designed, it blesses not only women but the

family and the Church. I testify that it is a fundamental part of the Lord's restored gospel because it abides in charity—His pure love. Of this I bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Personal correspondence.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Relief Society Organized by Revelation," *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1965, 4; italics added.
4. See *History of the Church*, 5:25.
5. "The Prophet's Sailing Orders to Relief Society," *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1949, 797.
6. Moroni 7:46.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 73.
8. See Alma 32:27.
9. Personal conversation.
10. Personal correspondence.

## Elder Donald L. Staheli

### Securing our testimonies

Recently I had an engaging conversation with a young man who was contemplating a mission. As we talked, it became apparent that he was struggling with his decision because he was questioning the strength of his testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wanted to know why he had not received more clear answers to his prayers and study of the scriptures.

This young man, whom I will call Jim, was raised in the mission field in a home with loving parents who were doing their best to teach gospel principles to their children.

He is an outstanding athlete and popular among his friends at school. However, he is only one of a very few LDS students in a large high school.

Having raised my family in the mission field, I quickly related to Jim's challenges of wanting to stay true to gospel principles while being accepted by good friends, yet friends whose values and beliefs generally differed from his.

He was looking for further confirmation of his testimony of Jesus Christ and the restoration of the gospel.

Today I speak to Jim and many others like him—young men and young women across the world who are unsure about their testimonies but very much want to develop strong, vibrant testimonies that will guide them through the shoals of life that lie ahead.

I also speak to those adults who have not yet felt deeply the spirit of the gospel in their lives. In the absence of a compelling testimony, some have let their daily



thoughts and actions become so focused on the things of the world that they have minimized the influence of the light of the gospel in their everyday lives.

And then as Elder Neal A. Maxwell has so eloquently described, also included are those “‘honorable’ members who are skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than ‘anxiously engaged’ (D&C 76:75; 58:27)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 65).

### **Do your very best to gain a testimony**

As I attended the funeral services of Elder Neal A. Maxwell and Elder David B. Haight and listened to their well-deserved tributes, I more fully internalized the extraordinary examples of testimony and discipleship that the lives of these two great brethren demonstrated. I kept pondering how their examples could help strengthen our testimonies and deepen our resolve to come closer to Christ.

These two great disciples of Christ exemplify President Gordon B. Hinckley’s admonition to all of us when he said:

“I have been quoted as saying, ‘Do the best you can.’ But I want to emphasize that it be the very best. We are too prone to be satisfied with mediocre performance. We are capable of doing so much better” (“Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21).

Surely President Hinckley’s counsel and encouragement applies as much to the development and strengthening of our testimonies of Jesus Christ as to anything else.

### **Testimonies come in varied times, ways**

True testimonies bring the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ into our lives and focus all of us toward the same goal of returning to our Father in Heaven

—yet our individual testimonies come through varied experiences and at different stages in our lives.

Like Jim, as a young man I was privileged to have “goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1). They taught gospel principles and values to our family by precept and example. As a young boy I thought I had a testimony. I believed! Then came some personal spiritual experiences through faith, prayer, scripture study, and especially father’s blessings in our home that caused me to think more seriously about the principles I had been taught and believed—but even more deeply about what I was beginning to feel. I will be forever grateful to parents who helped coach me through those precious spiritual experiences. They have had a lasting impact on me and on the strength of my testimony.

### **Alma teaches how to gain a testimony**

I think Alma must have had us in mind as he was teaching the Zoramites how to gain testimonies of the truth:

“But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27).

Alma then went on to “compare the word unto a seed.” He explained that as hearts are opened, “it will begin to swell within your breasts” (Alma 32:28). Alma then gave us the key to developing a successful testimony:

“But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life” (Alma 32:41).

And then the promise!

“Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you” (Alma 32:43).

Think with me for a moment, brothers and sisters, about what Alma is teaching us.

First, we must have a sincere *desire* to believe. Phrases such as “*awake*,” “*arouse your faculties*,” “*experiment*,” and “*exercise a particle of faith*” are action words that suggest sustained effort on our part.

His description of the swelling in our breast describes the feeling of the Holy Spirit. And as Moroni promises, “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

To keep that Spirit growing, Alma says we must nourish it by “faith with great diligence, and with patience.” He then promises that the rewards of faith, diligence, patience, and long-suffering will bring forth everlasting life (Alma 32:41; see also v. 43).

Like Alma, latter-day prophets have been clear in their teachings of the things we need to do to develop and strengthen our testimonies.

We have been sent here to work out our individual salvation through the tests and challenges of daily life. We cannot do that by relying heavily upon the borrowed light of someone else’s testimony. As we receive inspiration when we hear prophets, leaders, and peers bear their testimonies, those spiritual feelings should further enhance our desire to strengthen our own convictions.

### **Daily fervent prayer is essential**

To my young friend, and to all wherever you may be, never give up on the Lord. The answer to your prayers may not be as clear or as timely as you would like, but keep praying. The Lord is listening! As you pray, ask for help in understanding the promptings of the Holy Spirit. And

then do your very best to be worthy to receive those promptings. As you recognize or feel the impressions and whisperings of the Spirit, then act upon them.

Daily fervent prayers seeking forgiveness and special help and direction are essential to our lives and the nourishment of our testimonies. When we become hurried, repetitive, casual, or forgetful in our prayers, we tend to lose the closeness of the Spirit, which is so essential in the continual direction we need to successfully manage the challenges of our everyday lives. Family prayer every morning and night adds additional blessings and power to our individual prayers and to our testimonies.

### **Scripture study is essential**

Personal, sincere involvement in the scriptures produces faith, hope, and solutions to our daily challenges. Frequently reading, pondering, and applying the lessons of the scriptures, combined with prayer, become an irreplaceable part of gaining and sustaining a strong, vibrant testimony. President Spencer W. Kimball reminded us of the importance of consistent scripture reading when he said:

“I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems . . . no divine voice is speaking, . . . if I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 135).

The Savior taught, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

The strong, unwavering testimonies that so many of you wonderful, faithful members of the Church embrace have come from prayerfully following counsel from our prophets and the scriptures. That same priceless blessing is available to each of us who earnestly seek it.



### **Strong testimonies are a bulwark of armor**

To my young friend Jim, and all others who may have periodic concerns about the strength of their testimonies, know that you are loved and watched over daily by your Father in Heaven. He will respond as you strive to keep His commandments and reach out for His loving hand.

We all share the same promise that the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:63).

Our prophet's call to do our "very best" challenges each of us, individually and within our families, to carefully examine our personal lives and then commit to change those things which will more fully assure our testimonies are strong and secure.

Strong testimonies become the driving force for each of us to do "much better." They become the impenetrable bulwark of armor that protects us from the unrelenting things of the world.

I bear my witness that we have a loving, caring Father in Heaven and that He and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to the boy Joseph to usher in the Restoration of the gospel in this last dispensation.

Jesus Christ heads this Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His chosen prophet.

May we have the courage and the conviction to follow the prophet's counsel. As we do so, our personal testimonies will be secure. That this may be so I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Mormon Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

Today we thank the Primary choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. The choir has been a great inspiration to the speakers and to all of us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "My Heavenly Father Loves Me" and "I Will Follow God's Plan." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Gordon T. Watts of the Seventy.

## **Elder M. Russell Ballard**

### **Testimony is the foundation of our faith**

I recently returned from an assignment in Asia, where we met with faithful Saints and missionaries. One meeting was in a metropolitan area where we have approximately 14,000 Church members living within a population of nearly 21 million people. If that same ratio were applied to this meeting, in the Conference Center we would have only 13 members

of the Church scattered among this congregation of over 20,000.

This experience impressed upon me how deeply grateful we must all be to know that after ages of darkness and apostasy, Joseph Smith beheld a remarkable vision of the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove. Clearly, in our world today it is a rare and precious thing to have a testimony that God our Heavenly Father lives;

that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer; and that priesthood authority to administer the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored once again upon the earth. The profound blessing of having a testimony of these truths cannot be measured or ever taken for granted.

Personal testimony is the foundation of our faith. It is the binding power that makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unique in the lives of its members, as compared with all other religious denominations of the world. The doctrine of the Restoration is glorious in and of itself, but the thing that makes it powerful and imbues it with great meaning is the personal testimonies of Church members worldwide who accept the Restoration of the gospel and strive to live its teachings every day of their lives.

### **A testimony changes lives**

A testimony is a witness or confirmation of eternal truth impressed upon individual hearts and souls through the Holy Ghost, whose primary ministry is to testify of truth, particularly as it relates to the Father and the Son. When one receives a testimony of truth through this divinely appointed process, it immediately begins to have impact on that person's life. According to Alma the Younger, "it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves . . . the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me" (Alma 32:28).

Simply stated, testimony—real testimony, born of the Spirit and confirmed by the Holy Ghost—changes lives. It changes how you think and what you do. It changes what you say. It affects every priority you set and every choice you make. To have a real and abiding testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be "spiritually . . .

born of God," to "[receive] his image in your countenances," and to experience a "mighty change in your hearts" (Alma 5:14).

### **Anchor testimonies in gospel principles**

Like almost everything else in life, testimonies grow and develop through experience and service. We often hear some members, and especially children, bear their testimonies, listing things for which they are thankful: their love of family, the Church, their teachers, their friends. For them, the gospel is something that they are grateful for because it makes them feel happy and secure. This is a good beginning, but testimonies need to be much more. They need to be anchored very early to the first principles of the gospel.

A testimony of the reality of Heavenly Father's love, of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and of the effect of His Atonement on every son and daughter of God brings about the desire to repent and live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. It also brings a confirmation to our soul of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. Real testimony of these precious truths comes as a witness by the Holy Ghost after sincere and dedicated effort, including teaching in the home, prayer, scripture study, service to others, and diligent obedience to Heavenly Father's commandments. To gain and forever hold on to a testimony of gospel truths is worth whatever price in spiritual preparation we may be required to pay.

### **Center testimony meetings on the Savior**

My experience throughout the Church leads me to worry that too many of our members' testimonies linger on "I am thankful" and "I love," and too few are able to say with humble but sincere clarity, "I know." As a result, our meetings sometimes lack the testimony-rich, spiri-

tual underpinnings that stir the soul and have meaningful, positive impact on the lives of all those who hear them.

Our testimony meetings need to be more centered on the Savior, the doctrines of the gospel, the blessings of the Restoration, and the teachings of the scriptures. We need to replace stories, travelogues, and lectures with pure testimonies. Those who are entrusted to speak and teach in our meetings need to do so with doctrinal power that will be both heard and felt, lifting the spirits and edifying our people.

### **Bearing testimony ignites a fire of belief**

You will remember that at the heart of King Benjamin's powerful sermon to his people was his personal witness of the Savior, who at that time had yet to be born into mortality. At one point in the king's sermon, when he had just borne witness to the people, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy . . . because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come" (Mosiah 4:3). That is because the Spirit cannot be restrained when pure testimony of Christ is borne. Thus, King Benjamin's people were so inspired by his testimony that their lives were changed right there, on the spot, and they became as new people.

Remember also Abinadi and Alma. Abinadi infuriated wicked King Noah with his courageous testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eventually this great missionary offered the ultimate sacrifice for his witness and faith but not before his pure testimony touched one believing heart. Alma, one of King Noah's priests, "repented of his sins . . . , [accepted Jesus as the Christ,] and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi" (Mosiah 18:1). Many were converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ as a direct result of Abinadi's pow-

erfully borne testimony of the Savior, believed by one soul—Alma.

The Apostle Paul also bore fervent testimony of Christ and converted many through his missionary labors. He did not shrink in bearing his testimony before King Agrippa. So mighty were his words that even this influential representative of the Roman Empire was moved to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

The lesson, I believe, is clear: having a testimony alone is not enough. In fact, when we are truly converted, we cannot be restrained from testifying. And as it was with Apostles and faithful members of old, so is it also our privilege, our duty, and our solemn obligation to "declare the things which [we] know to be true" (D&C 80:4).

Again, please keep in mind that we are talking about sharing real testimony, not just speaking generally about the things we are thankful for. While it is always good to express love and gratitude, such expressions do not constitute the kind of testimony that will ignite a fire of belief in the lives of others. To bear testimony is "to bear witness by the power of the Holy Ghost; to make a solemn declaration of truth based on personal knowledge or belief" (Guide to the Scriptures, "Testify," 241). Clear declaration of truth makes a difference in people's lives. That is what changes hearts. That is what the Holy Ghost can confirm in the hearts of God's children.

Although we can have testimonies of many things as members of the Church, there are basic truths we need to constantly teach one another and share with those not of our faith. Testify that God is our Father and Jesus is the Christ. The plan of salvation is centered on the Savior's Atonement. Joseph Smith restored the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Book of Mormon is evidence that our testimony is true.

## Testifying to those who are not members

Miraculous things happen when members join with missionaries and share pure testimony with those who are not members of the Church. For example, while many people were touched by Alma's testimony in the land of Ammonihah, when Amulek stood and added his testimony to Alma's, "the people began to be astonished, seeing there was more than one witness who testified" (Alma 10:12). The same thing can happen with us today. As we stand together the Lord will help us find many more of His sheep who will know His voice as we unitedly share our testimonies with them.

Many years ago, Brigham Young told of an early missionary in the Church who was asked to share his testimony with a large group of people. According to President Young, this particular elder "never had been able to say that he knew Joseph [Smith] was a Prophet." He would have preferred to just say a prayer and leave, but the circumstances made that impossible. So he started to speak, and "as soon as he got 'Joseph' out, 'is a Prophet,' was . . . next; and from that, his tongue was loosened, and he continued talking until near sun-down."

President Young used this experience to teach that "the Lord pours out His Spirit upon a man, when he testifies that [which] the Lord gives him to testify of" (*Millennial Star*, supplement, 1853, 30).

## Far-reaching effects of Hyrum's testimony

The Prophet's brother Hyrum understood this and testified fearlessly of divine truth as it had been revealed to his brother Joseph and confirmed in his own heart. His testimony blessed the lives of many, including Parley P. Pratt. When Parley first encountered the Book of Mormon, Hyrum took him into his own home and spent the night teaching and testifying to him. He bore witness of the prophetic mantle that

rested upon Joseph and of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Shortly thereafter, Hyrum set aside his own needs and went with Parley to honor his request for baptism. (See *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. [1938], 35–42.)

We may never fully comprehend or be able to measure the far-reaching effects of Hyrum's one-on-one testimony to Parley P. Pratt. In addition to Parley's faithful posterity, his apostolic witness and missionary service drew countless souls into the kingdom of God. Interestingly, included among those who joined the Church as a direct result of his ministry in Canada were Joseph Fielding and his sisters, Mary and Mercy. After his first wife, Jerusha, died, Hyrum met and married Mary Fielding, and from their marriage came President Joseph F. Smith and countless other members and Church leaders. Now I realize that not all testimonies will return such a blessing as Hyrum's did.

## Beneficiaries of humble testimonies

Joseph Kimber, a humble new convert in Thatcham, England, bore his simple testimony to a fellow farmhand. I believe Brother Kimber's witness of Joseph Smith and the Restoration is what ignited the fire of belief in 17-year-old Henry Ballard's heart and caused him to ask to be baptized. Generations of the Ballard family are the beneficiaries of that humble testimony.

Members and missionaries in our day can have the experience of converting others by living our lives as best we can and being prepared "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). A friend recently told me about being on a 90-minute bus ride in Brazil. He felt impressed to go to the back of the bus to speak to the young people who had been serving as guides for his group of businessmen. An associate of his father followed him to the back of the bus and heard his testimony of the truth-

fulness of the restored gospel. This man later said, “When I heard your testimony, I had the distinct feeling go through my whole body that these things were true.” He and his wife will soon be baptized.

### **Boldly share testimonies**

The missionaries are now preparing to teach the lessons not as memorized dialogue or a rote presentation, but rather they will outline gospel principles in an organized way, calling upon the Spirit to direct how they communicate gospel truth to investigators, spirit to spirit and heart to heart. Brothers and sisters, join together with the missionaries in sharing your precious testimony every day, witnessing at every opportunity the glorious message of the Restoration. The fire of your testimony is all that you need in order to introduce the gospel to many more of our Father’s children. Trust in the Lord, and never underestimate the impact your testimony can have upon the lives of others as you bear it

with the power of the Spirit. Doubt and fear are tools of Satan. The time has come for all of us to overcome any fear and boldly take every opportunity to share our testimonies of the gospel.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to nurture your testimonies through your prayers, your personal gospel study, and your acts of service. With great joy I humbly testify our Heavenly Father loves us, Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith restored the fulness of the everlasting gospel, and the Book of Mormon testifies of these truths. We are led by a living prophet today. And I pray that the Lord may bless you, my dear brothers and sisters, as you teach and testify, which I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me” and “I Will Follow God’s Plan.”

Elder Gordon T. Watts offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2004. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by members of the Orchestra at Temple Square. Mack Wilberg and Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 174th Semi-

annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing for this session will be furnished by the men of the Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” The invocation will then be offered by Bishop Keith B. McMullin

of the Presiding Bishopric. The choir will then sing “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Carl B. Pratt of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Bishop Keith B. McMullin offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

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## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I am grateful to speak to this worldwide audience of priesthood holders. It is now 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning in the Philippines, my home for the last two years. I send greetings to my beloved associates in that nation and to all of you.

I assume there are no boys in this audience, only young men who are holders of the priesthood. The Apostle Paul wrote that when he was a child he understood as a child, but when he became a man he put away such things (see 1 Corinthians 13:11). You young men are doing the same, so I will speak to you as one man speaks to another.

### Be not deceived

From your position on the road of life, you young men have many miles to go and many choices to make as you seek to return to our Heavenly Father. Along the road there are many signs that beckon. Satan is the author of some of these invitations. He seeks to confuse and deceive us, to get us on a low road that leads away from our eternal destination.

In the beginning, when a powerful spirit was cast down for rebellion, “he became Satan, . . . the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will” (Moses 4:4). He and the spirits who follow him are still deceiving the world. Modern revelation declares that “Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you”

(see D&C 50:2–3). Satan’s methods of deception are enticing: music, movies and other media, and the glitter of a good time. When Satan’s lies succeed in deceiving us, we become vulnerable to his power.

### Methods of deception

Here are some ways the devil will try to deceive us. God’s commandments and the teachings of His prophets warn against each of them.

#### *Being misled about whom to follow*

1. One kind of deception seeks to mislead us about whom we should follow. In speaking of the last days, the Savior taught: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4–5). In other words, many will seek to deceive us by saying that they or their teachings will save us, so there is no need for a Savior or His gospel. The Book of Mormon describes this as “the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people . . . to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing” (3 Nephi 2:2).

#### *Being deceived about right and wrong*

2. Satan also seeks to deceive us about right and wrong and to persuade us that there is no such thing as sin. This detour typically starts off with what seems to be



only a small departure: “Just try it once. One beer or one cigarette or one porno movie won’t hurt.” What all of these departures have in common is that each of them is addictive. Addiction is a condition in which we surrender part of our power of choice. When we do that, we give the devil power over us. The prophet Nephi described where this leads: the devil says, “There is no hell” and “I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance” (2 Nephi 28:22).

If we choose the wrong road, we choose the wrong destination. For example, a friend of many years told me that her husband, always a “good kid” in high school, took a few drinks that he thought would help him forget some problems. Before he knew what was happening, he was addicted. Now he is not able to support his family, and he is ineffective at almost everything he tries to do. Alcohol governs his life, and he cannot seem to break free of its grip.

#### *Being pacified and lulled into carnal security*

3. The prophet Nephi warns against another kind of deception: “And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (2 Nephi 28:21).

Those who fall for this deception may profess to believe in God, but they do not take His commandments or His justice seriously. They are confident in their own prosperity and conclude that God must have accepted their chosen route.

“Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

“And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; never-

theless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; . . . there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28:7–8).

Surely you have seen and heard these arguments, brethren. They will come at you in classrooms and hallways, in what you read, and in what you see in popular entertainment. Many in the world deny the need for a Savior. Others deny that there is any right or wrong, and they scoff at the idea of sin or a devil. Still others rely on the mercy of God and ignore His justice. The prophet said, “There shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines” (2 Nephi 28:9).

#### **Paul’s warnings against being deceived**

The Apostle Paul gave pointed warnings about the “perilous times” that would come in the last days. “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4). He also said that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (v. 13). In a moment I will discuss what Paul told young Timothy about how to avoid this wickedness.

The Apostle gave another warning against being deceived by the devil and his pawns:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

Be not deceived, brethren. Heed the ancient and modern prophetic warnings against thievery, drunkenness, and all forms of sexual sin. The deceiver seeks to destroy your spirituality by all of these means. Paul warns us against those who “lie in wait to deceive” “by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness” (Ephesians 4:14). Beware of the slick package and the glitz of a good time. What the devil portrays as fun can be spiritually fatal.

### **We cannot escape consequences of sin**

As we look about us, we see many who are practicing deception. We hear of prominent officials who have lied about their secret acts. We learn of honored sports heroes who have lied about gambling on the outcome of their games or using drugs to enhance their performance. We see less well-known persons engaging in evil acts in secret they would never do in public. Perhaps they think no one will ever know. But God always knows. And He has repeatedly warned that the time will come when “[our] iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and [our] secret acts shall be revealed” (D&C 1:3; see also Mormon 5:8; D&C 38:7).

“Be not deceived,” the Apostle Paul taught. “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7–8).

In other words, if we indulge in drugs or pornography or other evils that the Apostle called sowing to the flesh, eternal law dictates that we harvest corruption rather than life eternal. That is the justice of God, and mercy cannot rob justice. If an eternal law is broken, the punishment affixed to that law must be suffered. Some of this can be satisfied by the Savior’s Atonement, but the merciful cleansing of a soiled sinner comes only after repentance

(see Alma 42:22–25), which for some sins is a prolonged and painful process. Otherwise, “he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” (Alma 34:16).

Fortunately, repentance is possible. For the most serious sins we need to confess to our bishop and seek his loving help. For other sins it may be sufficient for us to confess to the Lord and to whomever we have wronged. Most lying is of this sort. If you have deceived someone, resolve now to stop carrying the burden. Make it right and get on with your life.

### **How to avoid being deceived**

#### *Hold fast to the scriptures*

Now I wish to speak about how each of us can avoid being deceived on matters of eternal importance. I have two texts. The first is what Paul taught Timothy after giving him the warning I quoted earlier. Continue in the things you have learned and been assured of, he wrote, “knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14). In other words, you have been taught righteousness and assured of its truth, so stay with it. Continuing, Paul reminded his young friend “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” through faith in our Savior (v. 15). Hold fast to the scriptures, whose teachings protect us against evil.

#### *Be guided by the Holy Spirit*

The parable of the ten virgins teaches that when the Lord comes in His glory, of all followers of Christ invited to the wedding feast, only half will be given entrance. The inspired explanation of this parable reveals our second source of protection:



“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day” (D&C 45:57).

The other half will be denied entrance because they are not prepared. It is not enough to have received the truth. We must also “have taken the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” and “not [be] deceived.”

How do we take the Holy Spirit for our guide? We must repent of our sins each week and renew our covenants by partaking of the sacrament with clean hands and a pure heart, as we are commanded to do (see D&C 59:8–9, 12). Only in this way can we have the divine promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). That Spirit is the Holy Ghost, whose mission is to teach us, to lead us to truth, and to testify of the Father and the Son (see John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 3 Nephi 11:32, 36).

To avoid being deceived, we must also follow the promptings of that Spirit. The Lord taught this principle in the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“That which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men. . . .

“Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given” (D&C 46:7–8).

The Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit. We must keep the commandments, pray for guid-

ance, and attend church and partake of the sacrament each Sunday. And we must never do anything to drive away that Spirit. Specifically, we should avoid pornography, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, and always, always avoid violations of the law of chastity. We must never take things into our bodies or do things with our bodies that drive away the Spirit of the Lord and leave us without our spiritual protection against deception.

### **Be doers of the word, not hearers only**

I will conclude by describing another subtle form of deception—the idea that it is enough to hear and believe without acting on that belief. Many prophets have taught against that deception. The Apostle James wrote, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). King Benjamin taught, “And now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10). And in modern revelation the Lord declares, “If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you” (D&C 78:7).

It is not enough to know that God lives, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that the gospel is true. We must take the high road by acting upon that knowledge. It is not enough to know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is God’s prophet. We must put his teachings to work in our lives. It is not enough to have a calling. We must fulfill our responsibilities. The things taught in this conference are not just to fill our minds. They are to motivate and guide our actions.

I testify that these things are true, and I pray that we will do all that is necessary to avoid the deceptions of the devil, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Carl B. Pratt

### A proper fast day observance

Brethren, I hope you noticed this morning, as President Hinckley prepared to announce the names of two new Apostles, he spoke of fasting and praying to know the Lord's will.

Fasting has always been a practice among God's people. In our day it is a commandment given by the Lord to all members of the Church. In addition to occasional special fasts that we might have for personal or family reasons, we are expected to fast once a month on the first Sunday. We are taught that there are three aspects to a proper fast day observance: first, abstaining from food and drink for two consecutive meals or, in other words, 24 hours; second, attending fast and testimony meeting; and third, giving a generous fast offering.

For the Pratt family our regular fasts have always been from the Saturday noon meal to the Sunday noon meal. That way we fast for two meals, Saturday evening and Sunday morning meals. Although there is no Church standard for fasting, except that it should be for 24 hours and two meals, we have found a spiritual advantage in attending fast and testimony meeting toward the end of the fast.

For those who are physically able, fasting is a commandment. Speaking of our monthly fast day, President Joseph F. Smith said:

"The Lord has instituted the fast on a reasonable and intelligent basis. . . . Those who can are required to comply . . . ; it is a duty from which they cannot escape; . . . it is left with the people as a matter of conscience, to exercise wisdom and discretion. . . .

"But those should fast who can. . . . None are exempt from this; it is required of the Saints, old and young, in every part of the Church" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 244).

I fear, brethren, that too many of us are either not fasting on fast day or we are doing so in a lackadaisical manner. If we are guilty of taking our fast day for granted or simply fasting Sunday morning instead of making it two complete meals—24 hours—we are depriving ourselves and our families of the choice spiritual experiences and blessings that can come from a true fast.

### Fasting with a purpose

If all we do is abstain from food and drink for 24 hours and pay our fast offering, we have missed a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth. On the other hand, if we have a special purpose in our fasting, the fast will have much more meaning. Perhaps we can take time as a family before beginning our fast to talk about what we hope to accomplish by this fast. This could be done in a family home evening the week before fast Sunday or in a brief family meeting at the time of family prayer. When we fast with purpose, we have something to focus our attention on besides our hunger.

The purpose of our fast may be a very personal one. Fasting can help us overcome personal flaws and sins. It can help us overcome our weaknesses—help them become strengths. Fasting can help us become more humble, less prideful, less selfish, and more concerned about the needs of others. It can help us see more clearly our own mistakes and weaknesses and help us be less prone to criticize others. Or our fast may have a focus on a family challenge. A family fast might help increase love and appreciation among family members and reduce the amount of contention in the family, or we might fast as a couple to strengthen our marriage bonds. A purpose of our fast as priesthood holders might be to seek the Lord's guidance in our callings, as President Hinckley has demonstrated, or we might fast with

our home teaching companion to know how to help one of our families.

### **Power of combining fasting and prayer**

Throughout the scriptures the term *fasting* is usually combined with prayer. “Ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth” is the Lord’s counsel (D&C 88:76). Fasting without prayer is just going hungry for 24 hours. But fasting combined with prayer brings increased spiritual power.

When the disciples were unable to cure a boy who was possessed of an evil spirit, they asked the Savior, “Why could not we cast him out?” Jesus responded, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:19, 21).

Let us begin our fasts with prayer. This could be kneeling at the table as we finish the meal with which we begin the fast. That prayer should be a natural thing as we speak to our Heavenly Father concerning the purpose of our fast and plead with Him for His help in accomplishing our goals. Likewise, let us end our fasts with prayer. We could very appropriately kneel at the table before we sit down to consume the meal with which we break our fast. We would thank the Lord for His help during the fast and for what we have felt and learned from the fast.

In addition to a beginning and ending prayer, we should seek the Lord often in personal prayer throughout the fast.

### **Teaching children about fasting**

We should not expect our young children to fast for the recommended two meals. But let us teach them the principles of fasting. If fasting is discussed and planned in a family setting, the small children will be aware that their parents and older siblings are fasting, and they will understand the purpose of the fast. They should participate in the family prayers to begin and end the fast. This way, when

they reach the proper age, they will be eager to fast with the rest of the family. In our family, we have done this by encouraging our children between 8 and 12 years of age to fast for one meal; then as they have turned 12 and received the Aaronic Priesthood or entered Young Women, we have encouraged them to fast for two complete meals.

### **The Lord’s description of a proper fast**

After chastising ancient Israel for fasting improperly, the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, speaks in beautiful poetic language of a proper fast:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6).

If we fast and pray with the purpose of repenting of sins and overcoming personal weaknesses, surely we are seeking to “loose the bands of wickedness” in our lives. If the purpose of our fast is to be more effective in teaching the gospel and serving others in our Church callings, we are surely striving to “undo the heavy burdens” of others. If we are fasting and praying for the Lord’s help in our missionary efforts, aren’t we desiring to “let the oppressed go free”? If the purpose of our fast is to increase our love for our fellow man and overcome our selfishness, our pride, and having our hearts set upon the things of this world, surely we are seeking to “break every yoke.”

The Lord continues describing the proper fast: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:7). It is truly a wonderful thing that through our fast offerings today we can feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and clothe the naked.

### The blessings of a proper fast

If we fast properly, the Lord promises:

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; . . .

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:8–11).

It is my prayer that we can improve our fasts so we can enjoy these beautiful promised blessings. It is my testimony that as we “draw near” to the Lord through our fasting and prayer, He will “draw near” to us (see D&C 88:63). I testify that He lives, that He loves us, and that He wants to draw near to us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

### Perilous times

Brethren, it is both comforting and potentially worrisome to know that we live in an age and a time that was not only foreseen by the prophets of previous dispensations but was also clearly a focus of their concerns and their aspirations. The Apostle Paul said, “In the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Timothy 3:1), and then he went on to catalog and describe with remarkable accuracy much that we currently see daily in the media, in advertisements for entertainment, and almost everywhere in the world around us. As careful as we might and should be, absolute avoidance of much of the peril which is seemingly enveloping us is at best difficult and often nearly impossible to avoid.

Happily, we are not left without hope or spiritual sustenance as we strive individually and as families to accomplish the sacred purposes of mortal life for which we came to this earthly probation. Each of our circumstances is unique. We come literally from the four corners of the earth, and we also come from tremendously different families, backgrounds, challenges,

opportunities, experiences, triumphs, and disappointments.

Likewise, in common with all of the human family—everyone being the progeny of our loving Heavenly Father—we share vast congruence in our DNA or genetic physical makeup, as well as the universally possible and promised blessings and characteristics that identify our divine parentage and spiritual potential. It is this special blending of our common origins and characteristics and also of our unique attributes, experiences, and specialized challenges that makes each of us who and what we are. While we may have differences in what constitutes special peril for us individually, we share much that establishes the apt description of “perilous times” for all.

### Continue in the things you have learned

Paul, in describing our “perilous times,” did not promise that things would necessarily get easier or necessarily better. He did give counsel to those seeking comfort and assurance in the face of the deteriorating conditions of our day. Just as his prophecies or predictions were clearly

accurate, so is his direction to us remarkably relevant as well. Said he, “Continue . . . in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14).

In this general conference, consistent with the pattern covering the entire history of the Church, we have learned and will learn of the restoration of the gospel in our day; of the remarkable clarity and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ found in the Book of Mormon; of the mission and contributions of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors in the Presidency of the Church, including especially President Gordon B. Hinckley, who teaches and testifies with such power, spirituality, and lucidity; and of the strength, comfort, and blessings that accrue from the presence of other living apostles and prophets in our midst. Not only do we learn these things, but we are assured that they are true, knowing, as Paul said, “of whom [we have] learned them.”

### **Alma’s witness of Jesus Christ**

Another who was authorized to assure those to whom he ministered was Alma. As he expressed his pleasure at the privilege of teaching and testifying to the people of Gideon, he was forthright, clear, and direct in his witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was yet to come in His earthly ministry. He expressed his delight at the general faith and faithfulness of this group of good people and promised them that they would be the recipients of “many things to come” (Alma 7:7). In the midst of his discourse, describing things yet to come, he said, “There is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people” (Alma 7:7).

Alma was speaking in his time specifically of the events of a few decades hence

when the Savior would be born into mortality. Centuries have passed, and Alma’s prophecies have been largely fulfilled, but the central fact of his estimation of the thing more important than all else is still absolutely true, completely relevant, and fundamentally essential for us today as well. It is that “the Redeemer liveth.”

### **Gaining a testimony of Jesus Christ**

As Alma and “all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began” (Mosiah 13:33) have taught and testified of the coming of the Messiah and His mission to redeem His people, so do we join in bearing testimony of Him and His sacred work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Surely when we begin to understand the magnitude of His sacrifice and service to us individually and collectively, we then cannot consider anything else to be of more importance or to approach His significance in our lives.

For most of us, this understanding does not come all at once and likely will not be fully complete during our mortal sojourn. We do know, however, that as we learn line upon line, our appreciation for the Savior’s contributions will increase and our knowledge and assurance of their truthfulness will grow.

The Apostle Paul was forceful and candid in much of his teaching and preaching. Listen to these familiar words that may describe most of us in our efforts and progression and yet provide the counsel, encouragement, and witness that we so badly need:

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:11–12).

Many years ago, President James E. Faust gave this counsel to those still struggling to become fully convinced in their testimonies of Jesus Christ and His sacred mission and promises. Said he:

“For those who have honest doubts, let us hear what eyewitnesses had to say about Jesus of Nazareth. The ancient apostles were there. They saw it all. They participated. No one is more worthy of belief than they. Said Peter: ‘For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.’ (2 Pet. 1:16.) Said John: ‘For we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ (John 4:42.) Modern-day witnesses, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, declared: ‘For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father.’ (D&C 76:23.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 83–84; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 59).

### **Testimony of Christ is the greatest gift**

In our own day, we have been promised that the Lord has many gifts in store for “those who love [Him] and keep all [His] commandments” and also those “that seeketh so to do” (D&C 46:9). While not every gift of God is pledged to every person, we have been assured that “to every [person] is given a gift by the Spirit of God” (D&C 46:11).

Listen to these words from the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants that address the question of the thing or gift of more importance than any other:

“To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

“To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful” (verses 13–14).

### **Gratitude for assurance that Jesus lives**

It is this knowledge and testimony of the living Christ that allows us to be continually responsive to the advice and counsel of Peter, who said that we must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

When we begin to really sense that this hope is real and is actually centered in Jesus, being made possible because of His love for us and especially His love of His Father, then we can gratefully and individually proclaim, using the words of a favorite hymn, “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me” (“I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193). Likewise, as our understanding unfolds, we are led to exclaim, “Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee, How great thou art! How great thou art!” (“How Great Thou Art,” *Hymns*, no. 86).

How grateful I am, in these perilous times, for the protection and guidance that are given to us by the sacred assurance that Jesus Christ lives today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, brethren.

We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “Praise to the Man.” At the conclusion of the singing, we will hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.



## President James E. Faust

### The key of the knowledge of God

Brethren of the priesthood of God, I am again seated as I deliver my message this evening. As you are aware, I am working through a temporary back problem. Those of you who have had back trouble will understand. Those of you who haven't—just wait a while! Any other explanation of what ails me is not true!

I humbly speak to you tonight with a prayer in my heart that you may understand me by the power of the Spirit. It is hard to imagine anything more important for us as priesthood holders to learn than the key of the knowledge of God. This evening I would like to speak concerning that key.

The greater priesthood administers the gospel and holds “the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.”<sup>1</sup> What is the key of the knowledge of God, and can anyone obtain it? Without the priesthood there can be no fulness of the knowledge of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith said the “Melchizedek Priesthood . . . is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven.”<sup>2</sup> President Joseph F. Smith stated:

“One who can truly affirm that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and Jesus is the Savior, has in his possession a prize beyond computation. When we know this we know God, and we have a key to all knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

Father Abraham recognized the value of this grand key as he recounted his experience:

“I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a

greater knowledge, . . . and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.”<sup>4</sup>

### How to obtain greater knowledge of God

Anyone who is righteous and desires to possess greater knowledge and to become “a greater follower of righteousness” can, under the authority of the priesthood, obtain a greater knowledge of God. The Lord tells us one clear way to do so, as given in the Doctrine and Covenants: “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, . . . that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.”<sup>5</sup>

One might ask, “How do I become a greater follower of righteousness?” A righteous person is one who makes and keeps gospel covenants. These are holy contracts, usually between individuals and the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes they include other persons, such as spouses. They involve most sacred promises and commitments, such as baptism, the conferral of the priesthood, temple blessings, marriage, and parenthood. Many of the blessings of Father Abraham come as the Holy Ghost is poured out upon all people.<sup>7</sup> Any worthy man or woman who receives the Holy Ghost can actually become “a new creation.”<sup>8</sup>

### The oath and covenant of the priesthood

To obtain the full portion of these supernatural blessings and come to a full knowledge of God, a man must enter into and keep the oath and covenant of the priesthood.<sup>9</sup> President Marion G. Romney insightfully pointed out:

“The only way a man can make the maximum progress towards eternal life, for which mortality is designed, is to obtain and magnify the Melchizedek Priest-

hood. . . . It is of utmost importance that we keep clearly in mind what the magnifying of our callings in the priesthood requires of us. . . . It requires at least the following three things:

“1. That we obtain a knowledge of the gospel.

“2. That we comply in our personal living with the standards of the gospel.

“3. That we give dedicated service.”<sup>10</sup>

Two covenants are to be made by each priesthood holder. The first is to be faithful unto the obtaining of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.<sup>11</sup> The Aaronic Priesthood trains and prepares the priesthood holder for the greater duties of the Melchizedek Priesthood and prepares him to receive the blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood. Holding both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods is essential to receive the full blessings that the Lord has for His faithful sons. The second covenant as His agent in this holy authority is to be faithful in magnifying one’s calling with total faith in God.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the oath and covenant of the priesthood, the Lord makes several promises to His faithful sons “which he cannot break.”<sup>13</sup> First, the priesthood holders “are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.”<sup>14</sup> I think President Hinckley is a great example of this. He has been renewed in body, mind, and spirit in a most remarkable manner. Second, “they become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham.”<sup>15</sup> Third, they become “the elect of God.”<sup>16</sup> As His agents, they carry forth this holy work in our time on the earth. Fourth, “all they who receive this priesthood receive [the Lord].”<sup>17</sup> Fifth, those who receive the Lord’s servants receive Him.<sup>18</sup> Sixth, those who receive the Savior receive God the Father.<sup>19</sup> Seventh, they also receive the Father’s kingdom.<sup>20</sup> Eighth, they also shall be given all that the Father hath.<sup>21</sup> Those who receive all that the Father hath can receive nothing more.

## Aaronic Priesthood is a very real power

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood have been given great authority and responsibilities. Under the direction of the bishop, the Aaronic Priesthood functions in at least two ordinances that are directly related to the Atonement. One is the sacrament, which is in remembrance of the Savior’s blood shed for our sins and His body which He gave as a ransom for us.<sup>22</sup> The second is baptism. Priests have authority to perform baptisms for the remission of sins. The Aaronic Priesthood is a very real power. One young man wrote this of his experience in exercising this power:

“At one time I attended a ward which had almost no Melchizedek Priesthood holders in it. But it was not in any way dulled in spirituality. On the contrary, many of its members witnessed the greatest display of priesthood power they had ever known.

“The power was centered in the priests. For the first time in their lives they were called upon to perform all the duties of the priests and administer to the needs of their fellow ward members. They were seriously called to home teach—not just to be a yawning appendage to an elder making a social call but to bless their brothers and sisters.

“Previous to this time I had been with four of these priests in a different situation. . . . They drove away every seminary teacher after two or three months. They spread havoc over the countryside on Scouting trips. *But when they were needed—when they were trusted with a vital mission—they were among those who shone the most brilliantly in priesthood service.*

“The secret was that the bishop called upon his Aaronic Priesthood to rise to the stature of men to whom angels might well appear; and they rose to that stature, administering relief to those who might be in want and strengthening those who needed



strengthening. Not only were the other ward members built up but so were the members of the quorum themselves. A great unity spread throughout the ward and every member began to have a taste of what it is for a people to be of one mind and one heart. There was nothing inexplicable in all of this; it was just the proper exercise of the Aaronic Priesthood.”<sup>23</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley recently told the Aaronic Priesthood that those of you who live worthy lives can be blessed by the “protection of ministering angels” and that you “have something magnificent to live up to.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Significance of being the seed of Abraham**

What does it mean to be the seed of Abraham? Scripturally it has a deeper meaning than being his literal descendants. The Lord made a covenant with Abraham, the great patriarch, that all nations would be blessed through him.<sup>25</sup> Any man or woman can claim the blessings of Abraham. They become his seed and heirs to the promised blessings by accepting the gospel, being baptized, entering into temple marriage, being faithful in keeping their covenants, and helping to carry the gospel to all the nations of the earth.

To be empowered to “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations,”<sup>26</sup> a man must receive the Melchizedek Priesthood with its blessings. Then through faithfulness he becomes an heir to the fulness of eternal life. For as Paul said, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”<sup>27</sup>

As the seed of Abraham, we have some obligations. We are commanded to come to Christ by doing “the works of Abraham.”<sup>28</sup> These works include obeying God, receiving and keeping priesthood and temple ordinances and covenants, preaching the gospel, building a family unit and teaching our children, and being faithful to the end.

It is interesting that the Lord used the word *seed* in His promise to Abraham. It has a fuller meaning than *posterity* because it means to multiply the blessings of the covenant of Abraham “unto all nations.”<sup>29</sup> The Lord promised Abraham a posterity “as innumerable as the stars” or “the sand upon the seashore.”<sup>30</sup>

Abraham’s righteous posterity is also privileged to be adopted into the eternal family of Jesus Christ. This includes the right to receive eternal covenants in the temple by which, if they are worthy, they will be organized and exalted in the eternal family of Christ.<sup>31</sup> It also includes “the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Losing an arm becomes a blessing**

The patriarchal order runs from Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob. Through the line of the priesthood, it continues in our own day and time. Through the ages, blessings and promises were given from the fathers to their faithful sons. A modern example of this is taken from the life of Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy. He recalls:

“When it was time for me to go on a mission, I was very excited to serve the Lord. Just before I was to leave, however, I found out that I had bone cancer. The chance of living long enough to serve a mission wasn’t very high. I had faith that the Lord would provide a way if He wanted me to go. My father gave me a blessing in which I was told that I would serve my mission in Mexico, serve in the Church all my life, and have a family. My right arm had to be amputated above the elbow, but my life was spared, and the promises I was given have all been fulfilled.

“Some would think that losing an arm would be a terrible burden, but it has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. I learned that it is very important to have challenges and to face up to them.”

Elder Dickson had always been right-handed, and now he had to learn to do everything left-handed. One struggle was learning how to tie his ties. He said:

“One Sunday morning when I was in my bedroom with my tie in my hand, I thought, *How am I going to tie this?* I thought about getting a clip-on tie. I thought about asking Mom to help me. But I couldn’t take her with me on my mission just to tie my ties. So I decided I had to learn how to do it myself. I finally figured it out by using my teeth. I still do it that way, even after having tied it thousands of times.”<sup>33</sup>

### Great promises to those who are faithful

We don’t know in detail all that is going to be required of humanity, of the Saints of God in the uncertain days ahead. Everyday righteous living will be increasingly difficult. In addition, holders of the priesthood may well have to meet some extra challenges in safeguarding and providing for their families. As one world leader recently pointed out, there will be “dangers common to us all. Today’s deadly threats come from rogue powers and stateless networks of extremists who have nothing but contempt for the sanctity of human life and for the principles civilized nations hold dear.”<sup>34</sup>

We can all expect to face trials. But great eternal promises are extended to those who persist in righteousness. The Lord has given His word that “any man that shall . . . fail not to continue faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint. . . . And they shall not go hungry, neither athirst.”<sup>35</sup> I am optimistic about what the future holds for the Lord’s Church and its members, but we will have to persist in righteousness and be “faithful in all things.”<sup>36</sup> The key of the knowledge of God, administered by those who keep

the oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood, will enable us to come off as the sons of God. That we will do so, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 166–67.
3. “The M. I. Course: Remarks at the B. Y. Academy,” *The Daily Enquirer* (Provo, UT), Jan. 30, 1892.
4. Abraham 1:2.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
6. See Carlos E. Asay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 56–60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 43–45.
7. See 3 Nephi 20:25–29.
8. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149–50.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–42.
10. In Conference Report, Apr. 1962, 18; or *Improvement Era*, June 1962, 416.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:40.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:34.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:34.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:35.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:36.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:37.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
22. See Matthew 26:26–28; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22–24.
23. Quoted in Victor L. Brown, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 101–2; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 68.
24. Quoted in Jason Swensen, “Priesthood Restored Directly from Heaven,” *Church News*, May 22, 2004, 3.
25. See Genesis 18:18; Galatians 3:8; 3 Nephi 20:25, 29.
26. Abraham 2:9.
27. Galatians 3:29.
28. John 8:39; see also John 8:32–50.
29. Abraham 2:9.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 132:30.

31. See Galatians 3:29.
32. Abraham 2:11.
33. "Friend to Friend," *Friend*, Sept. 1995, 7.
34. Colin Powell, "Of Memory and Our Democracy," *USA Weekend*, May 2, 2004, Internet, <http://www.usaweekend.com>.

35. Doctrine and Covenants 84:80.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 84:80.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Praise to the Man."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### Be anxiously engaged

My dear brethren, it is a solemn and somewhat humbling experience to stand before you this evening and respond to the invitation to teach and to testify concerning the sacred privilege which is ours to bear the priesthood of God. I pray for your faith and your prayers in my behalf.

Beyond those who hold the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood who are in attendance this evening here in this beautiful Conference Center or seated in locations worldwide, there are vast numbers of priesthood bearers who, for whatever reason, have drifted from their duties and have chosen to pursue other pathways.

The Lord speaks rather plainly to us to reach out and rescue such individuals and bring them and theirs to the table of the Lord. We well could pay heed to the Lord's divine instructions when He declared, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>1</sup> He added:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And in-

asmuch as men do good they shall in no-wise lose their reward."<sup>2</sup>

### Jesus's example of doing good

The sacred scriptures provide for you and me a model to follow when they declare, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>3</sup> And He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him."<sup>4</sup>

I have observed in studying the life of the Master that His lasting lessons and His marvelous miracles usually occurred when He was doing His Father's work. On the way to Emmaus He appeared with a body of flesh and bones. He partook of food and testified of His divinity. All of this took place after He had exited the tomb.

At an earlier time, it was while He was on the road to Jericho that He restored sight to one who was blind.

The Savior was ever up and about—teaching, testifying, and saving others. Such is our individual duty as members of priesthood quorums today.

### A plea to priesthood holders

In a proclamation of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued on April 6, 1980, this declaration of testimony and truth was set forth:

"We solemnly affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in fact a restoration of the Church established by the Son of God, when in mortal-

ity he organized his work upon the earth; that it carries his sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ; that it is built upon a foundation of Apostles and prophets, he being the chief cornerstone; that its priesthood, in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek orders, was restored under the hands of those who held it anciently: John the Baptist, in the case of the Aaronic; and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek.”<sup>5</sup>

On October 6, 1889, President George Q. Cannon expressed this plea:

“I want to see the power of the Priesthood strengthened. . . . I want to see this strength and power diffused through the entire body of the Priesthood, reaching from the head down to the least and most humble deacon in the Church. Every man should seek for and enjoy the revelations of God, the light of heaven shining in his soul and giving unto him knowledge concerning his duties, concerning that portion of the work of God that devolves upon him in his Priesthood.”<sup>6</sup>

I share with you tonight two experiences from my life—one which took place when I was a boy and the other pertaining to a friend of mine who was a husband and father of children.

### **An adviser uses pigeons to teach**

Not long after my ordination as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, I was called to serve as president of the quorum. Our adviser, Harold, was interested in us, and we knew it. One day he said to me, “Tom, you enjoy raising pigeons, don’t you?”

I responded with a warm, “Yes.”

Then he proffered, “How would you like me to give you a pair of purebred Birmingham Roller pigeons?”

This time I answered, “Yes, Sir!” You see, the pigeons I had were just the common variety, trapped on the roof of the Grant Elementary School.

He invited me to come to his home the next evening. The following day was one of the longest in my young life. I was awaiting my adviser’s return from work an hour before he arrived home. He took me to his pigeon loft, which was in the upper area of a small barn located at the rear of his yard. As I looked at the most beautiful pigeons I had yet seen, he said, “Select any male, and I will give you a female which is different from any other pigeon in the world.” I made my selection. He then placed in my hand a tiny hen pigeon. I asked what made her so different. He responded, “Look carefully, and you’ll notice that she has but one eye.” Sure enough, one eye was missing, a cat having done the damage. “Take them home to your loft,” he counseled. “Keep them in for about 10 days, and then turn them out to see if they will remain at your place.”

I followed Harold’s instructions. Upon his release, the male pigeon strutted about the roof of the loft, then returned inside to eat. But the one-eyed female was gone in an instant. I called Harold and asked, “Did that one-eyed pigeon return to your loft?”

“Come on over,” he said, “and we’ll have a look.”

As we walked from his kitchen door to the loft, my adviser commented, “Tom, you are the president of the teachers quorum.” This, of course, I already knew. Then he added, “What are you going to do to activate Bob, who is a member of your quorum?”

I answered, “I’ll have him at quorum meeting this week.”

Then he reached up to a special nest and handed me the one-eyed pigeon. “Keep her in a few more days and try again.” This I did, and once more she disappeared. Again the experience: “Come on over, and we’ll see if she returned home.” Came the comment as we walked to the loft, “Congratulations on getting Bob to priesthood meeting. Now what

are you and Bob going to do to activate Bill?"

"We'll have him there next week," I volunteered.

This experience was repeated over and over again. I was a grown man before I fully realized that indeed Harold, my adviser, had given me a special pigeon, the only pigeon in his loft he knew would return every time she was released. It was his inspired way of having an ideal personal priesthood interview with the president of the teachers quorum every two weeks. I owe a lot to that one-eyed pigeon. I owe more to that quorum adviser. He had the patience and the skill to help me prepare for the responsibilities which lay ahead.

Fathers, grandfathers, we have an even greater responsibility to guide our precious sons and grandsons. They need our help; they need our encouragement; they need our example. It has been wisely said that our youth need fewer critics and more models to follow.

### **Shelley's miraculous change of heart**

Now for the illustration pertaining to those men whose habits and lives include but little Church attendance or Church activity of any kind. The ranks of these prospective elders have grown larger. This is because of those younger boys of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums who are lost along the Aaronic Priesthood pathway and also those grown men who are baptized but do not persevere in activity and faith so that they might be ordained elders.

I not only reflect on the hearts and souls of such individual men, but also sorrow for their sweet wives and growing children. These men await a helping hand, an encouraging word, and a personal testimony of truth expressed from a heart filled with love and a desire to lift and to build.

Shelley, my friend, was such a person. His wife and children were fine members,

but all efforts to motivate him toward baptism and then priesthood blessings had failed miserably.

But then Shelley's mother died. Shelley was so sorrowful that he retired to a special room at the mortuary where the funeral was being held. We had wired the proceedings to this room so that he might mourn alone and where no one could see him weep with sorrow. As I comforted him in that room before going to the pulpit, he gave me a hug, and I knew a tender chord had been touched.

Time passed. Shelley and his family moved to another part of the city. I was called to preside over the Canadian Mission and, together with my family, moved to Toronto, Canada, for a three-year period.

When I returned and after I was called to the Twelve, Shelley telephoned me. He said, "Bishop, will you seal my wife, my family, and me in the Salt Lake Temple?"

I answered hesitantly, "But Shelley, you must first be baptized a member of the Church."

He laughed and responded, "Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. I sort of snuck up on you. There was this home teacher who called on us regularly and taught me the truths of the Church. He was a school crossing guard and helped the small children across the street each morning when they went to school and each afternoon when they went home. He asked me to help him. During the intervals when there was no child crossing, he gave me additional instruction pertaining to the Church."

I had the privilege to see this miracle with my own eyes and feel the joy with my heart and soul. The sealings were performed; a family was united. Shelley died not too long after this period. I had the privilege of speaking at his funeral services. I shall ever see, in memory's eye, the body of my friend Shelley lying in his casket, dressed in his temple clothing. I

readily admit the presence of tears—tears of gratitude, for the lost had been found.

### Reasons for miraculous changes

Those who have felt the touch of the Master's hand somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to live better, to serve faithfully, to walk humbly, and to be more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."<sup>7</sup>

How can we account for these miracles? Why the upsurge of activity in men long dormant? The poet, speaking of death, wrote, "God . . . touch'd him, and he slept."<sup>8</sup> I say, speaking of this new birth, "God touched them, and they awakened."

Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions.

First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. They cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once excellence is within their reach.

Second, other men and women and, yes, young people have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors' dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The catalyst in this process has been the principle of love.

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says to you and to me, "Come forth."<sup>9</sup> I add: Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life.

As we do and direct our footsteps along the paths which Jesus walked, let us remember the testimony Jesus gave: "Be-

hold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and . . . life of the world."<sup>10</sup> "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father."<sup>11</sup>

### We must feed the hungry sheep

There are quorum members and those who should be our quorum members who require our help. John Milton wrote in his poem "Lycidas," "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."<sup>12</sup> The Lord Himself said to Ezekiel the prophet, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that . . . feed not the flock."<sup>13</sup>

My brethren of the priesthood, the task is ours. Let us remember and never forget, however, that such an undertaking is not insurmountable. Miracles are everywhere to be seen when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. We are on the Lord's errand. We are entitled to the Lord's help. But we must try. From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Let us, one and all, be doers of the word and not hearers only.<sup>14</sup> Let us follow the example of our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord's prophet.

May we, as did the Savior's followers of old, respond to the invitation, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."<sup>15</sup> That we may do so is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28.
3. Luke 2:52.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, May 1980, 52–53.
6. *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, Oct. 29, 1889, 5.
7. John 9:25.



8. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4.
9. John 11:43.
10. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.
12. “Lycidas,” line 125.
13. Ezekiel 34:2–3.
14. See James 1:22.
15. Matthew 4:19.

### President Hinckley

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30

to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will follow immediately.

We express appreciation to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the orchestra for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing “The Spirit of God.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, it is good to be with you in this very large priesthood meeting. I suppose this is the largest such gathering of priesthood ever assembled. What a contrast with the occasion described by Wilford Woodruff when all of the priesthood in all the world assembled in one room in Kirtland, Ohio, to receive instruction from the Prophet Joseph.

We have heard excellent counsel tonight, and I commend it to you.

### The raging storm of pornography

As I offer concluding remarks I rather reluctantly speak to a theme that I have dealt with before. I do it in the spirit of the words of Alma, who said, “This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance” (Alma 29:9).

It is in that spirit that I speak to you tonight. What I have to say is not new. I have spoken on it before. The September issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines carry a talk I gave some years ago on the same subject. Brother Oaks has touched on it tonight.

While the matter of which I speak was a problem then, it is a much more serious

problem now. It grows increasingly worse. It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations. I do so because of letters that come to me from broken-hearted wives.

### Pornography strangles a marriage

I should like to read portions of one received only a few days ago. I do so with the consent of the writer. I have deleted anything that might lead to disclosure of the parties concerned. I have exercised limited editorial liberty in the interest of clarity and flow of language. I quote now:

“Dear President Hinckley,

“My husband of 35 years died recently. . . . He had visited with our good bishop as quickly as he could after his most recent surgery. Then he came to me on that same evening to tell me he had been addicted to pornography. He needed me to forgive him [before he died]. He further said that he had grown tired of living a double life. [He had served in many important] Church callings while knowing [at the same time] that he was in the grips of this ‘other master.’

"I was stunned, hurt, felt betrayed and violated. I could not promise him forgiveness at that moment but pleaded for time. . . . I was able to review my married life [and see how] pornography had . . . put a stranglehold on our marriage from early on. We had only been married a couple of months when he brought home a [pornographic] magazine. I locked him out of the car because I was so hurt and angry. . . .

"For many years in our marriage . . . he was most cruel in many of his demands. I was never good enough for him. . . . I felt incredibly beaten down at that time to a point of deep depression. . . . I know now that I was being compared to the latest 'porn queen.' . . .

"We went to counseling one time and . . . my husband proceeded to rip me apart with his criticism and disdain of me. . . .

"I could not even get into the car with him after that but walked around the town . . . for hours, contemplating suicide. [I thought,] 'Why go on if this is all that my "eternal companion" feels for me?"

"I did go on, but zipped a protective shield around myself. I existed for other reasons than my husband and found joy in my children, in projects and accomplishments that I could do totally on my own. . . .

"After his 'deathbed confession' and [after taking time] to search through my life, I [said] to him, 'Don't you know what you have done?' . . . I told him that I had brought a pure heart into our marriage, kept it pure during that marriage, and intended to keep it pure ever after. Why could he not do the same for me? All I ever wanted was to feel cherished and treated with the smallest of pleasantries . . . instead of being treated like some kind of chattel. . . .

"I am now left to grieve not only for his being gone but also for a relationship that could have been [beautiful, but was not]. . . .

"Please warn the brethren (and sisters). Pornography is not some titillating

feast for the eyes that gives a momentary rush of excitement. [Rather] it has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships that should be sacred, hurting to the very core those you should love the most."

And she signs the letter.

What a pathetic and tragic story. I have omitted some of the detail but have read enough that you can sense her depth of feeling. And what of her husband? He has died a painful death from cancer, his final words a confession of a life laced with sin.

And sin it is. It is devilish. It is totally inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, with personal testimony of the things of God, and with the life of one who has been ordained to the holy priesthood.

### **Prevalence, destructiveness of the material**

This is not the only letter I have received. There have been enough that I am convinced this is a very serious problem even among us. It arises from many sources and expresses itself in a variety of ways. Now it is compounded by the Internet. That Internet is available not only to adults but also to young people.

I recently read that pornography has become a \$57 billion industry worldwide. Twelve billion of this is derived in the United States by evil and "conspiring men" (see D&C 89:4) who seek riches at the expense of the gullible. It is reported that it produces more revenue in the United States than the "combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises or the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC" ("Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003," Internet, <http://www.healthymind.com/s-port-stats.html>).

It robs the workplace of the time and talents of employees. "20% of men admit accessing pornography at work. 13% of women [do so]. . . . 10% of adults admit having internet sexual addiction" ("Inter-



net Pornography Statistics: 2003”). That is their admission, but actually the number may be much higher.

The National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families states that “approximately 40 million people in the United States are sexually involved with the Internet. . . .

“One in five children ages 10–17 [has] received a sexual solicitation over the Internet. . . .

“Three million of the visitors to adult websites in September 2000 were age 17 or younger. . . .

“Sex is the number 1 topic searched on the Internet” (NCPCF Online, “Current Statistics,” Internet, <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/resourcesservices/stat.html>).

I might go on, but you too know enough of the seriousness of the problem. Suffice it to say that all who are involved become victims. Children are exploited, and their lives are severely damaged. The minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break. Men, so very many, find they cannot leave it alone. Their energies and their interests are consumed in their dead-end pursuit of this raw and sleazy fare.

### **Seek the shelter of the gospel**

The excuse is given that it is hard to avoid, that it is right at our fingertips and there is no escape.

Suppose a storm is raging and the winds howl and the snow swirls about you. You find yourself unable to stop it. But you can dress properly and seek shelter, and the storm will have no effect upon you.

Likewise, even though the Internet is saturated with sleazy material, you do not have to watch it. You can retreat to the shelter of the gospel and its teaching of cleanliness and virtue and purity of life.

I know that I am speaking directly and plainly. I do so because the Internet has made pornography more widely accessible, adding to what is available on DVDs and videos, on television and magazine stands. It leads to fantasies that are destructive of self-respect. It leads to illicit relationships, often to disease, and to abusive criminal activity.

### **Stand above this evil thing**

Brethren, we can do better than this. When the Savior taught the multitude, He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Could anyone wish for a greater blessing than this? The high road of decency, of self-discipline, of wholesome living is the road for men, both young and old, who hold the priesthood of God. To the young men I put this question: Can you imagine John the Baptist, who restored the priesthood which you hold, being engaged in any such practice as this? To you men: Can you imagine Peter, James, and John, Apostles of our Lord, engaging in such? No, of course not.

Now brethren, the time has come for any one of us who is so involved to pull himself out of the mire, to stand above this evil thing, to “look to God and live” (Alma 37:47). We do not have to view salacious magazines. We do not have to read books laden with smut. We do not have to watch television that is beneath wholesome standards. We do not have to rent movies that depict that which is filthy. We do not have to sit at the computer and play with pornographic material found on the Internet.

I repeat, we can do better than this. We must do better than this. We are men of the priesthood. This is a most sacred and marvelous gift, worth more than all the dross of the world. But it will be amen to the effectiveness of that priesthood for anyone who engages in the practice of seeking out pornographic material.

## Overcoming this enslaving addiction

If there be any within the sound of my voice who are doing so, then may you plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals.

Let any who may be in the grip of this vise get upon their knees in the privacy of their closet and plead with the Lord for help to free them from this evil monster. Otherwise this vicious stain will continue through life and even into eternity. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, taught, “And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, inasmuch as they have become immortal, . . . they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still” (2 Nephi 9:15–16).

President Joseph F. Smith, in his vision of the Savior’s visit among the spirits of the dead, saw that “unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised” (D&C 138:20).

## Walk in virtue to claim greatest promises

Now, my brethren, I do not wish to be negative. I am by nature optimistic. But in such matters as this I am a realist. If we are involved in such behavior, now is the time to change. Let this be our hour of resolution. Let us turn about to a better way. Said the Lord:

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and

thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

How could any man wish for more? These supernal blessings are promised to those who walk in virtue before the Lord and before all men.

How wonderful are the ways of our Lord. How glorious His promises. When tempted we can substitute for thoughts of evil thoughts of Him and His teachings. He has said:

“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

“Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you” (D&C 88:67–68).

To you deacons and teachers and priests who are with us tonight, you wonderful young men who have to do with the sacrament, the Lord has said, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 133:5).

## Priesthood power requires righteousness

To all of the priesthood the statement of revelation is clear and unequivocal: “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36).

Now I know, my brethren, that most of you are not afflicted with this evil. I ask your pardon for taking your time in dwelling on it. But if you are a stake president or a bishop, a district or branch president, you may very well have to assist those who are affected. May the Lord grant you wisdom, guidance, inspiration, and love for those who so need it.

And to all of you, young or old, who are not involved, I congratulate you and leave my blessing with you. How beautiful is the life that is patterned after the teachings of the gospel of Him who was without sin. Such a man walks with unblemished brow in the sunlight of virtue and strength.

May heaven's blessings attend you, my dear brethren. May all of us reach out

to any who need help, I pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "The Spirit of God."  
Elder Merrill C. Oaks offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 3, 2004. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to this, the fourth general session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will

now favor us with "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare." The invocation will then be offered by Elder E. Ray Bateman of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare."

Elder E. Ray Bateman offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Love Is Spoken Here." We shall then be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Elder David A. Bednar, who also was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. We shall then hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang "Love Is Spoken Here."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, both within my view and assembled throughout the world, I seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the assignment and privilege to address you. First, however, I should like to extend a personal welcome to Elders Dieter Uchtdorf and David Bednar, our new members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

### Choose you this day

I have been thinking recently about choices and their consequences. It has been said that the gate of history turns on small hinges, and so do people's lives. The choices we make determine our destiny.

Joshua of old declared, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

All of us commenced an awesome and vital journey when we left the spirit world and entered this often challenging stage called mortality. We brought with us that great gift from God—our agency. Said the prophet Wilford Woodruff:

"God has given unto all of His children . . . individual agency. . . . [We] possessed it in the heaven of heavens before the world was, and the Lord maintained and defended it there against the aggression of Lucifer. . . . By virtue of this agency you and I and all mankind are made responsible beings, responsible for the course we pursue, the lives we live, the deeds we do."<sup>2</sup>

Brigham Young said, "All must use [this agency] in order to gain exaltation in [God's] kingdom; inasmuch as [we] have the power of choice [we] must exercise that power."<sup>3</sup>

The scriptures tell us that we are free to act for ourselves, "to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life."<sup>4</sup>

A familiar hymn provides inspiration in the choices we make:

Choose the right when a choice is  
placed before you.  
In the right the Holy Spirit guides;  
And its light is forever shining o'er  
you,  
When in the right your heart  
confides. . . .

Choose the right! There is peace in  
righteous doing.  
Choose the right! There's safety for  
the soul.  
Choose the right in all labors you're  
pursuing;  
Let God and heaven be your goal.<sup>5</sup>

### Guides to help us make correct choices

Do we have a guide to help us choose the right and avoid dangerous detours? Positioned on the wall of my office, directly opposite my desk, is a lovely print of the Savior, painted by Heinrich Hofmann. I love the painting, which I have had since I was a 22-year-old bishop and which I have taken with me wherever I have been assigned to labor. I have tried to pattern my life after the Master. Whenever I have a difficult decision to make, I have looked at that picture and asked myself, "What would He do?" Then I try to do it. We can never go wrong when we choose to follow the Savior.

Some choices may seem more important than others, but no choice is insignificant.

Some years ago I held in my hand a guide which, if followed, will never fail in helping us to make correct choices. It was a volume of scripture we commonly call the triple combination, containing the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. This book was a gift from a loving father to a pre-

cious daughter who followed carefully his advice. On the flyleaf page, her father had written in his own hand these inspired words:

“To my dear Maurine,

“That you may have a constant measure by which to judge between truth and the errors of man’s philosophies, and thus grow in spirituality as you increase in knowledge, I give you this sacred book to read frequently and cherish throughout your life.

“Lovingly your father,

“Harold B. Lee”

### **Staying on the path to our eternal destiny**

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our goal is to obtain celestial glory.

Let us not find ourselves as indecisive as is Alice in Lewis Carroll’s classic *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. She is confronted by the Cheshire cat, of whom Alice asks, “Which path shall I follow?”

The cat answers: “That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn’t matter which path you take.”<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Alice, we all know where we want to go, and it *does* matter which way we go, for the path we follow in this life surely leads to the path we will follow in the next.

Each of us should remember that he or she is a son or daughter of God, endowed with faith, gifted with courage, and guided by prayer. Our eternal destiny is before us. The Apostle Paul speaks to us today as he spoke to Timothy long years ago: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee.” “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.”<sup>7</sup>

At times many of us let that enemy of achievement—even the culprit “self-defeat”—dwarf our aspirations, smother

our dreams, cloud our vision, and impair our lives. The enemy’s voice whispers in our ears, “You can’t do it.” “You’re too young.” “You’re too old.” “You’re nobody.” This is when we remember that we are created in the image of God. Reflection on this truth provides a profound sense of strength and power.

### **Seeking heavenly help**

Mine was the privilege to know rather intimately President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who served for so many years as a member of the First Presidency. As I assisted him in the preparation for printing his monumental books, priceless lessons were learned. One day while in a somber, reflective mood, President Clark asked if I could arrange for the printing of a picture suitable for framing. The picture was to feature the lions of Persepolis guarding the ruins of a crumbled glory. President Clark wished to have printed with the picture—between the decaying arches of a civilization that was no more—a number of his favorite scriptures, chosen from his vast knowledge of holy writ. I felt you would wish to know his selections. There were three—two from Ecclesiastes and one from the Gospel of John.

First, from Ecclesiastes: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”<sup>9</sup>

Third, from John: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>10</sup>

An earlier prophet, even Moroni, writing in what is now the Book of Mormon, counseled, “And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever.”<sup>11</sup>

President David O. McKay counseled: “‘The greatest battle of life is fought within the silent chambers of your own soul.’ . . . It is a good thing to sit down and commune with yourself, to come to an understanding with yourself and decide in that silent moment what your duty is to your family, to your Church, to your country, and . . . to your fellowmen.”<sup>12</sup>

The boy prophet Joseph Smith sought heavenly help by entering a grove which then became sacred. Do we need similar strength? Does each need to seek his or her own “Sacred Grove”? A place where communication between God and man can go forth unimpeded, uninterrupted, and undisturbed is such a grove.

### Choosing to follow the Savior

In the New Testament we learn that it is impossible to take a right attitude toward Christ without taking an unselfish attitude toward men. In the book of Matthew, Jesus taught, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>13</sup>

When the Savior sought a man of faith, He did not select him from the throng of self-righteous who were found regularly in the synagogue. Rather, He called him from among the fishermen of Capernaum. While teaching on the seashore, He saw two ships standing by the lake. He entered one and asked its owner to put it out a little from the land so He might not be pressed upon by the crowd. After teaching further, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets.” Simon answered:

“Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

“And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes. . . .

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

Came the reply, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”<sup>15</sup>

Simon the fisherman had received his call. Doubting, disbelieving, unschooled, untrained, impetuous Simon did not find the way of the Lord a highway of ease nor a path free from pain. He was to hear the rebuke, “O thou of little faith.”<sup>16</sup> Yet when the Master asked him, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>17</sup>

Simon, man of doubt, had become Peter, Apostle of faith. Peter made his choice.

When the Savior was to choose a missionary of zeal and power, He found him not among His advocates but amidst His adversaries. The experience of Damascus’s way changed Saul. Of him the Lord declared, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”<sup>18</sup>

Saul the persecutor became Paul the proselyter. Paul made his choice.

### Service of a stalwart grandson

Acts of selfless service are performed daily by countless members of the Church. There are many which are freely given, with no fanfare or boasting, but rather through quiet love and tender care. Let me share with you the example of one who made such a simple yet profound choice to serve.

A few years ago, Sister Monson and I were in the city of Toronto, where we once lived when I was the mission president. Olive Davies, the wife of the first stake president in Toronto, was gravely ill and preparing to pass from this life. Her illness required her to leave her cherished home and enter a hospital which could provide the care she needed. Her only child lived with her own family far away in the West.

I attempted to comfort Sister Davies, but she had present with her the comfort she longed to have. A stalwart grandson sat silently next to his grandmother. I



learned he had spent most of the summer away from his university studies, that he might serve his grandmother's needs. I said to him, "Shawn, you will never regret your decision. Your grandmother feels you are heaven-sent, an answer to her prayers."

He replied, "I chose to come because I love her and know this is what my Heavenly Father would have me do."

Tears were near the surface. Grandmother told us how she enjoyed being helped by her grandson and introducing him to each employee and every patient in the hospital. Hand in hand, they walked the halls, and during the night he was close by.

Olive Davies has passed on to her reward, there to meet her faithful husband and together continue an eternal journey. In a grandson's heart there will ever remain those words, "Choose the right when a choice is placed before you. In the right the Holy Spirit guides."<sup>19</sup>

Such are foundation stones in building one's personal temple. As the Apostle Paul counseled, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"<sup>20</sup>

### A simple formula

May I leave with you today a simple yet far-reaching formula to guide you in the choices of life:

Fill your minds with truth.  
Fill your hearts with love.  
Fill your lives with service.

By doing so, may we one day hear the plaudit from our Lord and Savior, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."<sup>21</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Joshua 24:15.
2. *Deseret Weekly*, Sept. 21, 1889, 393.
3. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 54.
4. 2 Nephi 10:23.
5. "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239.
6. Adapted from Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1992), 76.
7. 1 Timothy 4:14; 6:20.
8. Ecclesiastes 12:13.
9. Ecclesiastes 1:2.
10. John 17:3.
11. Ether 12:41.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 84–85; or *Improvement Era*, June 1967, 80.
13. Matthew 25:40.
14. Luke 5:4–6, 8.
15. Matthew 4:19.
16. Matthew 14:31.
17. Matthew 16:15, 16.
18. Acts 9:15.
19. *Hymns*, no. 239.
20. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
21. Matthew 25:23.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Finding faith in Jesus Christ

I too would like to express our love and the thoughts and prayers that we had this morning in our family for Elder Uchtdorf and Elder Bednar. We look forward to their association and to hearing their faith and their testimony.

Believing in the Savior and His mission is so essential that it is the first principle of the gospel: "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> What is faith? In his epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul taught that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence

of things not seen.”<sup>2</sup> And how do we gain faith? How do we gain evidence of our Savior, whom we have not seen? The scriptures teach us:

“To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to *know* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

“To others it is given to *believe* on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.”<sup>3</sup>

From the beginning of time, prophets have *known* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, of His mortal mission, and of His Atonement for all mankind. Sacred records give the prophecies of thousands of years, not only of the first coming of our Savior but also of the *Second Coming*—a glorious day that will most assuredly come.

If we had lived in the days of these prophets of old, would we have believed on their words? Would we have had faith in the coming of our Savior?

### Responses to Samuel’s prophecies

In ancient America, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied that on the night of the Savior’s birth “there [would] be great lights in heaven, . . . insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day.”<sup>4</sup>

Many believed Samuel and went to find Nephi, confessed their sins, repented, and were baptized. “And angels did appear unto [them], and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy.”<sup>5</sup>

But for the most part, the Nephites “harden[ed] their hearts”<sup>6</sup> and became blind to the “signs and wonders” of the times. These signs were given so that the people “might know that the Christ must shortly come.”<sup>7</sup> But instead of heeding them, the Nephites depended “upon their own . . . wisdom, saying: Some things [the believers] may have guessed right, [but] it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come.”<sup>8</sup>

In those days as in ours, some naysayers, called anti-Christ, convinced others

that there was no need for a Savior and His Atonement. When Samuel’s prophecy was finally fulfilled and there was a “day and a night and a day, as if it were one day,”<sup>9</sup> what joy must have filled the hearts of those who had believed in the prophets! “It had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word.”<sup>10</sup>

### Tests of faith for believers

Those who believed the words of the prophets recognized the Savior throughout His life and ministry and were blessed to follow Him. But sometimes the faith of even the most devoted followers was tested. After the Crucifixion, Thomas heard his brethren testify that the Savior had risen from the tomb. But instead of believing their words, Thomas declared, “Except I shall see . . . , I will not believe.”<sup>11</sup> Later this beloved Apostle was given the opportunity to touch the prints of the nails in the Savior’s hands and confessed, “My Lord and my God.”<sup>12</sup> The Savior then lovingly taught him as He has taught all of us what it means to have faith: “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”<sup>13</sup>

Believers on the American continent faced similar tests of faith. As Samuel had prophesied, there were great “thunderings and lightnings,”<sup>14</sup> and darkness covered “the whole earth for the space of three days.”<sup>15</sup> But those who had “received the prophets and stoned them not”<sup>16</sup> did not fear or flee. They recognized this was “the sign [that] had been given concerning [the Savior’s] death”<sup>17</sup> and gathered to the temple, marveling together. And there He appeared to them, saying:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

“. . . I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and



have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world. . . .

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Believe prophets’ words about Christ**

Brothers and sisters, the prophecies of Christ’s *first* coming were fulfilled, “every whit.” As a result, many throughout the world believe that the Savior did come and did live in the meridian of time. But there are still many prophecies yet to be fulfilled! In this and other conferences, we hear living prophets prophesy and testify of Christ’s *Second* Coming. They also witness of the signs and wonders all about us, telling us that Christ will surely come again. Are we choosing to believe their words? Or despite their witnesses and warnings, are we waiting for evidence—are we “walking in darkness at noon-day,”<sup>19</sup> refusing to see by the light of modern prophecy, and denying that the Light of the World will return to rule and reign among us?

Throughout the course of my life, I have known many good and generous people who adhere to Christian values. However, some lack faith that He lives, that He is the Savior of the world, and that His Church has been restored to the earth. Because they do not believe in the words of the prophets, they miss the joy of the gospel and its saving ordinances in their lives.

### **How to develop the beginnings of faith**

I have a dear friend who, one day not long ago in a moment of brotherly tenderness, asked, “Elder Hales, I want to believe. I’ve always wanted to believe, but how do I do it?” This morning I desire to answer that question.

### *Hear and act on the word of God*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>20</sup> The very fact that you are viewing, listening to, or reading the proceedings of this conference means that you are hearing God’s word. The first step to finding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is to let His word—spoken by the mouth of His servants, the prophets—touch your heart. But it is not enough merely to let those words wash over you, as if they alone could transform you. We must do our part. Or as the Savior Himself said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, hearing requires an active effort. “Faith without works is dead.”<sup>22</sup> It means taking seriously what is taught, considering it carefully, studying it out in our minds. As the prophet Enos learned, it means letting others’ testimonies of the gospel “[sink] deep into [our] heart[s].”<sup>23</sup>

### *Elements in the building of Enos’s faith*

Let us review some of the elements of Enos’s profound, faith-building experience:

First, Enos heard the gospel truths from his father, just as you are hearing them in your families and in this conference.

Second, he let his father’s teachings about “eternal life, and the joy of the saints”<sup>24</sup> sink deep into his heart.

Third, he was filled with a desire to know for himself whether these teachings were true and where he himself stood before his Maker. To use Enos’s words, “My soul hungered.”<sup>25</sup> By this intense spiritual appetite, Enos qualified himself to receive the Savior’s promise: “Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>26</sup>

Fourth, Enos obeyed the commandments of God, which enabled him to be receptive to the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.

Fifth, Enos records, "I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens."<sup>27</sup> It wasn't easy. Faith did not come quickly. In fact, Enos characterized his experience in prayer as a "wrestle which [he] had before God."<sup>28</sup> But faith did come. By the power of the Holy Ghost, he did receive a witness for himself.

### *Cry to God in mighty prayer*

We cannot find Enos-like faith without our own wrestle before God in prayer. I testify that the reward is worth the effort. Remember the pattern: (1) hear the word of God, spoken and written by His servants; (2) let that word sink deep into your heart; (3) hunger in your soul for righteousness; (4) obediently follow gospel laws, ordinances, and covenants; and (5) raise your voice in mighty prayer and supplication, asking in faith to know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. I promise that if you do these things sincerely and unceasingly, the words Christ spoke to His disciples will be fulfilled in your life: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."<sup>29</sup>

### **Faith can't be measured by an extra day**

Once we find the beginnings of our faith in Jesus, our Heavenly Father allows our faith to be strengthened. This occurs in many ways, including through the experience of adversity. An acquaintance of mine recently wrote:

"We lost a 2½-year-old grandson to leukemia. . . . My children still haven't

taken his crib down; it will [soon be] 7 years [since he died. It is] hard to have faith. [I] lost a friend [who was] 69. [He] had three different cancers in 10 years, [cancers which] went into remission twice. [First, they found it in his] kidneys, [then his] brain, [and] then [his] lungs. [He] couldn't fight it any longer. [He] tried everything humanly possible and 6 years ago found faith . . . but not an extra day, so I guess it's hard to believe."

This appeal to me for faith was answered as follows: "Your family story of the loss of your grandson to leukemia was touching. Hopefully, you and your children will find peace as you seek answers to the purpose of life. Our faith is acquired through prayer with a sincere desire to draw close to God and trust in Him to bear our burdens and give us answers to life's unexplained mysteries of the purpose of life: Where did we come from? Why are we here on earth in mortality? And where are we going after our mortal sojourn on earth? All is well with your little one because he died before the age of accountability of eight years of age and he is in the presence of God. Seek faith, and may the blessings of God be with you."

Isn't it interesting that the one who is suffering often gains faith through suffering and accepts the Lord's will, "thy will be done,"<sup>30</sup> while family members and caregivers may have a difficult time accepting the tragic outcome and being able to strengthen their faith from the experience. We cannot measure faith by "an extra day."

### **Atonement brings strength during trials**

When the challenges of mortality come, and they come for all of us, it may seem hard to have faith and hard to believe. At these times only faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement can bring us peace, hope, and understanding. Only

faith that He suffered for our sakes will give us the strength to endure to the end. When we gain this faith, we experience a mighty change of heart, and like Enos, we become stronger and begin to feel a desire for the welfare of our brothers and sisters. We pray for them, that they too will be lifted and strengthened through faith on the Atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us consider a few of these prophetic witnesses of the effects of the Atonement in our lives. As we do I invite you to let them sink deep into your heart and fill whatever hunger and thirsting there may be in your soul.

“And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, . . . that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed.”<sup>31</sup>

And “the Lord showed himself unto [the brother of Jared], and said: . . . Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name.”<sup>32</sup>

Abinadi witnessed: “I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. . . . Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain . . . ; giving [him] power to make intercession for the children of men . . . , having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.”<sup>33</sup>

And finally, Joseph Smith. As a 14-year-old boy, he exercised unwavering faith and followed the prophet James’s direction to “ask of God.”<sup>34</sup> Because of Joseph’s prophetic calling, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him and gave him instructions. How glorious was this First Vision to the first prophet of this last dispensation! Sixteen years later in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph

was visited again by the Savior and testified:

“We saw the Lord. . . . And his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Satisfy hunger for faith by seeking Jesus**

To my dear friend and all those whose souls are hungering for faith, I invite you “to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written.”<sup>36</sup> Let their witness that the Savior gave His life for you sink deep into your heart. Seek a witness of the truth through the Holy Ghost in prayer, and then see your faith strengthened as you joyfully meet the challenges of this mortal life and prepare for eternal life.

Jesus Christ did come. He did live. And He will come again. This I know and give my special witness and testimony, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Articles of Faith 1:4.
2. Hebrews 11:1.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–14; italics added.
4. Helaman 14:3.
5. Helaman 16:14.
6. Helaman 16:15.
7. Helaman 16:4.
8. Helaman 16:15–16, 18.
9. Helaman 14:4.
10. 3 Nephi 1:20–21.
11. John 20:25.
12. John 20:28.
13. John 20:29.
14. Helaman 14:21.
15. Helaman 14:27.
16. 3 Nephi 10:12.
17. 3 Nephi 11:2.
18. 3 Nephi 11:10–12.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 95:6.
20. Romans 10:17.

- 21. Matthew 11:15.
- 22. James 2:26.
- 23. Enos 1:3.
- 24. Enos 1:3.
- 25. Enos 1:4.
- 26. 3 Nephi 12:6.
- 27. Enos 1:4.
- 28. Enos 1:2.

- 29. Matthew 7:7.
- 30. Matthew 26:42.
- 31. Moses 5:9.
- 32. Ether 3:13–14.
- 33. Mosiah 15:1, 7–9.
- 34. James 1:5.
- 35. Doctrine and Covenants 110:2–4.
- 36. Ether 12:41.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Feelings as a newly called Apostle

My dear brothers and sisters, here in Salt Lake City and around the world, it is good to be with you. I extend my love and my greetings to Elder Bednar and Elder Robert Oaks in their new callings. To describe my inner feelings, I would say I am calm as a hurricane, or even better, I am happy and frightened. In one sentence, I need your prayers; I need the Lord.

Having received a call and been given a sacred trust that will completely influence my life forever, my feelings are tender and my emotions often close to tears. I have a great sense of inadequacy, and I have felt a sweet agony from a deep and often painful examination of my soul during the many hours which have passed day and night since Friday morning this week.

### Expressions of love and gratitude

After President Gordon B. Hinckley extended the call to me to become an Apostle and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I left my busy office to share this totally unexpected news with my beloved Harriet. At this most important time in our lives, we have cherished the quiet sacredness of our home as a place of refuge and of defense. How grateful I am for my wife, for the loving comfort and strong support she has been throughout my life. Next to the gift of life itself and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, Harriet is

the greatest blessing which has come into my life.

I wish to express my deep love and appreciation to our children and our grandchildren for their prayers and love, but most of all for their example. Our children and grandchildren live in Germany and are building the kingdom of God in our homeland. The joys of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its eternal blessings bridge over the distance of many thousands of miles and bring happiness and comfort into our lives.

I express my gratitude and love to each member of our family and to a large number of friends and teachers along the way who teach and serve and lift to make us who we are.

I express my deepest feelings of love and gratitude to the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve for their love and kindness. In the closing of my stewardship as one of the seven Presidents of the Seventy, I want to express my love and admiration to the Seventy. They are truly especial witnesses of Christ. Instead of any others they are the men the Twelve call upon when they need assistance. I give thanks to those dedicated men who are giving so much of their time, talents, and spiritual power to build the kingdom. Words cannot describe how I love the 10½ years I had the privilege and joy to serve as a Seventy. I will cherish the example and friendship of the members of the Quorums of the Seventy forever.

I want to thank each and every member of the Church throughout the world for your faithfulness despite temptations; for your love; for your dedication to the principles and doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ; for your willingness to follow the living prophet in making the wards and branches grow; for your sacrifices in giving of your time and energy and your emotional, spiritual, and temporal substance. Thank you for paying an honest tithing and not neglecting the poor and the lonely. I have seen the face of Christ in your faces, in your deeds, and in your exemplary lives. You are a modern miracle.

### **Every calling is important**

I thank you for sustaining, with your hand and with your heart, the general officers of the Church. Yesterday we sustained the general leadership of the Church according to the principle of common consent. Not one of these Church leaders is seeking such a position, nor are they declining such a call, because they know it comes by revelation from God.

We are grateful for your prayers, and we pray for you. We love you, and we need your love. We sustain you, and we need your willingness to serve the Lord wherever you are and to whatever position you are called. In the Lord's Church, every calling is important.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71). And the President asked us to reach out to others and bless the lives of those around us. He said: "Let there be cultivated an awareness in every member's heart of his own potential for bringing others to a knowledge of the truth. . . . Let him pray with great earnestness about it"

("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106).

### **Story of grandmother's conversion**

My life was eternally blessed by one choice member who reached out more than 50 years ago. Some days after World War II, my grandmother was standing in line for food when an elderly single sister with no family of her own invited her to sacrament meeting in Zwickau, East Germany. My grandmother and my parents accepted the invitation. They went to church, felt the Spirit, were uplifted by the kindness of the members, and were edified by the hymns of the Restoration. My grandmother, my parents, and my three siblings were all baptized. I had to wait two years because I was only six.

How grateful I am for a spiritually sensitive grandmother, teachable parents, and a wise, white-haired, elderly single sister who had the sweet boldness to reach out and follow the Savior's example by inviting us to "come and see" (see John 1:39). Her name was Sister Ewig, which translates in English to "Sister Eternal." I will be eternally grateful for her love and example.

### **Joy for the opportunity to testify**

With these tender feelings of gratitude for all who have influenced my life in past years, I commit myself to the future. My heart and mind are filled with joy that for the rest of my life I will have the opportunity to "talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in Christ, . . . preach of Christ, [and] prophesy of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26), all this as a special witness of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ (see D&C 107:23).

Realizing my weaknesses, I gain great comfort from the instructions given by the Lord. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"The fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple

unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers. . . .

“And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed; . . .

“And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge” (D&C 1:23, 26, 28).

And in the Book of Mormon we read:

“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments . . . save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

And in the Old Testament we receive comfort:

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt . . . be turned into another man,” “God gave him another heart,” and “God is with thee” (1 Samuel 10:6, 9, 7).

I trust these wonderful promises. I therefore pledge to you, to these my Brethren, and to the Lord that I will live to be worthy to know the will of the Lord and to act accordingly.

### **These things I know**

God our Heavenly Father knows us by name. Jesus Christ lives; He is the Messiah; He loves us. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is real; it brings immortality to all and opens the door to eternal life.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is again on the earth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true and living.

The Book of Mormon is a second witness of Jesus Christ and a manifestation of the truthfulness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I love the Prophet Joseph. I love President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the prophet of God and who holds all the keys of the kingdom at this time—keys which prophets have held in uninterrupted succession since Joseph Smith.

These things I know in my heart and in my mind. And of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Redeemer of Israel.”

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## **Elder David A. Bednar**

### **Feelings as a newly called Apostle**

Brothers and sisters, my heart is filled to overflowing, my mind is spinning, my knees are weak and wobbly, and I find that words are totally inadequate to communicate effectively the feelings and thoughts I desire to share with you. I pray for and invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost for me and for you as I speak with you briefly this Sabbath morning.

In the hours since President Hinckley extended this new call to serve, I have heeded the admonition of Nephi to “liken all scriptures unto us” (1 Nephi 19:23) with a greater sense of purpose and intensity than I have ever done before.

I have reflected on the teaching of Paul that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). This morning I take great comfort in knowing that I am one of the truly weak things of the world.

### **Enabling, strengthening power of grace**

I have pondered the instruction of Jacob as contained in the Book of Mormon:

“Wherefore, we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the



spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea.

“Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things” (Jacob 4:6–7).

Brothers and sisters, please pay particular attention to the word *grace* as it is used in the verse I just read. In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote a strengthening or enabling power:

“The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“ . . . It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (p. 697).

Thus, the enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement helps us to see and to do and to become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. I testify and witness that the enabling power of the Savior’s Atonement is real. Without that strengthening power of the Atonement, I could not stand before you this morning.

### **In the strength of the Lord**

Can we sense the grace and strengthening power of Christ in the testimony of Ammon? “Yea, I know that I am nothing;

as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever” (Alma 26:12). Truly, brothers and sisters, in the strength of the Lord we can do and endure and overcome all things.

As I walked out of the Church Administration Building after my interview with President Hinckley on Friday afternoon, I recalled the words of Enoch:

“And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?

“And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good” (Moses 6:31–32).

For all of us who feel unprepared and overwhelmed and unequal to a new calling or responsibility, the promise of the Lord to Enoch is equally applicable. The promise was true in Enoch’s day, and it is true today.

### **Help from heaven at BYU–Idaho**

On the night of June 20, 2000, several colleagues and I were working late in the executive offices of then Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. We were making final preparations for an unexpected and historic assembly on our campus the next morning and the announcement by President Hinckley that Ricks College would become a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution and take on the name of Brigham Young University–Idaho. As an administrative team we were just beginning

to realize the monumental nature of the responsibility and challenges that were before us.

As we walked out of the building that night, one of my colleagues asked, “President, are you scared?” As best as I can recall, I answered something like this: “If I thought we had to execute this transition relying exclusively upon our own experience and our own judgment, then I would be terrified. But we will have help from heaven. Because we know who is in charge and that we are not alone, then no, I am not scared.” And we who serve at BYU–Idaho unitedly testify that there has been help from heaven, miracles have occurred, revelations have been received, doors have been opened, and we have been greatly blessed as individuals and as an institution.

### **Expressions of gratitude**

Please permit me now to express gratitude and appreciation. I am thankful for my progenitors—for those faithful and steady men and women whom I respect and honor and to whom I owe everything. I love and appreciate my mother and father and my wife’s mother and father. I am grateful for their love and support and teaching and strength.

My wife, Susan, is a virtuous woman and a righteous mother. You will quickly see that purity and goodness are evident in her countenance. I love her and appreciate her more than words can express. I thank her for the woman she is, for the lessons she has taught me, and for the love we share.

Susan and I have been blessed with three stalwart sons. I love and thank them. And our growing little family now includes two righteous daughters-in-law and three brilliant and beautiful and charming granddaughters. As we have opportunities to be together, we are blessed to see just a glimpse of the family unit in eternity.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful for you. As I see you assembled here in the Conference Center and envision you in meetinghouses all over the earth, I am blessed by your faithfulness and devotion to the Savior. As your arms were raised to the square on Saturday, I felt a sustaining influence flow into my soul that was most remarkable. Few of you know who I am, yet you know from whom the call has come, and you are so willing to sustain and support. I express my thanks to you and pledge my whole soul and all of my energy to this sacred work.

I will go where the Lord and the leaders of His Church want me to go, I will do what they want me to do, I will teach what they want me to teach, and I will strive to become what I should and must become. In the strength of the Lord and through His grace, I know that you and I can be blessed to accomplish all things.

### **Of these things I testify**

As one of the weakest of the weak, I testify that God lives. I testify and witness that Jesus is the Christ. He is our Redeemer and our Savior, and He lives. And I testify that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church have been restored to the earth in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Priesthood keys and authority and saving ordinances are again found on the earth. By the power of that priesthood, families truly can be together forever. The Book of Mormon is the word of God and the keystone of our religion. And, brothers and sisters, the heavens are not closed. God speaks—to us individually and to the leaders of His latter-day kingdom on earth. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord’s prophet on the earth today. Of these things I testify and declare my witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Gratitude for senior missionaries

Gratefully we welcome Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Elder David A. Bednar to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Prayerfully and unitedly we will serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Assignments this year have taken me to many nations of the earth. In some of those countries the Church is relatively new. No matter where I go, I meet our missionaries. They are remarkably resilient and ever effective. They give visible and tangible evidence that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fullness. It was He who said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”<sup>1</sup> This commandment throbs in the heart of every missionary who testifies of Jesus Christ and teaches His message.

When we think of missionaries, we generally picture in our minds young men with shirts and ties and young women dressed modestly. But along with them are marvelous senior missionaries who have answered the pleadings of prophets and apostles for more missionary couples.<sup>2</sup>

I express gratitude for our senior missionaries. They are young in spirit, wise, and willing to work. They even tolerate remarks from their fun-filled children who might change President Spencer W. Kimball’s plea “Lengthen your stride” to “Hasten your shuffle.”<sup>3</sup> These dear members are willing to serve and strengthen the lives of others.<sup>4</sup> Even if these seniors don’t know the local language, their accomplishments are great and their spirit of sacrifice is precious.<sup>5</sup>

### Examples of senior missionary service

#### *Lloyd and Catherine Poelman*

For example, I think of Elder Lloyd Poelman and his wife, Sister Catherine Poelman. Parents of 9 grown children and

grandparents of 20 grandchildren, they now serve in a remote part of Chile, working in a small branch. They make frequent visits among less-active members and with families recently converted to the Church. These visits provide opportunity for the Poelmans to read with those families and bear testimony of temple blessings. In their mission branches they have also taught people how to conduct music and play simplified versions of the hymns on small electronic keyboards. Elder and Sister Poelman recently wrote:

“Baptism is only the first step in conversion. When the initial excitement subsides and the new converts continue facing the need to work long hours just to put bread on the table, they need others to help them who share the joy of the gospel. That is our specialty. Part of our work is preventive—staying close to new converts. Yet others who rarely attend meetings have not lost conviction and receive our messages gratefully. As we watch the changes brought about in the lives of those we visit, we feel blessed to be receiving constant tutoring and help from the Lord in this work and, at the same time, to know that our family members back home are vicariously sharing our calling and those special blessings.”<sup>6</sup>

Such marvelous couples are engaged in the work of reclaiming souls who have previously made covenants to take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ.

#### *Kenneth and Barbara Willits*

Other missionary couples render service in sacred temples of the Church. Elder Kenneth and Sister Barbara Willits, for instance, serve in the Accra Ghana Temple. They developed a special love for the people of Ghana while serving there as missionaries more than two decades earlier. They are energetic and enthusias-

tic converts of 50 years, with 3 children, 16 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren. They perform the exalting ordinances of the temple. Brother Willits serves as a sealer.

On several occasions they have been pleasantly surprised to meet members whom they had previously encountered during their first mission. Recently Elder Willits performed the sealing of a husband and wife whom they had taught in 1982, and to that couple Elder Willits sealed four of their deceased children. Elder and Sister Willits write:

“Our willingness to leave our family and home is motivated by the temple covenants we have made, and our deepest desire is to become an eternal family. Our family is fully supportive as we serve, and they share in many blessings we have received. We are humbly grateful for the privilege of assisting others to receive their temple blessings.”<sup>7</sup>

Courageous and caring couples like Elder and Sister Willits enable and enrich the work done in many of our temples across the earth. Some, such as the Accra Ghana Temple, are located where most local members had not had previous opportunities to attend a temple. Ordinances for those members are now enhanced by experienced couples who serve as temple missionaries. To them we also express our heartfelt gratitude.

#### *Rudi and Eva Hegewald*

Earlier this year Elder Douglas L. Calister and I were in Kiev, capital city of Ukraine. We were there to create the first stake in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. We were pleased to note that the Kiev Ukraine District was well prepared to become a stake—fully organized and ready to take its place among the stakes of Zion. There we also met with the missionaries, among whom were several stalwart senior couples. We listened attentively to their expressions.

We remember the account of Elder Rudi and Sister Eva Hegewald, who grew up in what was then known as East Germany. Speaking with a slight and sweet German accent, they recounted the difficult days of World War II and the subsequent Soviet occupation. They spoke of their many deprivations. Finding the Lord’s true Church and later immigrating to America were counted as treasured blessings. The ensuing years brought them five healthy children, along with spiritual and financial increase. They felt that serving a mission would be a good way for them to show gratitude to the Lord. They expressed a deep desire to serve in Eastern Europe. Their call came to serve in the Ukraine Kiev Mission. Elder and Sister Hegewald write:

“Now, close to the end of our mission in the land of our former enemy, we are thankful for the opportunity to teach and love the Ukrainian people. As we have served the Lord, our souls have been healed and our family has become more united. We have had a truly remarkable and satisfying experience and have seen many small miracles.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **A call for more senior missionary couples**

Notice that all three couples wrote of their blessings. Another couple tells of blessings that come from missionary service. They wrote: “Good people replaced our parenting functions better than we. . . . If a family problem has not yielded to prayer and fasting, a mission might be considered.”<sup>9</sup>

No senior missionary finds it convenient to leave. Neither did Joseph or Brigham or John or Wilford. They had children and grandchildren too. They loved their families not one whit less, but they also loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him. Someday we may meet these stalwarts who helped to establish this dispensation. Then will we rejoice that we did not seek the shadows when a call to missionary service

came from the prophet, even in the autumn years of our lives.

At general conference in October 1925, President Heber J. Grant issued a clarion call for “men of mature years and sound judgment, who have had experience in the preaching of the gospel, . . . to go forth and labor in the mission fields.”<sup>10</sup>

That need persists. At the most recent training broadcast to priesthood leaders throughout the world, President Gordon B. Hinckley issued a similar call:

“There is a constant need for more couple missionaries,” he said. “They perform wonderful service throughout the world. You [leaders] need not wait for the couples to volunteer. The sacrifices associated with serving the Lord full-time will abundantly bless the couples, their families, and the people they serve.”<sup>11</sup>

### Qualifications for the work

Bishops also need to heed that prophetic call and ask such members if they could serve. Opportunities for senior missionaries are varied and vast.<sup>12</sup> Their calls to serve are officially made after prayerful consideration has been given to their occupational background, language experience, and personal capabilities.<sup>13</sup> Of all qualifications to serve, a *desire* to serve may be the most important. The Lord has declared:

“O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

“Therefore, if ye have *desires* to serve God ye are called to the work.”<sup>14</sup>

Many humble Latter-day Saints fear that they are not qualified for missionary labors. But to such a prospective missionary, the Lord has given this assurance: “Faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.”<sup>15</sup>

### Limitations imposed by age and health

As I extol the work of senior missionaries, I realize that there are many more who would like to serve but are not able to do so. Limitations imposed by age or by poor health deserve realistic appraisal, as do the important needs of family members. When desire burns within yet such limitations exist, you can extend your service through others. They can be your arms and legs, and you can provide needed funds. Still others can contribute time and talents as live-at-home missionaries.<sup>16</sup> Each will be pleasing to the Lord, and each will receive His praise.

### The gospel

All of us may preach the gospel by precept and example. The word *gospel* means “good news.” The good news is the Lord Jesus Christ and His message of salvation.<sup>17</sup> Jesus equated the gospel with both His mission and with His ministry in mortality. In His *mission* statement, Jesus said:

“This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross.”<sup>18</sup>

The Savior’s mortal mission we know as the *Atonement*.

The Savior’s mortal *ministry* includes everything else that He did—His teachings, expressions of love, attention to ordinances, patterns of prayer, perseverance, and more. He lived to be our Exemplar, which He also equated to the gospel in His ministerial statement. “This is my gospel,” He said, “for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, faith; repentance; baptism by water, fire, and of the Holy Ghost; the gathering of the elect; and enduring to the end are all part of the gospel.<sup>20</sup> All of us can emulate the Lord’s

example, regardless of age, status, or location.

As one among the “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,”<sup>21</sup> I declare that He is the Son of the living God, our atoning Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church, restored in these latter days to fulfill its divine destiny. His prophet today is President Gordon B. Hinckley. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Mark 16:15; see also Matthew 28:19; Mormon 9:22; Doctrine and Covenants 42:58; 68:8; 80:1; 84:62; 112:28.
2. For example, see Gordon B. Hinckley, “There Must Be Messengers,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 2–5; see also L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 104–8; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 78–80; M. Russell Ballard, “Missionary Couples,” *Ensign*, June 1988, 8–12; Robert D. Hales, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 31–34; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 25–27.
3. See “Serving as Couple Missionaries,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 15.
4. See Luke 22:32.
5. Concerns pertaining to a mission may be considered in four categories:
  - (1) Finances: Any expenses over and beyond what would have been needed at home may be subsidized by children, friends, quorums, or by other members of the family.
  - (2) Fear: Mature missionaries need not fear tracting or learning a new language. Much can be contributed by using talents already acquired. Missionaries can venture into another language situation knowing that they will learn what they need to know without demanding fluency of themselves. They will learn some of their mission language and find joy in using each new expression.
  - (3) Fitness: While a risk-free environment cannot be guaranteed either at home or in the mission field, appropriate provisions can be made for proper diet and exercise. Routine needs for physical care can generally be met in the mission field. In the event of an emergency, evacuation, if advisable, is possible.
- (4) Families: Children and grandchildren of senior missionaries will be blessed because of their service. To a missionary the Lord provided this promise: “Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones; and the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church” (D&C 31:2). As those “little ones” pray for their missionary parents, they will be drawn toward the Lord as well as to parents or grandparents.
6. Personal letter, dated June 29, 2004.
7. Personal letter, received June 28, 2004.
8. Personal letter, received July 1, 2004.
9. Letter addressed to Elder Dallin H. Oaks from Dr. Brent and Carol Petersen, dated June 27, 2004.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1925, 10.
11. “To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27; see also “Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 72.
12. Categories include leadership and member work; family history and temple service; medical, humanitarian, and welfare services; working at visitors’ centers, for public affairs, on an area or mission office staff, with finance and records, with physical facilities, for the Church Educational System, with the Perpetual Education Fund, or in support of other educational endeavors. Other opportunities are available to suit the unique abilities possessed by prospective missionaries. See Giles H. Florence Jr., “So Many Kinds of Missions,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1990, 6–11.
13. For details regarding qualification and preparation for senior missionaries, see

- David B. Haight, "Couple Missionaries—'A Wonderful Resource,'" *Ensign*, Feb. 1996, 6–12; Vaughn J. Featherstone, "Couple Missionaries: 'Too Wonderful for Me,'" *Ensign*, Sept. 1998, 14–17; "There Is Work for Us to Do," *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 36–41; "The Impact of Couple Missionaries," *Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 60–63; John L. Hart, "Working Miracles in Mission Field," *Church News*, Dec. 22, 1990, 3, 7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2–3; italics added.
  15. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
  16. Additional information can be found on the Church Web site [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) under "Service Opportunities for Senior Missionaries" (click on "Other Resources" on the home page, then on "Church-Service Missionary Opportunities").
  17. See Bible Dictionary, "Gospels," 682–83.
  18. 3 Nephi 27:13–14.
  19. 3 Nephi 27:21.
  20. See Doctrine and Covenants 33:6–12; 39:6.
  21. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
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- The choir sang "Still, Still with Thee."
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### President Hinckley

The choir has just sung "Still, Still with Thee."

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Ye Thankful People." Elder Spencer V. Jones of the Seventy will then offer the benediction.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Reflections on Sister Hinckley's passing

My brethren and sisters, at the outset, if you will bear with me, I wish to exercise a personal privilege. Six months ago, at the close of our conference, I stated that my beloved companion of 67 years was seriously ill. She passed away two days later. It was April 6, a significant day to all of us of this Church. I wish to thank publicly the dedicated doctors and wonderful nurses who attended her during her final illness.

My children and I were at her bedside as she slipped peacefully into eternity. As I held her hand and saw mortal life drain from her fingers, I confess I was overcome. Before I married her, she had been the girl of my dreams, to use the words of a song then popular. She was my dear companion for more than two-thirds of a century, my equal before the Lord, really my superior.

And now in my old age, she has again become the girl of my dreams.

Immediately following her passing there was a tremendous outpouring of love from across the world. Great quantities of beautiful floral offerings were sent. Large contributions were made in her name to the Perpetual Education Fund and her academic chair at Brigham Young University. There were literally hundreds of letters. We have boxes filled with them from many we know and from very many we do not know. They all express admiration for her and sympathy and love for us whom she left behind.

We regret that we have been unable to respond individually to these many expressions. So I now take this occasion to thank you every one for your great kindness toward us. Thank you so very, very much, and please excuse our failure to reply. The task was beyond our capacity, but your ex-

pressions have shed an aura of comfort in our time of grief.

I am grateful to be able to say that in our long life together I cannot remember a serious quarrel. Small differences occasionally, yes, but nothing of a serious nature. I believe our marriage has been as idyllic as anyone's could possibly be.

I recognize that many of you are similarly blessed, and I compliment you most warmly, for when all is said and done there is no association richer than the companionship of husband and wife, and nothing more portentous for good or evil than the unending consequences of marriage.

I see those consequences constantly. I see both beauty and tragedy. And so I have chosen to say a few words today on the women in our lives.

### **Eve's creation was the grand summation**

I begin with the Creation of the world.

We read in the book of Genesis and in the book of Moses of that great, singular, and remarkable undertaking. The Almighty was the architect of that creation. Under His direction it was executed by His Beloved Son, the Great Jehovah, who was assisted by Michael, the archangel.

There came first the forming of heaven and earth, to be followed by the separation of the light from the darkness. The waters were removed from the land. Then came vegetation, followed by the animals. There followed the crowning creation of man. Genesis records that "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

But the process was not complete.

"For Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman" (Genesis 2:20-23).

And so Eve became God's final creation, the grand summation of all of the marvelous work that had gone before.

### **Great women in the scriptures**

Notwithstanding this preeminence given the creation of woman, she has so frequently through the ages been relegated to a secondary position. She has been put down. She has been denigrated. She has been enslaved. She has been abused. And yet some few of the greatest characters of scripture have been women of integrity, accomplishment, and faith.

We have Esther, Naomi, and Ruth of the Old Testament. We have Sariah of the Book of Mormon. We have Mary, the very mother of the Redeemer of the world. We have her as the chosen of God, described by Nephi as "a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins" (1 Nephi 11:15).

She it was who carried the child Jesus into Egypt to save His life from the wrath of Herod. She it was who nurtured Him in His boyhood and young manhood. She stood before Him when His pain-wracked body hung upon the cross on Calvary's hill. In His suffering He said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" And to His disciple in a plea that he care for her, He said, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27).

Crossing through His life we have Mary and Martha, and Mary of Magdala. She it was who came to the tomb that first Easter morning. And to her, a woman, He first appeared as the resurrected Lord. Why is it that even though Jesus placed woman in a position of preeminence, so many men who profess His name fail to do so?

### **Duality of the sexes is God's design**

In His grand design, when God first created man, He created a duality of the



sexes. The ennobling expression of that duality is found in marriage. One individual is complementary to the other. As Paul stated, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

There is no other arrangement that meets the divine purposes of the Almighty. Man and woman are His creations. Their duality is His design. Their complementary relationships and functions are fundamental to His purposes. One is incomplete without the other.

I recognize that we have many wonderful women among us who do not have the opportunity of marriage. But they too make such a tremendous contribution. They serve the Church faithfully and ably. They teach in the organizations. They stand as officers.

I witnessed a very interesting thing the other day. The General Authorities were in a meeting, and the presidency of the Relief Society were there with us. These able women stood in our council room and shared with us principles of welfare and of helping those who are in distress. Our stature as officers of this Church was not diminished by what they did. Our capacities to serve were increased.

### **Do not demean women**

There are some men who, in a spirit of arrogance, think they are superior to women. They do not seem to realize that they would not exist but for the mother who gave them birth. When they assert their superiority, they demean her. It has been said, “Man can not degrade woman without himself falling into degradation; he can not elevate her without at the same time elevating himself” (Alexander Walker, in *Elbert Hubbard’s Scrap Book* [1923], 204).

How very true that is. We see the bitter fruit of that degradation all about us. Divorce is one of its results. This evil runs

rampant through our society. It is the outcome of disrespect for one’s marriage partner. It manifests itself in neglect, in criticism, in abuse, in abandonment. We in the Church are not immune from it.

Jesus declared, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6).

The word *man* is used in the generic sense, but the fact is that it is predominantly men who bring about the conditions that lead to divorce.

### **Solution to the problem of divorce**

After dealing with hundreds of divorce situations through the years, I am satisfied that the application of a single practice would do more than all else to solve this grievous problem.

If every husband and every wife would constantly do whatever might be possible to ensure the comfort and happiness of his or her companion, there would be very little, if any, divorce. Argument would never be heard. Accusations would never be leveled. Angry explosions would not occur. Rather, love and concern would replace abuse and meanness.

There was a popular song we sang many years ago, the lyrics of which said:

I want to be happy,  
But I won’t be happy  
Till I make you happy, too.  
[Irving Caesar, “I Want to Be Happy”  
(1924)]

How true this is.

### **Achieving harmony and peace at home**

Every woman is a daughter of God. You cannot offend her without offending Him. I plead with the men of this Church to look for and nurture the divinity that lies within their companions. To the degree that happens, there will be harmony, peace, enrichment of family life, nurturing love.

Well did President McKay remind us that “no other success [in life] can compensate for failure in the home” (quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116).

Likewise, the truth of which President Lee reminded us: “The [greatest] work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own home” (“Maintain Your Place as a Woman,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, 51).

The cure for most marital troubles does not lie in divorce. It lies in repentance and forgiveness, in expressions of kindness and concern. It is to be found in application of the Golden Rule.

It is a scene of great beauty when a young man and a young woman join hands at the altar in a covenant before God that they will honor and love one another. Then how dismal the picture when a few months later, or a few years later, there are offensive remarks, mean and cutting words, raised voices, bitter accusations.

It need not be, my dear brothers and sisters. We can rise above these mean and beggarly elements in our lives (see Galatians 4:9). We can look for and recognize the divine nature in one another, which comes to us as children of our Father in Heaven. We can live together in the God-given pattern of marriage in accomplishing that of which we are capable if we will exercise discipline of self and refrain from trying to discipline our companion.

### **“You have always given me wings to fly”**

The women in our lives are creatures endowed with particular qualities, divine qualities, which cause them to reach out in kindness and with love to those about them. We can encourage that outreach if we will give them opportunity to give expression to the talents and impulses that lie within them. In our old age my beloved companion said to me quietly one eve-

ning, “You have always given me wings to fly, and I have loved you for it.”

I once knew a man who has since passed on but who insisted on making all of the decisions for his wife and children. They could not buy a pair of shoes without him. They could not take a piano lesson. They could not serve in the Church without his consent. I have since witnessed the outcome of that attitude, and that outcome is not good.

My father never hesitated to compliment my mother. We children knew that he loved her because of the way he treated her. He deferred to her. And I shall ever be profoundly grateful for his example. Many of you have been blessed likewise.

### **We are all necessary in God’s plan**

Now I might go on, but it is not necessary. I wish only to give emphasis to the great, salient truth that we are all children of God, both sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.

As a father, do I love my daughters less than I love my sons? No. If I am guilty of any imbalance, it is in favor of my girls. I have said that when a man gets old, he had better have daughters about him. They are so kind and good and thoughtful. I think I can say that my sons are able and wise. My daughters are clever and kind. And “my cup runneth over” (Psalm 23:5) because of this.

Women are such a necessary part of the plan of happiness which our Heavenly Father has outlined for us. That plan cannot operate without them.

### **Show gratitude for women**

Brethren, there is too much of unhappiness in the world. There is too much of misery and heartache and heartbreak. There are too many tears shed by grieving wives and daughters. There is too much negligence and abuse and unkindness.



God has given us the priesthood, and that priesthood cannot be exercised, “only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile” (D&C 121:41–42).

How thankful I am, how thankful we all must be, for the women in our lives. God bless them. May His great love distill upon them and crown them with luster and beauty, grace and faith. And may His

Spirit distill upon us as men and lead us ever to hold them in respect, in gratitude, giving encouragement, strength, nurture, and love, which is the very essence of the gospel of our Redeemer and Lord. For this I humbly pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Come, Ye Thankful People.”

Elder Spencer V. Jones offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 3, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction

of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “High on the Mountain Top.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Val R. Christensen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Val R. Christensen offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Adam-ondi-Ahman.”

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### **President Monson**

The choir just sang “Adam-ondi-Ahman.”

We will now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Elaine S. Dalton, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy will then address us.

## President Boyd K. Packer

I join in welcoming Elders Uchtdorf and Bednar to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. By comparison with the rest of us, they are very young men. I was young when I was called. President Harold B. Lee prophesied, “You will get over it.”

I also welcome Elder Robert C. Oaks as one of the Presidents of the Seventy. After an illustrious career in the military, in the air force, he retired as a four-star general. That retirement was interrupted by a call to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, and after associating with the greatest military commanders and political leaders in the world, he and Gloria found themselves in Africa, where they served for three years among the humblest members of the Church, of whom I will speak.

### **An ordinary man remembered forever**

There is a message for Latter-day Saints in a seldom quoted revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1838. “I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord” (D&C 117:12).

Oliver Granger was a very ordinary man. He was mostly blind, having “lost his sight by cold and exposure” (*History of the Church*, 4:408). The First Presidency described him as “a man of the most strict integrity and moral virtue; and in fine, to be a man of God” (*History of the Church*, 3:350).

When the Saints were driven from Kirtland, Ohio, in a scene that would be repeated in Independence, in Far West, and in Nauvoo, Oliver was left behind to sell their properties for what little he could. There was not much chance that he could succeed. And, really, he did not succeed!

But the Lord said, “Let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First

Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord” (D&C 117:13).

What did Oliver Granger do that his name should be held in sacred remembrance? Nothing much, really. It was not so much what he did as what he was.

When we honor Oliver, much, perhaps even most, of the honor should go to Lydia Dibble Granger, his wife.

Oliver and Lydia finally left Kirtland to join the Saints in Far West, Missouri. They had gone but a few miles from Kirtland when they were turned back by a mob. Only later did they join the Saints at Nauvoo.

Oliver died at age 47, leaving Lydia to look after their children.

### **The Lord accepts our best efforts**

The Lord did not expect Oliver to be perfect, perhaps not even to succeed. “When he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord” (D&C 117:13).

We cannot always expect to succeed, but we should try the best we can.

“For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:9).

The Lord said to the Church:

“When I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings. . . .

“... This I make an example unto you, for your consolation concerning all those who have been commanded to do a work and have been hindered by the hands of their enemies, and by oppression, saith the Lord your God” (D&C 124:49, 53; see also Mosiah 4:27).

The few in Kirtland are now millions of ordinary Latter-day Saints across the world. They speak a multitude of languages but unite in faith and understanding through the language of the Spirit.

These faithful members make and keep their covenants and strive to be worthy to enter the temple. They believe the prophecies and sustain their ward and branch leaders.

Like Oliver, they sustain the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and accept what the Lord said: “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of [these men] whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place” (D&C 124:45).

### **Lord uses the weak, makes them strong**

In the revelation given as a preface for the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explained who would do His work. Listen carefully as I read that revelation, and think of the trust that the Lord has in us:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

“And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—

“The *weak things* of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh.”

The next verse provides for the priesthood to be conferred upon ordinary, worthy men and boys:

“That every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; . . .

“That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the *weak and the simple* unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

“Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their *weakness*, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.

“And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;

“And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

“And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;

“And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time” (D&C 1:17–20, 23–28; italics added).

### **When we fall, we shall rise again**

Now another generation of youth comes forward. We see a strength in them beyond what we have seen before. Drinking and drugs and moral mischief are not a part of their lives. They band together in study of the gospel, in socials, and in service.

They are not perfect—not yet. They are doing the best they can, and they are stronger than the generations that came before.

The Lord told Oliver Granger, “When [they fall, they] shall rise again, for [their] sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than [their] increase” (D&C 117:13).

Some worry endlessly over missions that were missed, or marriages that did not turn out, or babies that did not arrive, or children that seem lost, or dreams unful-

filled, or because age limits what they can do. I do not think it pleases the Lord when we worry because we think we never do enough or that what we do is never good enough.

Some needlessly carry a heavy burden of guilt which could be removed through confession and repentance.

The Lord did not say of Oliver, “*If he falls,*” but “*When he falls he shall rise again*” (D&C 117:13; italics added).

### **Great power in ordinary members**

Some years ago in the Philippines we arrived early for a conference. Sitting on the curb were a father and mother and four small children dressed in their Sunday best. They had come several hours on a bus and were having the first meal of the day. Each of them was eating a cob of cold, boiled corn. The cost of the bus to Manila probably came out of their food budget.

As I watched that family, my heart overflowed with emotion. *There* is the Church. *There* is the power. *There* is the future. As with families in many lands, they pay their tithing, sustain their leaders, and do their best to serve.

For more than 40 years, my wife and I have traveled over the earth. We know members of the Church in perhaps a hundred countries. We have felt the power in their simple faith. Their individual testimonies and their sacrifice have had a profound effect on us.

I do not like to receive honors. Compliments always bother me because the great work of moving the gospel forward has in the past, does now, and will in the future depend upon ordinary members.

My wife and I do not expect reward for ourselves greater than will come to our own children or to our parents. We do not press nor do we really want our children to set great prominence and visibility in the world or even in the Church as their goal in life. That has so very little to do

with the worth of the soul. They will fulfill our dreams if they live the gospel and raise their children in faith.

Like John, “[We] have no greater joy than to hear that [our] children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4).

### **Great strength of ordinary missionaries**

Some years ago, as president of the New England Mission, I left Fredericton, New Brunswick. It was 40 degrees below zero. As the plane taxied away from that small terminal, I saw two young elders standing outside, waving good-bye. I thought, “Foolish boys. Why do they not go inside where it’s warm?”

Suddenly there came over me a powerful prompting, a revelation: There in these two ordinary young missionaries stands the priesthood of Almighty God. I leaned back, content to leave the missionary work for that entire province of Canada in their hands. It was a lesson I have never forgotten.

Eight weeks ago Elder William Walker of the Seventy and I held a zone conference in Naha for 44 missionaries on the island of Okinawa. President Mills of the Japan Fukuoka Mission was prevented from attending by an approaching ferocious typhoon. The young zone leaders conducted that meeting with as much inspiration and dignity as their mission president might have done. We left the next morning in gale-force winds, content to leave the missionaries in their care.

### **Church leaders from many nations**

Recently in Osaka, Japan, Elders Russell Ballard and Henry Eyring of the Twelve and I, together with President David Sorensen and others of the Seventy, met with 21 mission presidents and 26 Area Authority Seventies. There were among the Area Authority Seventies Elder Subandriyo from Jakarta, Indonesia; Elder Chu-Jen Chia from Beijing, China;

Elder Remus G. Villarete of the Philippines; Elder Won Yong Ko from Korea; and 22 others—only two Americans among them. It was a uniting of nations, tongues, and people. None of them are paid. They all serve freely, grateful to be called to the work.

We reorganized stakes in Okazaki, Sapporo, and Osaka, Japan. All three of the new stake presidents and an incredible number of the leaders had joined the Church as teenagers. Most of them had lost their fathers in the war.

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy is one of that generation.

The calamities that the Lord foresaw now come upon an unrepentant world. At once, generation after generation of youth come forward. They are given in marriage. They keep the covenants made in the house of the Lord. They have children and do not let society set limits upon family life.

### **“The least of these”**

Today we fulfill the prophecy “that [Oliver Granger’s] name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever” (D&C 117:12). He was not a great man in terms

of the world. Nevertheless, the Lord said, “Let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings . . . be on him forever and ever” (D&C 117:15).

Let no one underestimate the power of faith in the ordinary Latter-day Saints. Remember the Lord said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

He promised that “the Holy Ghost shall be [their] constant companion, and [their] scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and [their] dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto [them] forever and ever” (D&C 121:46).

Nothing! No power can stop the progress of the Lord’s work.

“How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).

Of this I bear an apostolic witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Sister Elaine S. Dalton

### **We did this for you**

A little over a year ago, my husband and I visited Nauvoo. As we walked through the Old Pioneer Cemetery searching for the grave of an ancestor, Zina Baker Huntington, I was touched by the peaceful solitude and spirit I felt. I walked through the trees and read the names on the grave-stones, many of them children and families. I wept as my heart was turned to our forefathers, many of whom had joined the Church and come to Nauvoo. In my mind

I asked many questions: Why did they leave their comfortable homes and families? Why did they suffer persecution, sickness, even death? Why did they sacrifice all that they had to come to this place and build a temple? They hardly had shelter, and yet they were building a temple! Why did they do it? And when the temple was nearly completed, how could they leave it behind? As I sat silently contemplating this scene, the answer came forcefully yet softly to my mind and heart: “We did this for you.”

Those words, “We did this for you,” reminded me that our ancestors, along with many other faithful Saints, sacrificed everything because of their testimonies and faith in Jesus Christ. They knew that the gospel had been restored to the earth once more and that they were led by a prophet of God. They knew that the Book of Mormon was true and understood its message and witness. They knew that through the restoration of priesthood keys, families could be sealed together for eternity through holy priesthood ordinances available only in a temple. They knew that temple work was the key to the salvation and exaltation of the human family. They knew the importance of this work, and they were willing to give all that they had in order to provide a house acceptable to the Lord wherein this holy work could be performed. They sacrificed everything so that past and future generations would have access to the eternal blessings of the temple.

### Hearts of children turn to their fathers

Prior to coming to Nauvoo, the Saints sacrificed greatly to build the first temple of this dispensation in Kirtland, Ohio. It was there that the Lord appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Three other heavenly messengers also appeared there. One of these was Elijah the prophet, who restored, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, keys pertaining to the restoration of the priesthood and the “great work to be done in the temples of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> This happened in accordance with the promise that is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants wherein the Lord said:

“Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet. . . .

“And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

“If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.”<sup>2</sup>

The early Saints understood what this scripture meant, and on that beautiful morning in the old cemetery in Nauvoo, I understood also.

### Enter temples to fulfill the promises

How can the promises made to the fathers be planted in the hearts of the children? How can the hearts of the children be turned to their fathers? This can happen only when we understand our identity and roles in this work and remain worthy and prepared to enter the temple and act on behalf of those who have gone before.

Brigham Young said: “We have a work to do just as important in its sphere as the Savior’s work was in its sphere. . . . We are now called upon to do ours; which is to be the greatest work man ever performed on the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

In the vision of the redemption of the dead given to President Joseph F. Smith, he saw many of the noble and great prophets who had been on the earth prior to the Savior’s coming. He also saw the Prophet Joseph Smith; Hyrum Smith, his father; and “*other choice spirits* who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work.”<sup>4</sup> Who were those other choice spirits? Our generation was somewhere there among those “noble and great” leaders, prepared in the world of spirits to be on the earth at this time! The scriptures tell us that “even before they were born, they, *with many others*, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.”<sup>5</sup> The labor we were prepared and reserved to perform includes “the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead.”<sup>6</sup>



## Temples are spreading over the earth

Brigham Young foresaw the time in which we are now living. He said:

“To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal.”<sup>7</sup>

When I was young, my grandfather Martin taught me that in the latter days, temples would literally dot the earth. At the time my grandfather expressed this thought to me, I could hardly imagine it. But I was raised with this knowledge and feeling in my heart. Recently I looked on the Church’s Web site under “temples,” and I could plainly see that temples, designated by red dots, are starting to spread over much of the earth.<sup>8</sup>

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said, “We are determined . . . to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship.”<sup>9</sup> Our prophet knows that it is difficult to do temple work if we are not near a temple. This is our day, and temple work is the work that we have been prepared to do. It is a work for every generation, including and especially the youth of the Church.

## Importance of youth doing temple work

In order to perform this great work, we must be worthy. No wonder we are surrounded on every side with things designed to discourage, distract, or disqualify us. We must keep our focus, and we must remember that the temple is the reason for everything we do in the Church.

Youth programs such as Personal Progress and Duty to God encourage our youth to be worthy to attend the temple. These programs are designed to help youth make and keep commitments, thus

preparing them to make and keep covenants. They also encourage youth to participate in journal writing, family history, and performing baptisms for their ancestors.

The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet teaches doctrine and principles that, if understood and lived, will help youth be worthy to attend the temple. These programs are powerful tools to be used by youth, parents, and leaders. They help youth prepare to be worthy to attend the temple. And our youth do not have to wait until a mission or marriage to visit the temple. They can have temple experiences beginning at age 12 by doing baptisms and confirmations, and these can continue throughout their teen and adult years.

## Youth feel blessings of temple work

Great blessings will literally “be poured out upon the heads” of those who are endowed in the temples, and a portion of these blessings will come to our youth as they live worthily to participate in the house of the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

The Salt Lake Temple baptistry is a thrilling place to be on Saturday mornings! I was there early one morning to be baptized for some of my ancestors. As I sat waiting on the bench in the baptismal area, I noticed that the young woman on my left was reading her patriarchal blessing. The girl on my right was reading her scriptures. I asked her if she had come here with a group. Her reply was, “No, I come with my friend every Saturday. It makes my whole week go better.”

These young women, along with many other young men and women, know a grand secret—the temple blesses not only our families’ and ancestors’ lives, but also our own. We are promised that those who are endowed in the temple will go forth from that holy house “armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them.”<sup>11</sup>

These are great blessings and promises. What youth does not desire to prepare to receive these blessings in order to navigate in today's ever-darkening world?

### **A great work for youth to do in temples**

When President Faust talked to the young men in the priesthood session last October, he called on them to lead out and become a part of temple and family history work. He said:

"I encourage you . . . to begin to unlock the knowledge of who you really are by learning more about your forebears. . . .

". . . You can easily access a vast collection of family history records using the Internet on your home computer or at your nearest family history center. . . .

". . . Temple work is essential . . . because 'we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.'"<sup>12</sup>

The youth have been prepared "for such a time as this."<sup>13</sup> They are intelligent and bright. They are proficient on computers and the Internet. They are a great untapped resource for good in the world! They have been reserved for these latter days, and they have a great work to do. And not only do they have a great work to do there, but the temple will also be a refuge for them that will protect them from worldly pressures and influences.

### **An army of youth in the temple**

As I contemplate President Faust's words, I can visualize an army of righteous youth prepared and worthy to attend the temple. I can see families sealed together for eternity. I can see youth who understand what it means to be "saviours . . . on mount Zion."<sup>14</sup> I can see youth whose hearts are turned to their fathers.<sup>15</sup> And I can envision youth growing up in such

a way that they will come forth from the temples filled with strength to resist worldly pressures.<sup>16</sup> I can see a generation of youth who will "stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved."<sup>17</sup>

Zina Baker Huntington, along with so many other faithful Saints, sacrificed *everything* in order that we might have the blessings of the restored gospel. It is my prayer that we might understand our role in this great work and remain worthy to enter His holy temples. I know that if we will do this, the joyful day will come when we shall meet our ancestors once again and be able to say to them, "*We did this for you.*" In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 138:48; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:14–16; 128:17; 138:47.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.
3. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 406.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 138:53; italics added.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56; italics added.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 138:54.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 394.
8. See [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org); see also "Temples throughout the World," *Friend*, July 2002, 36–37.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 50.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:9–10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 57–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 53–54; see also Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
13. Esther 4:14.
14. Obadiah 1:21.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.



## Elder Richard J. Maynes

### A perilous time for the Nephites

From ancient days to modern days, true disciples of Jesus Christ have understood the importance of making and keeping covenants with the Lord.

In approximately 64 B.C., the Nephite nation was living in extremely perilous times. Because of iniquity, dissensions, and intrigue, they found themselves in the most dangerous circumstances (see Alma 53:9). The government teetered on the brink of collapse. The war with the Lamanites had been ongoing for years. Nephite dissidents were leaving to join forces with the enemy. Many Nephite cities had been attacked and captured.

In the midst of this dangerous and chaotic situation, righteous men were sought after to lead the Nephite armies—men like Moroni and Helaman. These Nephite leaders understood that their nation's ability to defend itself was in direct proportion to their obedience to the Lord. They constantly struggled to motivate the population to remember the Lord and keep His commandments.

### Stripling warriors enter into a covenant

At this very critical point in time, after many Nephite cities had been lost and the balance of power seemed to be shifting toward the Lamanites, a miraculous thing took place. A group of people, once Lamanites, now known as Ammonites because they were converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ through the teachings of Ammon, came forward desirous to take up arms in the defense of their newly inherited land, country, and way of life (see Alma 53:13).

The fathers of these Ammonite families had previously made an oath to the Lord never to take up arms again. Helaman, the Nephite prophet, counseled these men to keep their promise to the Lord (see

Alma 53:15). Mormon relates what transpired after Helaman shared that counsel:

“But behold, it came to pass they had many sons, who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies; therefore they did assemble themselves together at this time, as many as were able to take up arms, and they called themselves Nephites.

“And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives; yea, even they covenanted that they never would give up their liberty. . . .

“Now behold, there were two thousand of those young men, who entered into this covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country. . . .

“And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.

“And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people” (Alma 53:16–18, 20–22).

### Faith and obedience of stripling warriors

Helaman and his 2,000 stripling soldiers fought valiantly to protect their families and their liberty. Their entrance onto the field of battle changed the course of the war. Momentum swung back in favor of the Nephites.

In a letter written to Moroni, Helaman describes the faith and courage these young men exhibited:

“And now I say unto you, my beloved brother Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites. . . .

“Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:45, 47).

Brothers and sisters, “they did not doubt, [and] God [did] deliver them.” In their first great battle, not one of the 2,000 was slain. After the battle, 60 more young Ammonite men joined the small army. Helaman tells us, “They did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them” (Alma 57:21).

The second battle in which this small army was engaged was more intense than the first. In its aftermath Helaman writes:

“And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, . . . there was not one soul of them who did perish. . . .

“And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, . . . and we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith” (Alma 57:25–26).

### **Making and keeping sacred covenants**

Helaman and his young stripling soldiers understood the importance of making covenants with the Lord. They were also recipients of the blessings that come to those who faithfully keep their covenants.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have also taken upon ourselves sacred obligations. We have done this in the waters of baptism and in the temples of the Lord. We

call these obligations *covenants*. Covenants are promises we make to the Lord. They are extremely sacred in nature. The most important thing we can do in this life is to keep the promises or covenants we have made with the Lord. When we keep our promises to the Lord, He allows us to progress spiritually.

### **A covenant-keeping family**

During the past two years, Sister Maynes and I have been assigned to serve in the Philippines. We have come across many examples of Filipino families and individuals who understand and keep the covenants they have made with the Lord. Let me share with you an experience that we have had with one of these families.

A few months ago I was assigned to preside at the Talisay Philippines Stake conference. During the Sunday general session, I began my talk by thanking the congregation for their reverence. While speaking, I looked down to my left and saw a very large family sitting a couple of rows back from the front of the chapel. I was impressed to point them out and use them as an example of a family who understood and lived the principle of reverence. The parents were sitting there surrounded by many, many reverent children.

Upon the completion of the meeting, we had the wonderful opportunity to meet the Abasanta family. The more I learned about them, the more I was impressed with the fact that they truly understood what it meant to keep covenants and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brother Lani and Sister Irene Abasanta joined the Church 22 years ago. Together they have had 17 children. Among the 17 children is one set of triplets. We all know that raising a family is not an easy task anywhere in the world, and the Philippines is no exception. The Abasanta family is a living example that it can be done, and it can be done in the right way.

The successes they have enjoyed raising their children in the Church are made manifest in many ways. A family of 19 sitting reverently through Church meetings is just one example.

Another example is illustrated by how they work hard and how they work together to meet their everyday financial needs. Brother Abasanta works as an electrician. Sister Abasanta, with the help of her daughters, makes and sells jewelry out of their home. Together they have succeeded in providing the necessities of life for their family.

Even more important than their example in supporting their large family financially is how they teach their children to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their regular family home evenings play an essential part in the teaching of their family. Referring to their family home evenings, Brother Abasanta said, “First we discuss any problems we might have in the family and how we can become more united; then there is a spiritual thought or lesson; then we play games.”

At a recent family home evening, Brother Abasanta used the *Liahona* magazine as a tool to help him teach his children not to spend so much time watching television but instead to use that time doing something of greater worth, like homework or reading the scriptures. Over the years during family home evenings, the children have been taught to practice being reverent. Because their children have been taught to be reverent in their home, it is easier for them to demonstrate reverence at church on Sunday.

Another example of living the gospel and keeping their covenants is the priority they have given in teaching their children the importance of paying an honest and full tithing. Brother Abasanta stated: “We teach our children that the food we have is a direct result of paying tithing. When our kids have their own work, we make sure to tell them that they need to pay their

tithing. It’s hard to provide for so many children, but when I pay my tithing faithfully and honestly, it’s not hard at all. We just trust in the Lord 100 percent that if we pay an honest tithing, we’ll be able to eat daily.”

Remember that I mentioned that Brother and Sister Abasanta have 17 children. Now let me tell you about the triplets. They happen to be all boys. They happen to be 19 years old. Their names are Ammon, Omni, and Omner. Yes, you guessed it. All three are serving the Lord as faithful and hard-working full-time missionaries. Ammon is serving in the Philippines Baguio Mission, Omni is serving in the Philippines Davao Mission, and Omner is serving in the Philippines Manila Mission.

Now I do not want you to get the impression that the Abasanta family is perfect. None of us are perfect. However, by trying their best to live the commandments and keep their covenants, the Abasanta family is able to enjoy the blessings of the Lord in their lives.

### **Earn the Lord’s trust by doing His will**

Brothers and sisters, we are all looking forward to the day when we can return home to our Heavenly Father. In order to qualify for exaltation in the celestial kingdom, we must gain the trust of the Lord here on earth. We gain the trust of the Lord through earning it, and that is accomplished through our actual performance in living His gospel and keeping our covenants. In other words, we earn the trust of the Lord by doing His will.

Remember when the Lord warned Joseph Smith regarding those who “draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

Remember the admonition of James: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Actions truly do speak louder than words. In fact, actions mean much more to the Lord than words. The Lord declared in the Doctrine and Covenants, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments” (D&C 42:29).

### **Faithfully keep our promises to the Lord**

Helaman and his young stripling soldiers are an ancient illustration of the blessings that come to those who faithfully keep their promises to the Lord. The Abasanta family is a modern-day example of a family doing their best to keep their covenants and live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have made promises to the Lord. We have promised to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments (see D&C 20:77). Faithful members of the Church keep those promises.

It is my prayer today that we might all recommit ourselves to do everything in our power to earn the trust of the Lord by doing His will, by living His gospel, and by keeping our covenants, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, President Packer, Sister Dalton, and Elder Maynes.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Seventy will address us, after which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## **Elder H. Bryan Richards**

### **Remember the teachings of your father**

On January 10, 1945, I received my patriarchal blessing from my father’s mission president, John M. Knight. It was the only time I ever met him. After he pronounced my lineage, his next words—the first words of counsel in my blessing—were “Remember the teachings of your father.” That counsel has been and continues to be a great blessing in my life.

Not long after receiving my blessing, I came home from Sunday School. Our lesson had been about Joseph Smith’s First Vision, and I was wondering if it was really true. My father was leaving for a Church meeting. I stopped him and asked, “Dad, how do we really know that Joseph Smith

had that vision?” My father put his arm around me, and we sat on the sofa in our living room. There he shared with me the Prophet Joseph’s account, and my father bore his own testimony of its truthfulness. That experience with my father burns in my heart today. Since then I have never doubted the Prophet Joseph’s account of his First Vision.

Over my teenage years, I remember vividly my father’s regular study of the Book of Mormon. His love of the Book of Mormon and counsel to me to study and ponder over it were the beginning of a journey with that sacred record that is the foundation of my personal testimony today. It is a journey each of us must take.

## **Learning to love the Book of Mormon**

Others along the way helped me on my personal journey with the Book of Mormon. My first seminary teacher shared her experience as a young missionary wanting to know if the Book of Mormon was true. She told of reading King Benjamin's speech and in her mind's eye seeing King Benjamin standing on his tower and hearing him deliver that great sermon. Her testimony, accompanied by the Spirit, left a deep impression upon my mind.

I remember the summer before entering college having the chance to go to Monument Valley to work on the first high school built there for the Navajo people. As I was about to leave home, my father asked me if I was going to take my Book of Mormon. I hadn't thought to, but I paid heed to his question. I remember lying in my bunk late at night at the construction site and feeling the spirit and power of the Book of Mormon.

I remember as a young missionary in the Great Lakes Mission coming to that great knowledge and absolute testimony that the Book of Mormon was another witness of another nation that Jesus is the Christ and that this Church is true. From those experiences there burns in my heart today that divine witness of the message of the Book of Mormon, of Christ as our Savior and Redeemer, and of the Restoration of His Church in these latter days.

## **The Book of Mormon changes lives**

I want to share with you some of the great blessings the Book of Mormon can bring to us. The Book of Mormon can and does change lives. After our son John received his mission call to Japan, he said to me, "Dad, before I enter the Missionary Training Center, I am going to read the Book of Mormon twice." I said to John, "That is quite a demanding goal." I felt his resolve and made the decision to follow

his example. I began reading early each morning. A few days later when I came home from work, John said to me, "I caught up with you today." I asked, "What do you mean?" His response: "I caught up to where you are in the Book of Mormon. You left it open on your desk." The next morning after my reading, I felt inspired to turn about 150 pages past where I was. I left my Book of Mormon open where he could not miss it and went to work. After a meeting that morning, I checked my voice mail. The very first message said, "Yeah, sure, Dad!"

Why this story? As I watched my son read from the Book of Mormon, I began to see a special change in his life as he prepared to enter the Missionary Training Center. That experience has anchored my son to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I recall an experience with a zone leader in England who came to me during the lunch break at zone conference. He said, "We are teaching a lady who is blind and nearly deaf. She wants to know if the Book of Mormon is true. What shall we do?" I did not have an answer at that moment, but I said, "I will let you know after our conference." During the afternoon session I had the distinct impression come as to how to help her. After the meeting I said to the zone leader, "Have this sister hold her copy of the Book of Mormon and turn its pages very slowly. When she has done this, have her ask if it is true." Though she could not read nor hear the words, she felt the spirit and power of the Book of Mormon, and it changed her life.

## **Three invitations to feel the book's power**

I have come to love the message of the Book of Mormon. To help each of you feel the power and spirit of the Book of Mormon and, I hope, to help you along your journey, may I give to you three invitations?

*Learn what the stripling warriors were taught*

First, I'd like to refer to the story of Helaman and his 2,060 stripling warriors:

"And as the remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted.

"Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them. . . .

"And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army. . . . And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe" (Alma 57:20–21, 26).

If I were to ask you who it was that taught these great young warriors, all of you would know the answer—their mothers. My first invitation to you is to find out what their mothers taught them.

*Learn of the word and plant it in your heart*

Second, we are familiar with Alma's teaching on faith, challenging the people:

"Behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you. . . .

"Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed. . . .

"Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away" (Alma 32:27–28, 32).

My second invitation to you is to discover specifically what the word, or seed, is and plant it in your heart. You will have to go to Alma, chapter 33 to find it. When you do, your faith will take on a whole new dimension.

*Learn what Helaman taught, then teach it*

Third, if you were going to teach your children three great truths that you would want them to remember, what would they be? Helaman asked his sons Lehi and Nephi to remember three great truths "that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, . . . that ye may have that precious gift of eternal life" (Helaman 5:8). My third invitation to you is to find out what Helaman asked his sons to remember and then to teach those things to your children. I'll help you this much. Read and ponder Helaman, chapter 5.

**Why opposition to the Book of Mormon?**

Why is it that tremendous opposition was directed at the Book of Mormon even before its translation and has continued even until today? In this regard, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"What is it about some words on a printed page—all of which are clean and uplifting and pertain to historical and doctrinal matters—that arouses such violent antagonisms? . . . Why do men oppose the Book of Mormon? For precisely the same reason they oppose Joseph Smith" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 459, 461).

The reason Satan desperately fights the Book of Mormon is found in the last two paragraphs of the introduction to that book:

"We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who



pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See *Moroni 10:3–5*.)”

Now listen carefully:

“Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah.”

The reason Satan has fought and continues to fight against the Book of Mormon is because of those three divine truths. He does not want us to come to that sacred knowledge.

## A witness of Jesus Christ

“Remember the teachings of your father.” I will ever be grateful for my father. Though he has been gone for nearly 30 years, his teachings continue to live in my heart. I am grateful that for a season of my life I have the privilege of being an especial witness of Christ. Because of the Book of Mormon, its message, and the divine witness I have received, I can leave you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father in the flesh. He finished the work of the infinite and eternal Atonement. Christ will come again and rule over us as Lord of lords and King of kings. Of Him and of this work, I leave you my solemn witness, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop H. David Burton

Sister Burton and I were interviewed prior to our marriage by Elder Richards’s father. We know of what Elder Richards has spoken in this session of conference.

At a recent stake conference, a young lady came up to me at the conclusion. As we were shaking hands, she said, “Bishop, you could improve your general conference talks by smiling.” I wanted to tell her about fear and smiling, but I didn’t have time. But I’ll try and hope for the best.

## A desire for more

At the conclusion of every general conference, I experience a longing for more—more of the serenity of the occasion, more of the companionship of the Spirit, more of the nurturing that has brightened and blessed my soul.

The current conventional wisdom is that more is better and less is usually undesirable. For some, the pursuit to acquire more of this world’s goods and services

has become a passion. For others, more of this world’s wealth is necessary just to sustain life or raise living standards to a minimum level. The unbridled desire for more often has tragic consequences. For example, President Boyd K. Packer reminded us:

“We could be like a father determined to provide everything for his family. He devotes every energy to that end and succeeds; only then does he discover that what they needed most—to be together as a family—has been neglected. And he reaps sorrow in place of contentment” (in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1998, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 22).

## Struggles to avoid the pitfalls of “more”

Parents who have been successful in acquiring more often have a difficult time saying no to the demands of overindulged children. Their children run the risk of not learning important values like hard work,

delayed gratification, honesty, and compassion. Affluent parents can and do raise well-adjusted, loving, and value-centered children, but the struggle to set limits, make do with less, and avoid the pitfalls of “more, more, more” has never been more difficult. It is hard to say no to more when you can afford to say yes.

Parents are rightfully anxious about the future. It is difficult to say no to more sports equipment, electronics, lessons, clothes, team participation, et cetera, when parents believe more will help children thrive in an increasingly competitive world. Young people seem to want more, partly because there is infinitely more to catch their eye. The American Academy of Pediatrics estimated that American children see more than 40,000 commercials a year.

Fewer and fewer parents ask their children to do chores around the house because they think they are already overwhelmed by social and academic pressures. But children who are devoid of responsibilities risk never learning that every individual can be of service and that life has meaning beyond their own happiness.

### When “more” is too much

In her book *My Grandfather's Blessings*, Dr. Rachel Remen tells of becoming good friends with a couple and their young son, Kenny. When she visited, she would sit on the floor with Kenny and play with his two Hot Wheels cars. Sometimes she would have the one without a fender and he had the one with a door missing and sometimes vice versa. He loved those cars!

When a gas station chain offered a Hot Wheels car with every fill-up, she recruited the staff at her clinic to go to that particular station and collect the cars. As soon as she had all of the models, she wrapped them in a big box to take to Kenny. She hoped she wouldn't offend his

parents, who lived quite meagerly. Kenny excitedly opened the big box and took out the cars one by one. They filled the windowsills and even extended to the floor. What a collection! Later, while visiting the family, Rachel noticed Kenny just staring out the window. When she asked Kenny, “What's the matter? Don't you like your new cars?” he looked down sheepishly. “I'm sorry, Rachel. I guess I just don't know how to love so many Hot Wheels.” (See “Owning” [2000], 60–61.)

We have all heard children, after they have opened many Christmas or birthday gifts, say, “Isn't there more?” With all the challenges present in this “more generation,” there remains divine counsel to teach our children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, . . . to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord, . . . [and to] observe the Sabbath day [and] keep it holy” (D&C 68:25, 28–29).

The meaning of *more* and *less* is not always crystal clear. There are times when less is in reality more and times when more can be less. For instance, less pursuit of materialism may enable more family togetherness. More indulgence of children may result in less understanding of life's important values.

### “More holiness give me”

Some aspects of life can be significantly enhanced by the notion that more is better. The sacred hymn “More Holiness Give Me” (*Hymns*, no. 131) brings to our remembrance the virtues worthy of more of our attention. Jesus Himself described what it requires to be “more, Savior, like thee.” He said, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48).

Meekness is vital to becoming more Christlike. Without it one cannot develop other important virtues. Mormon indi-



cated, “None is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart” (Moroni 7:44). Acquiring meekness is a process. We are asked to “take up [the] cross daily” (Luke 9:23). Our lifting should not be an occasional exercise. More meekness does not translate to weakness, but “it is the presentation of self in a posture of *kindness* and *gentleness*. It reflects certitude, strength, serenity; it reflects a healthy self-esteem and a genuine self-control” (Neal A. Maxwell, “Meekly Drenched in Destiny,” in *Brigham Young University 1982–83 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* [1983], 2). More meekness will allow us to be tutored by the Spirit.

The virtues expressed in “More Holiness Give Me” fall into several groups. Some are personal goals, like more holiness give me; more strivings within; more faith, gratitude, and purity; more fit for the kingdom; more purpose in prayer; and more trust in the Lord. Others center on adversity. They include patience in suffering, meekness in trial, praise for relief, strength to overcome, freedom from earth stains, and longing for home. The rest firmly anchor us to our Savior: more sense of His care; more pride in His glory; more hope in His word; more joy in His service; more tears for His sorrows; more pain at His grief; more blessed and holy; and more, Savior, like Thee. More of these virtues is better. Less is not desirable.

### **An elder’s “strivings within”**

Many experience joy in His service by teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and its Restoration and testifying of the Savior and His life, ministry, and Atonement.

A missionary district leader was wondering why Elder Parker, who was about to conclude his mission, was successful in spite of his inability to memorize the discussions. To understand, he teamed with Elder Parker to give a discussion. Elder Parker’s presentation was so disorganized

that by the end of the formal lesson, the district leader was confused and surmised that the family being taught felt the same way.

It was then that “Elder Parker leaned forward and put his hand on the arm of the family’s father. He then looked him straight in the eyes, told him how much he loved him and his family, and bore one of the most humble and powerful testimonies that the district leader had ever heard. By the time he finished, every member of the family, including the father, and both elders had tears running down their cheeks. Next, Elder Parker taught the father how to pray, and they all knelt down while the father prayed that they might receive testimonies of their own and thanked Heavenly Father for the great love that he felt. Two weeks later the whole family was baptized.”

Later, Elder Parker apologized to his district leader for not knowing the discussions. He said he struggled with memorization, even though he spent hours each day working on it. He said that he knelt in prayer before teaching each family and asked Heavenly Father to bless him when he bore his testimony so that people would feel his love and the Spirit and know they were being taught the truth (see Allan K. Burgess and Max H. Molgard, “That Is the Worst Lesson I’ve Ever Heard!” in *Sunshine for the Latter-day Saint Soul* [1998], 181–83).

What can we glean from this simple story? Do you think Elder Parker felt the need to strive more to learn the discussions? Is it possible Elder Parker came to understand the need to offer prayers with a purpose? Do you suppose his prayers were laced with pleas to garner more strength to overcome? Might the inability to memorize have brought patience in suffering and meekness in trial? Did he demonstrate great faith in the Savior and trust in the Lord? Most certainly he did!

### **Volunteers feel “more joy in His service”**

Over the last seven weeks, four major hurricanes have come ashore in Florida and along the Gulf of Mexico. Most nations of the Caribbean have experienced extensive devastation. Food, clothing, and shelter are in short supply. Large masses of debris clog roads and yards. Local infrastructure has been destroyed or needs major repair.

Last week I was in Tallahassee, Florida, and received many expressions of appreciation for the aid furnished by the Church during these emergencies. Florida Governor Bush, Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings, partners like the Red Cross and Salvation Army, along with federal and state emergency personnel expressed gratitude that I pass on to you who performed the labor to ease the burden of cleanup and to those who have contributed to the Church's Humanitarian Fund. Thank you. I trust you have felt more joy and more used in His service.

Following the pattern of previous weekends at different locations, over 2,000 volunteers from all over the southeastern United States gathered in Pensacola, Florida, last weekend to help with the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan. They rolled out their sleeping bags on meetinghouse floors, in other churches, and in members' homes. They responded to thousands of work orders to assist wherever they were needed. Missionaries participated by covering the

roof of the local Methodist church with the ever-present blue tarps. First responders, the firemen and the policemen, expressed appreciation that the Latter-day Saints had been assigned to help their families in their absence.

All of this was accomplished at the same time Hurricane Jeanne was coming ashore after causing much distress in Haiti and other Caribbean locations. Thanks again to those of you who give of your means and those whose hands have lightened the load of so many. I salute you for your desire to be more blessed and holy and more like the Savior. This weekend 2,500 will be helping with the aftermath of Hurricane Jeanne.

### **Seek “more” of eternal virtues**

In discussing our various longings for more, I'm not suggesting we adopt Scrooge as a role model for good parenting. I am suggesting that it is important for families and individuals to aggressively seek more of the virtues which go beyond this mortal life. A prayerful, conservative approach is the key to successfully living in an affluent society and building the qualities that come from waiting, sharing, saving, working hard, and making do with what we have. May we be blessed with the desire and the ability to understand when more is really less and when more is better. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Press on despite difficulties, sorrows**

I have lived long enough to experience firsthand many of the challenges of life. I have known exceptional people who have endured severe trials, while others, at least on the surface, seem to have lived charmed lives.

Often those who struggle with adversity ask the question “Why did this happen to me?” They spend sleepless nights wondering why they feel so lonely, sick, discouraged, oppressed, or brokenhearted.

The question “Why me?” can be a difficult one to answer and often leads to frustration and despair. There is a better

question to ask ourselves. That question is “What could I learn from this experience?”

The way we answer that question may determine the quality of our lives not only on this earth but also in the eternities to come. Though our trials are diverse, there is one thing the Lord expects of us no matter our difficulties and sorrows: He expects us to press on.

### **The doctrine of enduring to the end**

The gospel of Jesus Christ includes enduring to the end as one of its bedrock doctrines. Jesus taught, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”<sup>1</sup> And “if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”<sup>2</sup> Some think of enduring to the end as simply suffering through challenges. But it is so much more than that—it is the process of coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him.

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi taught: “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

Enduring to the end is the doctrine of continuing on the path leading to eternal life after one has entered into the path through faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. Enduring to the end requires our whole heart—or, as the Book of Mormon prophet Amaleki taught, we must “come unto him, and offer [our] whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth [we] will be saved.”<sup>4</sup>

Enduring to the end means that we have planted our lives firmly on gospel soil, staying in the mainstream of the Church, humbly serving our fellowmen,

living Christlike lives, and keeping our covenants. Those who endure are balanced, consistent, humble, constantly improving, and without guile. Their testimonies are not based on worldly reasons—they are based on truth, knowledge, experience, and the Spirit.

### **The parable of the sower**

The Lord Jesus Christ uses the simple parable of the sower to teach the doctrine of enduring to the end.

“The sower soweth the word.

“And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

“And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.

“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

“And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.”<sup>5</sup>

This parable describes the types of soil onto which seeds of truth are sown and nourished. Each type of soil represents our degree of commitment and ability to endure.

The first type of soil, that of the “way side,” represents those who hear the gospel but never give the truth a chance to take root.

The second type of soil, “stony ground,” represents those in the Church who, at the first sign of sacrifice or trial, run away offended, not willing to pay the price.

The third type of soil, “sown among thorns,” represents some members of the Church who are distracted and obsessed by the cares, riches, and lusts of the world.

Finally, those on “good ground” are those members of the Church whose lives reflect their discipleship to the Master, whose roots go deep into gospel soil, and thereby produce abundant fruit.

### Three obstacles to endurance

In the parable of the sower, the Savior identifies three obstacles to endurance which can canker our souls and stop our eternal progress.

The first obstacle of endurance, “the cares of the world,” is essentially pride.<sup>6</sup> Pride rears its ugly head in so many ways that are destructive. For example, intellectual pride is very prevalent in our day. Some people exalt themselves above God and His anointed servants because of their learning and scholarly achievements. We must never allow our intellect to take priority over our spirit. Our intellect can feed our spirit and our spirit can feed our intellect, but if we allow our intellect to take precedence over our spirit, we will stumble, find fault, and may even lose our testimonies.

Knowledge is very important and one of the few things that accompanies us into the next life.<sup>7</sup> We should always be learning. However, we must be careful not to set aside our faith in the process because faith actually enhances our ability to learn.

The second obstacle to endurance is “the deceitfulness of riches.” We should end our fixation on wealth. It is only a means to an end, which end should ultimately be the building up of the kingdom of God. I feel that some are so concerned

about the type of car they drive, the expensive clothes they wear, or the size of their house in comparison to others that they lose sight of the weightier matters.<sup>8</sup> We must be careful in our daily lives that we do not allow the things of this world to take precedence over spiritual things.

The third obstacle to endurance mentioned by the Savior is “the lusts of other [things].” The plague of pornography is swirling about us as never before. Pornography brings a vicious wake of immorality, broken homes, and broken lives. Pornography will sap spiritual strength to endure. Pornography is much like quicksand. You can become so easily trapped and overcome as soon as you step into it that you do not realize the severe danger. Most likely you will need assistance to get out of the quicksand of pornography. But how much better it is never to step into it. I plead with you to be careful and cautious.

### Enduring to the end is a principle for all

A few weeks before President Heber J. Grant passed away, one of the Brethren went to visit him in his home. Before the man left, President Grant prayed, “O God, bless me that I shall not lose my testimony and keep faithful to the end!”<sup>9</sup> Can you imagine President Grant, one of the great prophets of the Restoration, the President of the Church for nearly 27 years, praying that he would keep faithful to the end?

No one is immune from Satan’s influence and temptations. Do not be so proud to think that you are beyond the adversary’s influence. Be watchful that you do not fall prey to his deceptions. Stay close to the Lord through daily scripture study and daily prayer. We cannot afford to sit back and take our salvation for granted. We must be anxiously engaged our whole lives.<sup>10</sup> These words of President Brigham Young motivate and remind us that we can never give up the fight to endure:

“The men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom, will find that they must battle every day [for this sacred goal].”<sup>11</sup>

### **Strength to endure**

I know that there are many who suffer heartbreak, loneliness, pain, and setback. These experiences are a necessary part of the human experience. However, please do not lose hope in the Savior and His love for you. It is constant. He promised that He would not leave us comfortless.<sup>12</sup>

When we face challenges in our lives, we are comforted by the words of the Lord in the 58th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

“For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.”<sup>13</sup>

### *Warren Johnson presses on despite trials*

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we must press on and eventually become more like the Lord in the process. We all know those who have faced great trials in life and have endured faithfully. One inspiring example is from an early Saint of the 19th century, Warren M. Johnson. He was assigned by Church leaders to operate Lee’s Ferry, an important crossing over the Colorado River in the desert of northern Arizona. Brother Johnson endured great challenges yet remained faithful his entire life. Listen to Brother Johnson explain his family tragedy in a letter to President Wilford Woodruff:

“In May 1891 a family . . . came [to Lee’s Ferry] from Richfield Utah, where they . . . spent the winter visiting friends. At Panguitch they buried a child, . . . with-

out [cleaning] the wagon or themselves. . . . They came to our house, and remained overnight, mingling with my little children. . . .

“We knew nothing of the nature of the disease [diphtheria], but had faith in God, as we were here on a very hard mission, and had tried as hard as we knew how to obey the [commandments] . . . that our children would be spared. But alas, in four and a half days [the oldest boy died] in my arms. Two more were taken down with the disease and we fasted and prayed as much as we thought it wisdom as we had many duties to perform here. We fasted [for] twenty-four hours and once I fasted [for] forty hours, but to no avail, for both my little girls died also. About a week after their death my fifteen year old daughter Melinda was [also] stricken down and we did all we could for her but she [soon] followed the others. . . . Three of my dear girls and one boy [have] been taken from us, and the end is not yet. My oldest girl nineteen years old is now prostrate [from] the disease, and we are fasting and praying in her behalf today. . . . I would ask for your faith and prayers in our behalf however. What have we done that the Lord has left us, and what can we do to gain his favor again[?]”

A short time later, Brother Johnson wrote a local leader and friend, expressing his faith to press on:

“It is the hardest trial of my life, but I set out for salvation and am determined that . . . through the help of Heavenly Father that I [would] hold fast to the iron rod no matter what troubles [came] upon me. I have not slackened in the performance of my duties, and hope and trust that I shall have the faith and prayers of my brethren, that I can live so as to receive the blessings.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Three attributes to foster endurance*

Though heavy trials of Brother Johnson can help us to face our own challenges,

may I suggest three attributes to foster endurance in our day.

First, testimony. Testimony gives us the eternal perspective necessary to see past the trials or challenges we will inevitably face. Remember what Heber C. Kimball prophesied:

“The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. . . .

“ . . . If you don’t have it you will not stand; therefore seek for the testimony of Jesus and cleave to it, that when the trying time comes you may not stumble and fall.”<sup>15</sup>

Second, humility. Humility is the recognition and attitude that one must rely on the Lord’s assistance to make it through this life. We cannot endure to the end on our own strength. Without Him, we are nothing.<sup>16</sup>

Third, repentance. The glorious gift of repentance allows us to return to the path with a new heart, giving us the strength to endure on the path leading to eternal life. The sacrament thus becomes a key component of our endurance in this life. The sacrament provides a precious weekly opportunity to renew our baptismal covenants and repent and evaluate our progress toward exaltation.

### Have the faith and courage to press on

We are sons and daughters of the Eternal God, with the potential to be joint-heirs with Christ.<sup>17</sup> Knowing who we are, we should never give up the goal of achieving our eternal destiny.

I testify that in the eternities, as we look back upon our little span of existence here on this earth, we will lift our voices and rejoice that, in spite of the difficulties we encountered, we had the wisdom, the faith, and the courage to endure and press on.

That we may do so this day and forever is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 24:13.
2. John 8:31.
3. 2 Nephi 31:20.
4. Omni 1:26.
5. Mark 4:14–20.
6. See Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 3–7; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–7.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
8. See Matthew 23:23.
9. Quoted by John Longden, in Conference Report, Oct. 1958, 70.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.
11. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 392.
12. See John 14:18.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 58:3–4.
14. Quoted in Jay A. Parry and others, eds., *Best-Loved Stories of the LDS People*, 3 vols. (1997–2000), 3:107–8.
15. In Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 450.
16. See John 15:5.
17. See Romans 8:17.

### President Monson

Thank you, Elder Richards, Bishop Burton, and Elder Wirthlin, for those inspiring messages.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Primary Choir from the stakes of West Jordan, Utah—we still see those smiling faces, taught to sing—and the men of the Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square. We likewise thank their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend our gratitude to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following Pres-



ident Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again." The benediction will then be of-

fered by Elder Quentin S. Cook of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **Leave conference with stronger faith**

We have experienced another great conference. What remarkable meetings these are. What a great purpose they serve. We gather together in a spirit of worship and with a desire to learn. We renew our relationships as members of this large family of Latter-day Saints who live in many lands, who speak a variety of languages, who come out of difficult cultures, who even look different. And we recognize that we are all one, each a son or daughter of our Father in Heaven.

In a few minutes this great Conference Center in Salt Lake City will be emptied. The lights will be dimmed and the doors locked. It will be so with thousands of other halls across this broad world. We shall return to our homes, greatly enriched I hope. Our faith will have been strengthened, our resolve fortified. Where we have felt defeated and beaten, I hope that a new courage has come into our lives. Where we have been wayward and indifferent, I hope that a spirit of repentance has taken hold of us. Where we have been unkind or mean and selfish, I hope that we have determined that we will change. All who walk in faith will have had that faith strengthened.

Today is Monday in the Far East. Tomorrow is Monday in the Western Hemisphere and in Europe. It is a time that we have designated as family home evening. On that occasion I hope that fathers and mothers will gather their children about them and talk of some of the things they have heard in this conference. I would wish they might even write down some of

these things, reflect on them, and remember them.

### **Temple attendance sanctifies us**

Now as we conclude I wish to remind you of another matter. I would hope that we might go to the house of the Lord a little more frequently. As I indicated at the opening session, we have done all that we know how to do to bring temples closer to our people. There are still many who have to travel long distances. I hope they will continue to make that effort until such time as a temple is justified in their midst.

Most of our temples could be much busier than they are. In this noisy, bustling, competitive world, what a privilege it is to have a sacred house where we may experience the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of the Lord. The element of selfishness crowds in upon us constantly. We need to overcome it, and there is no better way than to go to the house of the Lord and there serve in a vicarious relationship in behalf of those who are beyond the veil of death. What a remarkable thing this is. In most cases we do not know those for whom we work. We expect no thanks. We have no assurance that they will accept that which we offer. But we go, and in that process we attain to a state that comes of no other effort. We literally become saviors on Mount Zion. What does this mean? Just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as

saviors to those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth.

And so, my brothers and sisters, I encourage you to take greater advantage of this blessed privilege. It will refine your natures. It will peel off the selfish shell in which most of us live. It will literally bring a sanctifying element into our lives and make us better men and better women.

Every temple, large or small, has its beautiful celestial room. This room was created to represent the celestial kingdom. When the Mesa Arizona Temple was extensively renovated some years ago and was opened for public tours, one visitor described the celestial room as God's living room. So it well might be. It is our privilege, unique and exclusive, while dressed in white, to sit at the conclusion of our ordinance work in the beautiful celestial room and ponder, meditate, and silently pray.

Here we can reflect on the great goodness of the Lord to us. Here we can reflect on the great plan of happiness which our Father has outlined for His children. And

so I urge you, my brothers and sisters, to do it while you have strength to do it. I know that when you get old, it becomes extremely difficult to get up and down. But what a great blessing it is.

### **Expression of love and testimony**

Now, my brothers and sisters, I express to you again my love. May heaven smile upon you. This work is true. Never doubt it. God, our Eternal Father, lives. Jesus is our Redeemer, our Lord, the Son of the living God. Joseph was a prophet, the Book of Mormon is of divine origin, and this is God's holy work in the earth. I leave you my witness, my love, my blessing as we separate to go to our homes. May God be with you till we meet again is my humble prayer, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Quentin S. Cook offered the benediction.

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## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC**

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah. Jane Knudsen Poulsen directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by the men of the Tabernacle

Choir, joined by members of the Orchestra at Temple Square. Mack Wilberg and Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**Brook P. Hales**  
Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-fifth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 2 and 3, 2005**





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# Report of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 2 and 3, 2005. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 2, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, John H. Groberg, and Robert C. Oaks

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamin De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Richard G. Hinckley, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Dennis E. Simmons, Lowell M. Snow, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2005. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems, for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make these proceedings available by Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice" and will now favor us with "Redeemer of Israel." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son."

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Remembering Pope John Paul II

My beloved brothers and sisters, on behalf of the worldwide membership of this Church, I extend to our Catholic neighbors and friends our heartfelt sympathy at this time of great sorrow. Pope John Paul II has worked tirelessly to advance the cause of Christianity, to lift the burdens of the poor, and to speak fearlessly in behalf

of moral values and human dignity. He will be greatly missed, particularly by the very many who have looked to him for leadership.

### Accounting of stewardship for past 10 years

Now, my brothers and sisters, I think it appropriate that in opening this conference I give a few words of accountability

concerning our stewardship during the past 10 years.

On March 12, 1995, there was bestowed upon us the high and sacred responsibility of the Presidency.

In the conference that followed I made this statement:

“Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships—in other words, to become more Christlike” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 95; *Ensign*, May 1995, 71).

You must be the judge of how far we have come in realizing the fulfillment of that invitation given 10 years ago.

### **A remarkable flowering of the work**

This past decade has been a wonderful season in the history of the Church. There has been a remarkable flowering of the work. There have been many meaningful accomplishments.

This forward thrust is not the work of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventy, or the Presiding Bishopric alone. It is the result of the faith, the prayers, the efforts, the dedicated service of every member of a stake presidency or high council; of every bishopric and quorum presidency; of every auxiliary presidency; and of every faithful, active member of the Church across the world.

To each of you, wherever you may be, I express the feelings of my heart and thank you for your great and dedicated service. What wonderful people you are.

The majesty and the wonder of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith shine today with resplendent luster.

### **Great growth of the Church**

As we stand on the summit of these years and look back, we must never feel arrogant or proud, but we can feel humbly grateful for what has been accomplished in a variety of undertakings.

For instance, the Church has grown across the world until our membership outside of North America exceeds that in North America. We have become a great international family scattered through 160 nations.

In these past 10 years, more than 500 new stakes have been created and more than 4,000 new wards and branches. Three million new members have been added.

The enrollment in our education system has doubled, increasing by approximately 200,000. For the most part, our youth are stronger and more faithful.

The Perpetual Education Fund has been created. We started with nothing but hope and faith. Today nearly 18,000 young people are being assisted. They live in 27 different nations. They are being trained and are moving out of the slough of poverty in which they and their forebears have lived for generations. Their skills are being refined and their earnings multiplied.

We have greatly increased the number of temples. In 1995 there were 47. Today there are 119, with three more to be dedicated this year.

The Book of Mormon was had in 87 languages in 1995. Today it is available in 106 languages.

Fifty-one million copies of the Book of Mormon have been distributed during these past 10 years.

We have constructed literally thousands of buildings across the earth. They are of a better quality and more suitable to our needs than those previously built.

In addition, we have constructed this remarkable hall from which we speak today, the unique and beautiful Conference Center here in Salt Lake City.

With all of this and much more, we have reached out across the earth to assist those in distress and need wherever they may be. In the last 10 years we have supplied in cash and commodities hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to those not of our faith.

We have traveled the earth bearing witness of this, the work of the Almighty. During these same years I personally have traveled nearly a million miles, visiting some 70 countries. My beloved companion traveled with me until a year ago, when she passed away on the 6th of April. It has been lonely since then.

### **A marvelous future**

Our hope concerning the future is great and our faith is strong. We know that we have scarcely scratched the surface of that which will come to pass in the years that lie ahead.

I am now in my 95th year. I never dreamed that I would live this long. My life reminds me of a sign that hung by a rusty staple to a run-down barbed-wire fence in Texas. It read:

Burned out by drought,  
Drowned out by flud waters,  
Et out by jackrabbits,  
Sold out by sheriff,  
Still here!

I hope to have the privilege of associating with you, my beloved friends and co-workers, for as long as the Lord permits. And I hope that service will be acceptable.

### **Stand a little taller**

Our foundation is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The authority of the holy priesthood is here, restored under the hands of those who received it directly from our Lord. The curtains have been parted, and the God of heaven and His Beloved Son have spoken to the boy prophet Joseph in opening this last and final dispensation.

Our burden in going forward is tremendous. But our opportunity is glorious.

I now repeat what I said 10 years ago: let us “stand a little taller, . . . lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

This, my brothers and sisters, is my invitation to you this morning. I extend my love, my blessing, and my gratitude as we open this great conference. May the Spirit of the Lord direct all that occurs is my humble prayer, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son.”

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### **President Faust**

We shall now hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric will address us. The choir and congregation will then sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

We shall then be pleased to hear from Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president. Following her remarks, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. The choir will then sing “Teach Me to Walk in the Light.”

## President Boyd K. Packer

### The keystone of our religion

Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (Book of Mormon introduction; see also *History of the Church*, 4:461).

The first edition of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ came off the press in Palmyra, New York, in March of 1830. Joseph Smith—an uneducated country boy—had just passed his 24th birthday. The year before he had spent a total of about 65 days translating the plates. Almost half of it was after he had received the priesthood. The printing had taken seven months.

### Receiving a spiritual witness of the book

When I first read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover, I read the promise that if I “would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if [the things I had read were] true; and if [I would] ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he [would] manifest the truth of it unto [me], by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). I tried to follow those instructions as I understood them.

If I expected a glorious manifestation to come at once as an overpowering experience, it did not happen. Nevertheless, it felt good, and I began to believe.

The next verse has an even greater promise: “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of *all* things” (Moroni 10:5; italics added). I did not know how the Holy Ghost worked, even though the Book of Mormon explains it a number of times in a number of ways.

I studied and learned that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost;

wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.” It said, as well, that one is to “feast upon the words of Christ,” with the promise that “the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

And it says plainly that “if ye cannot understand . . . it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock” (2 Nephi 32:4).

I also read, “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). I had already done that when I was confirmed a member of the Church by the “laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4).

If I had expected in my little-boy innocence some special spiritual experience, it had not happened. Over the years as I listened to sermons and lessons and read in the Book of Mormon, I began to understand.

Nephi had been very badly treated by his brothers and reminded them that an angel had spoken unto them, “but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words” (1 Nephi 17:45). When I understood that the Holy Ghost could communicate through our feelings, I understood why the words of Christ, whether from the New Testament or the Book of Mormon or the other scriptures, carried such a good feeling. In time I found that the scriptures had answers to things I needed to know.

### Learning to liken the scriptures

I read, “Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto *all* men” (2 Nephi 11:8; italics added; see also 1 Nephi 19:23–24; 2 Nephi 6:5; 11:2). I took that to mean that the scriptures are likened to me personally, and that is true of everyone else.

When a verse I had passed over several times took on personal meaning, I thought whoever wrote that verse had a deep and



mature understanding of my life and how I felt.

For example, I read that the prophet Lehi partook of the fruit of the tree of life and said, “Wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit” (1 Nephi 8:12). I had read that more than once. It did not mean much to me.

The prophet Nephi also said that he had written “the things of my soul . . . for the learning and the profit of my children” (2 Nephi 4:15). I had read that before, and it did not mean all that much to me either. But later when we had children, I understood that both Lehi and Nephi felt just as deeply about their children as we feel about our children and grandchildren.

### **Plain and precious insights**

I found these scriptures to be plain and precious. I wondered how young Joseph Smith could have such insights. The fact is I do not believe he had such penetrating insights. He did not have to have them. He just translated what was written on the plates.

Such plain and precious insights are everywhere in the Book of Mormon. They reflect a depth of wisdom and experience that is certainly not characteristic of a 23-year-old.

I learned that anyone, anywhere, could read in the Book of Mormon and receive inspiration.

Some insights came after reading a second, even a third time and seemed to be “likened” to what I faced in everyday life.

#### *Insight about war and defending the family*

I mention another plain and precious insight that did not come with the first reading in the Book of Mormon. When I was 18 years old, I was inducted into the military. While I had no reason to wonder

about it before, I became very concerned if it was right for me to go to war. In time I found my answer in the Book of Mormon:

“They [the Nephites] were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.

“And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God; for the Lord had said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies.

“And again, the Lord has said that: Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed. Therefore for this cause were the Nephites contending with the Lamanites, to defend themselves, and their families, and their lands, their country, and their rights, and their religion” (Alma 43:45–47).

Knowing this, I could serve willingly and with honor.

#### *Insight about walking by faith*

Another example: We once had a major decision to make. When our prayers left us uncertain, I went to see Elder Harold B. Lee. He counseled us to proceed. Sensing that I was still very unsettled, he said, “The problem with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.” Then he quoted this verse from the Book of Mormon: “Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6).

He added, “You must learn to walk a few steps ahead into the darkness, and then the light will turn on and go before you.” That was a life-changing experience from one verse in the Book of Mormon.

#### *Insight about weak things becoming strong*

Haven’t you felt at times like Nephi, who said, “I was led by the Spirit, not



knowing beforehand the things which I should do"? (1 Nephi 4:6). Haven't you at times felt very weak?

Moroni felt weak and afraid that they "shall mock at our words [because of our weakness].

"... The Lord spake unto [him], saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for *all* men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:25–27; italics added).

Life moves all too fast. When you feel weak, discouraged, depressed, or afraid, open the Book of Mormon and read. Do not let too much time pass before reading a verse, a thought, or a chapter.

### **Testimony of the book may come gradually**

My experience has been that a testimony does not burst upon us suddenly. Rather, it grows, as Alma said, from a seed of faith. "It will strengthen your faith: for ye will say I know that this is a good seed; for behold it sprouteth and beginneth to grow" (Alma 32:30). If you nourish it, it will grow; and if you do not nourish it, it will wither (see Alma 32:37–41).

Do not be disappointed if you have read and reread and yet have not received a powerful witness. You may be somewhat like the disciples spoken of in the Book of Mormon who were filled with the power of God in great glory "and they knew it not" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Do the best you can. Think of this verse: "See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he

should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order" (Mosiah 4:27).

### **Miracles have not ceased**

The spiritual gifts described in the Book of Mormon are present in the Church today—promptings, impressions, revelations, dreams, visions, visitations, miracles. You can be sure that the Lord can, and at times does, manifest Himself with power and great glory. Miracles can occur.

Mormon said:

"Has the day of miracles ceased?

"Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

"Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought" (Moroni 7:35–37).

Pray always—alone and with your family. Answers will come in many ways.

### **The Book of Mormon gives protection**

A few words or a phrase in a verse, such as "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10), will tell you of the reality of the evil one and how he works.

"For after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him" (Moroni 7:17).

Generations of the prophets taught the doctrines of the everlasting gospel to protect "the peaceable followers of Christ" (Moroni 7:3).

Mormon saw our day. He issued this warning: "Except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him" (Helaman 12:3).

## Naming the Lord's Church

When the Lord visited the Nephites, they asked what they should “call this church; for there [were] disputations among the people concerning this matter.

“... The Lord said unto them: ... why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing?

“Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:3–5).

## Central purpose is to testify of Christ

The central purpose of the Book of Mormon is its testament of Jesus Christ. Of more than 6,000 verses in the Book of Mormon, far more than half refer directly to Him.

So, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

## An endless treasure of wisdom

The Book of Mormon is an endless treasure of wisdom and inspiration, of counsel and correction, “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest [among us]” (D&C 89:3). At once it is rich in nourishment for the most learned if they will humble themselves (see 2 Nephi 9:28–29).

From the Book of Mormon we learn about:

The plan of salvation, or “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8; see also Alma 42:5, 12, 30).

The doctrine of Christ and the Atonement (see 2 Nephi 31:2–21; 32:1–6; 3 Nephi 11:31–40; 27:13–21).

Why death is necessary (see 2 Nephi 9:4–6; Mosiah 16:8–9; Alma 12:25–27).

Life after death in the spirit world (see Alma 40:11–14).

The workings of the evil one (see 2 Nephi 2:27; Alma 28:13; 3 Nephi 2:2).

The order of the priesthood (see Mosiah 29:42; Alma 4:20; 5:3, 44; Alma 13:1–10).

Sacramental prayers (see Moroni 4:3; 5:2).

A sure way to judge between good and evil (see Moroni 7:16).

How to retain a remission of your sins (see Mosiah 4:26).

Clear, prophetic warnings and many, many other things pertaining to the redemption of man and to our lives. All are parts of the fulness of the gospel (see D&C 20:9).

The Book of Mormon confirms the teachings of the Old Testament. It confirms the teachings of the New Testament. It restores “many plain and precious things” (1 Nephi 13:28) lost or taken from them (see also 1 Nephi 13:20–42; 14:23). It is in truth another testament of Jesus Christ.

## A powerful defense of the Prophet Joseph

This year we celebrate the 175th anniversary of the organization of the Church and the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In the Church, much will be written and said to honor him.

As usual there will be much said and written to discredit him. There always were, are now, and ever will be those who stir into 200-year-old dust, hoping to find something Joseph is alleged to have said or done in order to demean him.

The revelations tell us of “those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them” (D&C 121:16). They face very stern penalties indeed.

We do not have to defend the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ will defend him for us. Those who reject Joseph Smith as a prophet and revelator are left to find some other explanation for the Book of Mormon; and for the second powerful defense, the Doctrine and Covenants; and

a third, the Pearl of Great Price. Published in combination, these scriptures form an unshakable testament that Jesus is the Christ and a witness that Joseph Smith is a prophet.

And I join the millions of others who have that testimony, and bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### **A professor's excitement for the gospel**

In 1995 I was invited to give a welcome and some opening remarks at a scientific seminar in Salt Lake City on the subject of child nutrition. Ninety-six scientists from 24 countries attended. As I surveyed the audience during my remarks, I was impressed by the many nations represented, as evidenced by their dress, skin color, language, and other distinguishing features.

Three or four months later I attended a stake conference on the East Coast of the United States. As I sat on the stand in preparation for the priesthood leadership session, an African man entered the chapel and sat down by the aisle. He looked vaguely familiar, but I couldn't remember where I might have seen him. I leaned over and asked the stake president who the man was. The stake president answered, "Oh, he is not a member of the Church. He is a visiting professor from Africa teaching at a prestigious university in the area. A few months ago he attended some kind of scientific seminar in Salt Lake City. He picked up a pamphlet about the Church, which led him to read everything he could find about the Church. He now attends every meeting possible." Half in jest, the stake president then said, "I would be surprised if he were not attending Relief Society meetings."

After the priesthood leadership meeting, I reintroduced myself to the visiting professor. He affirmed his excitement for this newly discovered source of truth. He explained that his family, still in Africa, was studying with the missionaries and would be joining him in America in about four weeks, at which time they would all be baptized together.

At the conclusion of the Saturday evening adult session, this man came rushing to the podium and, thumping his chest, excitedly declared, "My heart is throbbing just like this. I can hardly contain it in my body. I don't know if I can wait the four weeks for my family to be baptized." I suggested he ought to slow down his heart and wait for his wife and children so all could be baptized together.

### **A still, small voice and a throbbing heart**

When Elijah was fleeing for his life from the wicked Phoenician princess Jezebel, the Lord directed him to a high mountain, where he had a most unusual experience. As Elijah stood upon the mount before the Lord, he felt "a great and strong wind . . . ; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11–12).

*Reasons the Church grows*

I am occasionally asked by those not of our faith why it is that our Church grows so rapidly, in both membership and activity, while other churches are reportedly declining in both. The answer to that question is simply a still, small voice and then a throbbing heart. In this busy, tumultuous, and noisy world, it is not like a wind, it is not like a fire, it is not like an earthquake; but it is a still, small, but very discernible voice, and it causes a throbbing heart. It is a quiet burning within that this is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, with all of its doctrine, priesthood, and covenants that had been lost through the many centuries of darkness and confusion. Yes, it is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that testifies of the miracle of the Restoration.

*Motivation to serve and sacrifice*

It is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that motivates millions of members to emulate the life of Jesus in word, deed, and service. It is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that motivates thousands of retired couples to serve missions, usually for 18 months or longer. They put aside the comforts of life to go into the world, serving others at their own expense and at what some would consider substantial sacrifice, often serving in remote parts of the world where a hot shower and a comfortable bed are luxuries that linger only in their memories.

It is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that causes hundreds of thousands of young men and women to leave promising professions, put off their education (sometimes leaving athletic and other scholarships), or delay romances to serve the Lord at their own expense to declare the Restoration of the gospel.

*Motivation to keep the commandments*

It is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that gives our young people the desire and courage to stand for purity, honesty, and principle, even at the expense of sometimes being ridiculed and rejected. It is a still, small voice and a throbbing heart that motivates one to joyfully keep God's commandments and share the burdens of those less fortunate. Yes, there is power in a still, small voice and a throbbing heart.

Alma had his way of asking about the spiritual condition of our hearts. He asks, "Have ye spiritually been born of God?" And then: "Have ye received his image in your countenances? *Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?*" (Alma 5:14; italics added). In other words, is your heart throbbing with a testimony of Jesus Christ?

**Three things that make a heart throb***Knowledge that Jesus is the Savior*

May I tell you just three things of many that cause my heart to throb? First, my heart throbs with the knowledge that Jesus Christ is my personal Savior and that His love for me was sufficient that He would suffer unimaginable pain and even death. My heart throbs when, in the solitude of my deep thoughts, I realize I can be cleansed, purified, and redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ. My heart throbs when I contemplate the price that was paid—the suffering incurred to spare me from similar personal suffering for my sins and transgressions.

*Restoration through Joseph Smith*

Second, my heart throbs with the knowledge that a young boy only 14 years of age went into a grove of trees—and from a simple, humble prayer the heavens

opened, God and Christ appeared, and angels descended. And thus the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored with all of its priesthood, covenants, and purity of doctrine. My heart throbs when I consider what this boy prophet endured to bring about the fulness of the restored gospel. While heavenly angels were descending, Satan's angels were also at work. The persecutions began, and like the lives of prophets of old, Joseph's life culminated in his martyrdom. Throughout all his trials and persecutions, the young prophet remained steadfast and determined.

Because of the Prophet Joseph Smith, I understand more fully the magnitude of the Atonement. Because of the Prophet Joseph, I better understand the significance of the Garden of Gethsemane—a place of great suffering as Christ assumed our personal suffering not only for our sins but also for our pains, infirmities, trials, and tragedies. I understand the infinite and eternal nature of His great and last sacrifice. I better understand the love our Savior exemplified in His last redeeming act. Because of Joseph Smith, my love and gratitude for the Savior is magnified and my worship more meaningful. Among the many hymns in our hymnbook written by W. W. Phelps is the familiar song with the words "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" ("Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27). My heart throbs as I sing that song.

Yes, because we sing with enthusiasm and gusto, "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" we sing about the Savior with even more reverence, emotion, and gratitude with the words "Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me / Enough to die for me! / Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!" ("I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193). My heart throbs because of the enlightenment the Prophet Joseph brought to my life regarding the personal effect of the Atonement of my Savior.

### *Truths revealed in the Book of Mormon*

Third, my heart throbs as I study and ponder the sacred scriptures in the Book of Mormon, as it complements the Bible and further testifies of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. Because of this sacred companion to the Bible, my understanding of Christ's doctrine is expanded; thus many of the questions left unanswered in the Bible are explained to my full satisfaction. The Book of Mormon is tangible evidence that Joseph is a prophet of God, Christ did in reality appear to him, and the gospel has been restored in its purity and its fulness.

My heart throbs just to contemplate the miracle of the Book of Mormon's existence—the laborious job of engraving on metal plates, the careful custodianship through the centuries by God's chosen, and the miraculous translation. Truly it fits the perfect definition of holy writ. Because of God's majestic love for us, He provided this evidence that we can handle, we can peruse, we can study, and we can even challenge. But, most important, God loves me enough that He will give me and anyone else who sincerely seeks a personal revelation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon—the tangible evidence of the Restoration and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet.

### **Seek a testimony of sacred truths**

In speaking of this sacred knowledge, the Book of Mormon prophet Alma testifies:

"Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?"

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many

days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation" (Alma 5:45–46).

Like Alma of old, each of us, members and sincere investigators alike, can know with surety that these things are true. It is our great privilege to know. It is more than a privilege; it is our responsibility to know. It is our enormous loss to not know when such a privilege is given. The Lord has said, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). The Book of Mormon

prophet Jacob says, "Come with full purpose of heart" (Jacob 6:5).

We do not need to rely upon intellect or our physical senses. We study, we pray, and, like Alma of old, we may even fast, and then comes a still, small voice and a throbbing heart. Imagine a personal revelation from God that these things are true. The very thought of it makes my heart throb. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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## Sister Coleen K. Menlove

### **All thy children shall be taught of the Lord**

Recent disasters around the world have touched our hearts. The suffering children, who are innocent victims, weigh particularly heavy upon us. We have seen children without family members to provide, protect, and love them. Our hearts desire to reach out and help in some way—any way that would relieve their suffering and bring hope to their lives. We are grateful for the opportunities we have to give assistance. We are encouraged by the efforts of many who are helping these children.

However, we do not need to look far to find children who live in different yet challenging circumstances. Unknowingly, we may look beyond the children in our own midst. Are we really aware of the perilous circumstances surrounding our own children? We can usually determine if their physical needs are met, but what about their spiritual needs? Do they know of the light and peace of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The scriptures teach, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."<sup>1</sup>

Children need the peace that comes from knowing they have a loving Heavenly Father, who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bring light and hope into the world. It is up to us as adults to direct children to that peace and light.

### **Helping children know what matters most**

The spiritual plight of some children in the world today is depicted in a painting by the Danish artist Carl Bloch. This painting beautifully illustrates a scriptural account found in John, chapter 5. Christ, the healer and comforter, is the focus of the painting. He is lifting a covering from a man who has had infirmities since birth. The man is waiting for the miracle of healing in the pool of Bethesda, but he has no one to assist him. As the man waits, hoping for a miracle, Christ stands in his presence with the power to heal him.

The painting includes several figures in the background, none of whom are looking directly at Christ. The Lord is in their midst, yet only one man sees Him as such. All the others appear to be going about



their daily business, oblivious to the great power of Jesus and the miracle about to occur in their presence. A young child and a woman, perhaps his mother, are in view of Jesus; yet like the others, their eyes are focused elsewhere. In the very presence of the Savior, this woman fails to direct the child to the Savior.

I wonder, would we too have missed this opportunity to come unto Christ? Are life's experiences distracting us and dulling our spiritual view so we are not focusing on that which matters most? I wonder, do we miss opportunities to learn of the Lord and feel His love? Do we miss opportunities to share with others—especially children—that which matters most, the gospel of Jesus Christ? We have all seen children and youth standing in the crowds, confused and wanting to know what matters most.

I can almost hear this child and other children crying out the words so many of us have sung, "Teach me to walk in the light." Remember the words:

Teach me to walk in the light of his love;  
Teach me to pray to my Father above;  
Teach me to know of the things that are right;  
Teach me, teach me to walk in the light.<sup>2</sup>

Are we teaching our children to know, feel, and rejoice in the beauty, power, and miracles of the gospel of Jesus Christ? President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled: "Let us nurture our children concerning Him whom we call the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us teach our children the grand saving principles of the gospel."<sup>3</sup> Children need to know that having faith in the Savior and following Him will help them receive peace in this troubled world.

### **Follow Jesus's example in teaching children**

How do we teach our children? We can follow the example of the Savior. In the Book of Mormon we read of the resur-

rected Savior's appearance to those in the Western Hemisphere. While teaching the people, He gathered the children to Him. He knelt and prayed with the children and for them. He blessed the children one by one. He felt the joy of their presence and opened the heavens that the children might be taught from on high.

As you include children at your family dinner table, as you involve them in daily family prayer and scripture study and in family home evening, you are following the example of the Savior by loving and teaching them. As you do this, let them know that together your family is striving to keep the commandments and to be worthy to be an eternal family. It may be during the informal one-on-one times that the Spirit will prompt us to ask just the right questions or to say just the right thing to help our children know and feel the light of the Lord. If we make the opportunities, the Spirit will guide us.

We have wonderful, capable children in our midst. We can help them find peace in this life and in the life to come.

### **Be filled with light to resist darkness**

Children need to experience the Light of Christ so they can choose the light and resist the darkness. Moses had a miraculous experience when he was transfigured and beheld God with his spiritual eyes. After Moses had been taught of God and had beheld His glory and work, Satan came to Moses with darkness and confusion. Because Moses had experienced the light and glory of God, he knew the difference. He stood boldly against Satan saying, "Who art thou? For behold I am a son of God."<sup>4</sup>

Children need to be filled with the light of the gospel so when temptation comes they can say: "I know who I am. I am a child of God. I know what I am to do. I am to be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and keep the commandments." Then children can say: "I know who I can become. I can be-

come a righteous young woman,” or, “I can become a righteous young man and receive the priesthood of God.” Children filled with this knowledge and light can make the decision to reject darkness and turn to the light and peace of the gospel.

### **The gospel brings children peace**

Children who have the gospel tucked into their hearts recognize the hand of the Lord in their lives. Children know more than we sometimes suppose and can do more than we sometimes think. I have learned that children who have the light of the gospel are believing. They do not doubt. Samantha, age 11, said, “I know the gospel is true because I can feel it.” Three-year-old Benjamin said, “I know Heavenly Father hears and answers my prayers because He loves me.” Children who have the light of the gospel say, “I know the Holy Ghost is directing my life because I feel happy when I choose to follow its promptings.”

Sam is beginning to understand the feelings that come from the Holy Ghost. When his mother asked, “Who is the Holy Ghost?” he said, “It is a warm feeling inside me.” Sam also understood that when his little two-week-old brother was sick, it was the Holy Ghost encouraging him to pray for the Lord’s help.

Can you feel the peace of these children?

### **“Teach me to walk in the light”**

Teaching children requires more than desire. It requires diligence on our part. Earlier I mentioned the song “Teach Me to Walk in the Light,” written by Clara McMaster. Sister McMaster shared with me that while serving on the Primary general board, she received the assignment to write a song about teaching children. She found this an especially daunting task and prayed to know how to begin and complete this assignment.

After much effort she submitted her work, only to be told that it was not yet right. She was not told what to change, only to continue the effort until it was right. She was spiritually exhausted, not knowing how to proceed. She again sought guidance from the Lord, made changes, and submitted another edition. This process continued three times until at last she was told it was perfect and she was not to change anything.

Even though there were many times that Sister McMaster wanted to give up, she diligently worked at what she had been asked to do and what she hoped would bless the lives of children. Her inspired music has been sung by adults and children in many lands and in many languages. This song represents the desire of my heart—that all children will learn to walk in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This song begins with a plea from a child, “Teach me to walk in the light,” and ends with a commitment, “Gladly, gladly we’ll walk in the light.”<sup>5</sup>

It will take time and effort to teach children, but we must not become distracted or give up. Our children so need the fulfillment of the promise “and great shall be the peace of thy children.”<sup>6</sup> Let no child wonder if he or she is loved by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Let all children know who they are, what they are to do, and who they can become.

I am grateful to all who reach out to children, who love them and teach them that regardless of their earthly circumstances, they can feel peace in the light of the gospel and receive the promises of the Lord.

### **A message to the children**

I would like to speak especially to the children around the world. I have met some of you here and some of you in places such as Africa, the Philippines, Korea, and most recently in Ukraine and Russia. I have visited you in Primaries and even in



children's hospitals. I hope you know how much you are loved by your family, your Primary teachers, and, most importantly, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Never settle for less than the privileges and blessings God offers you. The standards you keep in your dress, your language, and your behavior are outward signs of your inward commitment to follow Heavenly Father's plan for you.

Your influence upon me is greater than you can imagine. Thank you for the joy and hope you bring into my heart and the hearts of your Primary leaders and especially your parents. Please remember to express your thanks to those who love and teach you. I know, and I want you to

know, you are a child of God, Heavenly Father loves you, and you can pray to Him anytime, anywhere. Try always to remember and follow Jesus Christ, and this will bring light and peace into your lives now and give you hope for the eternities. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 22:13.
2. "Teach Me to Walk in the Light," *Children's Songbook*, 177.
3. "Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley," *Church News*, Sept. 4, 1999, 2.
4. Moses 1:13.
5. *Children's Songbook*, 177.
6. 3 Nephi 22:13.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Reflections on Sister Nelson's passing

My dear brethren and sisters, since our last general conference, my sweetheart—my beloved wife for 59 years—passed away. While I was at home on a rare Saturday with no assignment, we had worked together. She had washed our clothing. I had helped to carry it, fold it, and put it in place. Then while we were sitting on the sofa, holding hands, enjoying a program on television, my precious Dantzel slipped peacefully into eternity. Her passing came suddenly and unexpectedly. Just four days earlier, our doctor's report at a routine checkup indicated that her laboratory tests were good. After my efforts to revive her proved fruitless, feelings of shock and sorrow overwhelmed me. My closest friend, angel mother of our 10 children, grandmother of our 56 grandchildren, had been taken from us.

Dantzel was not only a loved and loving companion. She was a teacher: by her noble example, she taught faith, virtue, obedience, and mercy. She taught me how

to listen and to love. Because of her, I know all the blessings that can come to a husband, father, and grandfather.

With deep gratitude I acknowledge the tremendous outpouring of love from dear friends across the world. Countless letters, calls, cards, and other messages have been sent. All tributes expressed loving admiration for her and sympathy for us whom she left behind. Those messages came in such large numbers that we, regretfully, were unable to respond to all of them individually. May I thank each and all for your great kindness toward us. Thank you so very, very much. Your expressions have brought much comfort through this time of heartache for our family. We really love dear Dantzel! We miss her!

From her sudden departure we can learn a very important lesson: now is the time to prepare to meet God. Tomorrow may be too late. Prophets through the ages have so declared: "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God. . . . Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance."<sup>1</sup>

### The need to prepare now

Yet many do procrastinate.<sup>2</sup> A prophet warns us: “Ye cannot say . . . that I *will* repent, that I *will* return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will . . . possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>3</sup> Another prophet adds, “He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still.”<sup>4</sup>

Great is the knowledge that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain . . . in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.”<sup>5</sup> From the Prophet Joseph Smith we also learn that “God has . . . a time . . . appointed . . . when He will bring all His subjects, who have obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, into His celestial rest. This rest<sup>6</sup> is of such perfection and glory, that man has need of a preparation before he can, according to the laws of that kingdom, enter it and enjoy its blessings. . . . God has given certain laws to the human family, which, if observed, are sufficient to prepare them to inherit this rest.”<sup>7</sup> Sister Nelson was so prepared!

### Remain faithful during trials

That glorious goal seems mighty distant if one is discouraged by worldly trouble and gloom. I remember when a friend having a difficult day exclaimed, “Oh, why was I ever born?” God’s plan answers his question. We came into this life to acquire a physical body. We may fall in love and be married. We may have children and experience the trials of mortal life. (Please forgive me for mentioning children and the trials of life in the same breath. I sense that they are both part of our growing process.) The Church was restored—the earth was created—so that those families could be sealed in holy temples. Otherwise, the whole earth would be “utterly wasted.”<sup>8</sup>

We came to be tried, to be tested, and to choose.<sup>9</sup> Our decisions determine our

destiny. We are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator . . . , or to choose captivity and death.”<sup>10</sup> Those who choose the Lord’s way will likely endure persecution.<sup>11</sup> But their reward is certain. Those who prove faithful “shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever.”<sup>12</sup> Sister Nelson has earned that reward. What comfort that brings to me and our family!

### Maintain an eternal perspective

Trials and tests apply to rich and poor alike. Years ago I was asked to perform an operation upon a very wealthy man. A surgical biopsy confirmed that he had an advanced cancer that had spread throughout his body. As I reported this news, his immediate response was to rely upon his wealth. He would go anywhere or do anything to treat his condition. He thought he could buy his way back to health. But he soon passed away. Someone asked, “How much wealth did he leave?” The answer, of course, was, “All of it!”

His priorities were set upon things of the world. His ladder of success had been leaning against the wrong wall. I think of him when I read this scripture: “Behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is . . . too late.”<sup>13</sup>

In radiant contrast, Sister Nelson prepared throughout her life for the time when she would return to God. She lived each day as though it were her last. She cherished every hour, knowing that time on earth is precious.

Some people live as if there were no day of reckoning. Others waste today’s time with a disabling fear of tomorrow or a paralyzing preoccupation over mistakes of yesterday. Each of us might well heed the words of a poet, as posted on a sundial:

The shadow by my finger cast  
Divides the future from the past:  
Before it, sleeps the unborn hour,

In darkness, and beyond thy power:  
Behind its unreturning line,  
The vanished hour, no longer thine:  
One hour alone is in thy hands,—  
The NOW on which the shadow  
stands.<sup>14</sup>

### ***How do we prepare?***

Now is the time. But *how* do we prepare? Begin with repentance! Scripture declares, “If ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; . . . no unclean thing can dwell with God.”<sup>15</sup> He gave this simple rule: “Except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Respect for the physical body***

Now is the time to show reverent respect for one’s physical body. It serves as the tabernacle for one’s spirit throughout all eternity. Physical appetites are to be controlled by the will of one’s spirit. We are to “deny [our]selves of all ungodliness.”<sup>17</sup> We are to “forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, [and] live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.”<sup>18</sup>

### ***Obedience to God’s laws***

Because of frequent and frightening calamities in the world, some people doubt the existence of God. But, in fact, He is trying to help us. He revealed these words: “How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and . . . tempests, . . . earthquakes, . . . great hailstorms, . . . famines and pestilences of every kind, . . . and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!”<sup>19</sup>

His hope for us is eternal life. We qualify for it by obedience to covenants and ordinances of the temple—for ourselves, our families, and our ancestors. We cannot be made perfect without them.<sup>20</sup> We cannot

*wish* our way into the presence of God. We are to obey the laws upon which those blessings are predicated.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Align goals with God’s goals***

God’s plan is fair. Even those “who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.”<sup>22</sup> His plan is also merciful. He “will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.”<sup>23</sup>

Now is the time to enroll our names among the people of God. This we do by paying tithing. He tithes His people to bless them.<sup>24</sup> Sister Nelson taught that lesson to our family over and over again.<sup>25</sup>

Now is the time to align our goals with God’s goals. His work and His glory—“to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”<sup>26</sup>—can become ours. Of temple marriage the Savior declared, “If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . [they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory in all things.”<sup>27</sup> We are to emulate the example of the Lord, to love as He did, to pray as He did, and to endure to the end as He did.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Importance of death in God’s eternal plan***

Death is a necessary component of our eternal existence. No one knows when it will come, but it is essential to God’s great plan of happiness.<sup>29</sup> Thanks to the Atonement of the Lord, eventual resurrection is a reality and eternal life is a possibility for all humankind.<sup>30</sup> That possibility becomes a reality as we obey God’s law. He said, “Except ye shall keep my commandments, . . . ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>31</sup> One day we will be judged by the Lord<sup>32</sup> and go to our own mansion prepared in our Father’s heavenly house.<sup>33</sup> Celestial glory awaits those who

have been faithful to God's gentle commands.<sup>34</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we live to die and we die to live—in another realm. If we are well prepared, death brings no terror. From an eternal perspective, death is premature only for those who are not prepared to meet God.

Now is the time to prepare. Then, when death comes, we can move toward the celestial glory that Heavenly Father has prepared for His faithful children. Meanwhile, for sorrowing loved ones left behind—such as our family and me—the sting of death is soothed by a steadfast faith in Christ, a perfect brightness of hope, a love of God and of all men, and a deep desire to serve them.<sup>35</sup> That faith, that hope, that love will qualify us to come into God's holy presence and, with our eternal companions and families, dwell with Him forever. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Alma 34:32–33; see also Alma 13:27.
2. Scripture admonishes each of us to “harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; . . . therefore, if ye will repent . . . , immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you” (Alma 34:31).
3. Alma 34:34; italics added.
4. Mormon 9:14; see also 2 Nephi 9:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 88:27–32, 34–35; 130:2.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 130:18.
6. In the New Testament, the term *rest* has been translated from the Greek feminine noun *katapausis*, which means “the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells.” Thus, *rest* connotes an element of glory.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 54.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:27; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; Abraham 3:24–26.
10. 2 Nephi 2:27.
11. See 2 Timothy 3:12.
12. 2 Nephi 9:18.
13. Helaman 13:38.
14. Henry Van Dyke, “The Sun-Dial at Wells College,” in *The Poems of Henry Van Dyke* (1911), 345. Sundial and poem displayed at Wells College, Aurora, New York.
15. 1 Nephi 10:21.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–39.
17. Moroni 10:32; see also 2 Nephi 2:21; Mormon 9:28.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 98:11.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 43:25.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15, 18.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 137:7.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
24. See Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10. Tithing also prepares people against a future day of vengeance and burning (see Doctrine and Covenants 85:3).
25. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 104.
26. Moses 1:39; see also Moses 6:59; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:62.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 75:5; 101:65.
28. See 2 Nephi 33:4; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:21–22; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
29. See Alma 42:8–9.
30. See 1 Corinthians 15:50–54; 1 John 5:11, 20; Alma 12:25; Mormon 9:13; Doctrine and Covenants 46:14; 76:40–42, 50–59; 133:62.
31. 3 Nephi 12:20.
32. See 1 Nephi 10:20; 2 Nephi 9:41–46; Alma 12:27.
33. See John 14:2; Doctrine and Covenants 98:18.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:7; 131:1–3.
35. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Mosiah 16:7–8; Moroni 7:38–48.

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The choir sang “Teach Me to Walk in the Light.”

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## President Faust

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "How Firm a Foundation." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Constant truths for changing times

My dear brothers and sisters, both within my view and assembled throughout the world, I seek an interest in your prayers and your faith as I respond to the assignment and privilege to speak to you.

I begin by expressing commendation to all of you. In this challenging world, the youth of the Church are the very best ever. The faith, the service, and the actions of our members are praiseworthy. We are a prayerful and faith-filled people, ever striving to be decent and honest. We take care of each other. We try to show love to our neighbors.

However, lest we become complacent, may I quote from 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon:

"At that day shall [the devil] . . . lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls."<sup>1</sup>

Someone has said that our complacency tree has many branches, and each spring more buds come into bloom.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We live in perilous times; the signs are all around us. We are acutely aware of the negative influences in our society that stalk traditional families. At times television and movies portray worldly and immoral heroes and heroines and attempt to hold up as role models some actors and actresses whose lives are anything but exemplary.

Why should we follow a blind guide? Radios blare forth much denigrating music with blatant lyrics, dangerous invitations, and descriptions of almost every type of evil imaginable.

We, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, must stand up to the dangers which surround us and our families. To aid us in this determination, I offer several suggestions, as well as some examples from my own life.

### Hold regular family home evenings

I begin with family home evening. We cannot afford to neglect this heaven-inspired program. It can bring spiritual growth to each member of the family, helping him or her to withstand the temptations which are everywhere. The lessons learned in the home are those that last the longest. As President Gordon B. Hinckley and his predecessors have stated, "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Glenn J. Doman, noted author and medical authority, wrote:

"The newborn child is almost an exact duplicate of an empty . . . computer, although superior to such a computer in almost every way. . . . What is placed in the child's [mind] during the first eight years of life is probably there to stay." "If you put misinformation into his [mind] during [this period], it is extremely difficult to erase it."

Dr. Doman added that the most receptive age in human life is that of two or three years.<sup>3</sup>

I like this thought: “Your mind is a cupboard, and you stock the shelves.” Let us make certain that our cupboard shelves, and those of our family members, are stocked with the things which will provide safety to our souls and enable us to return to our Father in Heaven. Such shelves could well be stocked with gospel scholarship, faith, prayer, love, service, obedience, example, and kindness.

### **Avoid debt and live within your means**

Next, I address the subject of debt. This is a day of borrowing, a day when multiple credit card offers arrive in our mailboxes each week. They generally offer a very low rate of interest which may apply for a short period of time; but what one usually doesn’t realize is that after that period has expired, the rates increase dramatically. I share with you a statement made by President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who many years ago was a member of the First Presidency. Its truth is timeless. Said he:

“It is a rule of our financial and economic life in all the world that interest is to be paid on borrowed money. . . .

“Interest never sleeps nor sickens nor dies; it never goes to the hospital; it works on Sundays and holidays; it never takes a vacation; it never visits nor travels; it takes no pleasure; it is never laid off work nor discharged from employment; it never works on reduced hours. . . . Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you.”<sup>4</sup>

My brothers and sisters, I’m appalled at some of the advertising I see and hear advocating home equity loans. Simply put, they are second mortgages on homes. The

promotion for such loans is designed to tempt us to borrow more in order to have more. What is never mentioned is the fact that, should one be unable to make this “second” house payment, one is in danger of losing his house.

Avoid the philosophy and excuse that yesterday’s luxuries have become today’s necessities. They aren’t necessities unless we ourselves make them such. Many of our young couples today want to begin with multiple cars and the type of home Mother and Dad worked a lifetime to obtain. Consequently, they enter into long-term debt on the basis of two salaries. Perhaps too late they find that changes do come—women have children, sickness stalks some families, jobs are lost, natural disasters and other situations occur—and no longer can the mortgage payment, based on the income from two salaries, be made.

It is essential for us to live within our means.

### **Counsel to mothers**

Next, I have felt impressed to speak to mothers, to fathers, to sons, and to daughters.

I would say to each mother, each father—be a good listener. Communication is so vital today in our fast-paced world. Take time to listen. And to you children, talk to your mother and to your father. It may be difficult to realize, but your parents have lived through many of the same challenges which you face today. Often they see the big picture more clearly than you can. They pray for you each day and are entitled to the inspiration of our Heavenly Father in providing you counsel and advice.

Mothers, share household duties. It is often easier to do everything yourself than to persuade your children to help, but it is so essential for them to learn the importance of doing their share.



### **Counsel to fathers**

Fathers, I would counsel you to demonstrate love and kindness to your wife. Be patient with your children. Don't indulge them to excess, for they must learn to make their own way in the world.

I would encourage you to be available to your children. I have heard it said that no man, as death approaches, has ever declared that he wished he had spent more time at the office.

I love the following example, taken from an article entitled "A Day at the Beach" by Arthur Gordon. Said he:

"When I was around thirteen and my brother ten, Father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunchtime there was a phone call; some urgent business required his attention downtown. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say, 'No, I won't be down. It'll have to wait.'

"When he came back to the table, Mother smiled [and said,] 'The circus keeps coming back, you know.'

"I know,' said Father. 'But childhood doesn't.'"<sup>5</sup>

My brothers and sisters, time with your children is fleeting. Do not put off being with them now. Someone put it another way: Live only for tomorrow, and you will have a lot of empty yesterdays today.<sup>6</sup>

### **Counsel to parents**

Parents, help your children set goals concerning school and careers. Help your sons learn manners and respect for women and children.

Said President Hinckley: "As we train a new generation, so will the world be in a few years. If you are worried about the future, then look to the upbringing of your children."<sup>7</sup>

The Apostle Paul's statement to his beloved Timothy could well apply: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word,

in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>8</sup>

Parents, live your lives in such a way that your children will find you an example worthy of emulation.

### **Search out your heritage; do temple work**

I admonish all families: search out your heritage. It is important to know, as far as possible, those who came before us. We discover something about ourselves when we learn about our ancestors.

I recall as a boy hearing of the experiences of my Miller ancestors. In the spring of 1848, my great-great-grandparents Charles Stewart Miller and Mary McGowan Miller, joined the Church in their native Scotland; left their home in Rutherglen, Scotland; and journeyed across the Atlantic Ocean. They reached the port of New Orleans and traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri, with a group of Saints, arriving there in 1849. One of their 11 children, Margaret, would become my great-grandmother.

When the family arrived in St. Louis, planning to earn enough money to make their way to the Salt Lake Valley, a plague of cholera struck the area. The Miller family was hard-hit: in the space of two weeks, mother, father, and two of their sons died. My great-grandmother Margaret Miller was 13 years old at the time.

Because of all the deaths in the area, there were no caskets available—at any price. The older surviving boys dismantled the family's oxen pens in order to make crude caskets for the family members who had passed away.

The nine remaining orphaned Miller children and the husband of one of the older daughters left St. Louis in the spring of 1850 with four oxen and one wagon, arriving finally in the Salt Lake Valley that same year.

I owe such a debt of gratitude to these and other noble forebears who loved the gospel and who loved the Lord so deeply

that they were willing to sacrifice all they had, including their own lives, for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. How grateful I am for the temple ordinances which bind us together for all eternity.

I emphasize how essential is the work we do in the temples of the Lord for our kindred dead.

Just two months ago today, members of my family gathered together in the Salt Lake Temple to perform sealings for some of our deceased ancestors. This was one of the most spiritual experiences our family has had together and enhanced the love we have for one another and the obligation which is ours to live worthy of our heritage.

### **A son watches his father's example**

Years ago when our youngest son, Clark, was attending a religion class at Brigham Young University, the instructor, during a lecture, asked him, "Clark, what is an example of life with your father that you best remember?"

The instructor later wrote to me and told me of the reply which Clark had given to the class. Said Clark:

"When I was a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood, my father and I went pheasant hunting near Malad, Idaho. The day was Monday—the last day of the pheasant hunting season. We walked through numerous fields in search of pheasants but saw only a few, and those we missed. Dad then said to me, 'Clark,' he looked at his watch, 'let's unload our guns, and we'll place them in this ditch. Then we'll kneel down to pray.' I thought Dad would pray for more pheasants, but I was wrong. He explained to me that Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve was gravely ill and that at 12:00 noon on that particular Monday the members of the Quorum of the Twelve—wherever they may be—were to kneel and, in a way, together unite in a fervent prayer of faith for

Elder Evans. Removing our caps, we knelt, we prayed."

I well remember the occasion, but I never dreamed a son was watching, was learning, was building his own testimony.

### **Tragedy follows criticism of a paperboy**

Several years ago we had a young paperboy who didn't always deliver the paper in the manner intended. Instead of getting the paper on the porch, he sometimes accidentally threw it into the bushes or even close to the street. Some on his paper route decided to start a petition of complaint. One day a delegation came to our home and asked my wife, Frances, to sign the petition. She declined, saying, "Why, he's just a little boy, and the papers are so heavy for him. I would never be critical of him, for he tries his best." The petition, however, was signed by many of the others on the paper route and sent to the boy's supervisors.

Not many days afterward, I came home from work and found Frances in tears. When she was finally able to talk, she told me that she had just learned that the body of the little paperboy had been found in his garage, where he had taken his own life. Apparently the criticism heaped upon him had been too much for him to bear. How grateful we were that we had not joined in that criticism. What a vivid lesson this has always been regarding the importance of being nonjudgmental and treating everyone with kindness.

### **Follow the Savior's example**

The Savior should be our example. As is recorded of Him, He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>9</sup> He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him."<sup>10</sup>

Remember that oftentimes the wisdom of God appears as foolishness to men, but the greatest single lesson we can learn in



mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.

May we ever follow the Prince of Peace, who literally showed the way for us to follow, for by doing so, we will survive these turbulent times. His divine plan can save us from the dangers which surround us on every side. His example points the way. When faced with temptation, He shunned it. When offered the world, He declined it. When asked for His life, He gave it.

Now is the time. This is the place. May we follow Him, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 28:20–21.

2. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; see *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
3. *How to Teach Your Baby to Read* (1964), 43, 45, 44.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1938, 102–3.
5. In *A Touch of Wonder* (1974), 77–78.
6. See Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey, *The Music Man* (1957).
7. “Behold Your Little Ones,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 2.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. Acts 10:38.

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The choir sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 175th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A combined choir from the Ogden and Logan Utah Institutes provided the music. Jonathan G. Woodstock, Jerald F. Simon, and Brent T. Cottle directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Gordon B. Hinckley read the following statement as the meeting began.

#### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brothers and sisters, as we open this meeting, I offer the following statement:

We join those throughout the world who mourn the passing of Pope John Paul II, an extraordinary man of faith, vision, and intellect, whose courageous actions have touched the world in ways that will be felt for generations to come. The Pope’s voice remained firm in defense of free-

dom, family, and Christianity. On matters of principle and morality he was uncompromising. On his compassion for the world’s poor he has been unwavering. He will be greatly missed. Thank you.

#### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to this, the second general session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from the Ogden and Logan Utah Institutes, under the direction of Jonathan G. Woodstock, Jerald F. Simon,

and Brent T. Cottle, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “I Need Thee Every Hour.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing “As I Search the Holy Scriptures.” Following the sing-

ing, the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church will be presented for sustaining vote.

Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of the Auditing Department, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2004.

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The choir sang “As I Search the Holy Scriptures.”

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## **The Sustaining of Church Officers**

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland,

Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2005:

Jorge O. Abad, Carlos E. Agüero, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Gustavo A. Barrios, René J. Cabrera, Edison M. Cabrito, Tad R. Callister, Carl B. Cook, Reynaldo L. Cuyong, Jorge L. del Castillo, Benjamin De Hoyos, Lindsay T. Dil, Fred C. Dimaya, Enrique R. Falabella, Roberto Garcia, Larry W. Gibbons, C. Scott Grow, John A. Harris, Merrill F. Higham, R. Randall Huff, Michael L. Jensen, Paul V. Johnson, Won Yong Ko, Wilfredo R. López, Ronald L. Loveland, Jeffrey J. Marchant, Hans H. Mattsson, E. Israel Pérez, Holger D. Rakow, Alfonso Ramos, Carlos C. Revillo Sr., Manfred H. Schütze, J. Mitchel Scott,

José A. Teixeira da Silva, Lowell M. Snow, Guillermo Torres, Roland N. Walker. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for the service of these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation as the Primary general presidency Sisters Coleen K. Menlove, Sydney S. Reynolds, and Gayle M. Clegg. All who can join in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Marlin K. Jensen as Church Historian/Recorder. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Benjamin De Hoyos, David F. Evans, C. Scott Grow, Richard G. Hinckley, Paul V. Johnson, Paul E. Koelliker, Paul B. Pieper, and Ulisses Soares as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Won Yong Ko, Wolfgang H. Paul, Lowell M. Snow, and Paul K. Sybrowsky as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Seventies:

Nelson L. Altamirano, Manuel Araiz, Sergio E. Avila, Marcelo P. Bolfarini, Shayne M. Bowen, David R. Brown, Fernando E. Calderon, Milton da Rocha Camargo, Daniel M. Cañoles, I. Poloski Córdón, Federico F. Costales Jr., John C.

Dalton, Heber O. Diaz, Luis G. Duarte, Frerich Görts, Ronald J. Hammond, Miguel Hidalgo, Patrick Kearon, Donald J. Keyes, Christiaan H. Kleijweg, Larry R. Lawrence, Robert W. Lees, F. Rene Loli, Glendon Lyons, Juan A. Machuca, Raymundo Morales, Brent H. Nielson, Carlos S. Obata, Alejandro M. Robles, Gerardo L. Rubio, Gvido Senkans, Fabian L. Sinamban, Dirk Smibert, Hans T. Sorensen, Eivind Sterri, Miguel R. Valdez, Gary W. Walker, Richard C. Zambrano. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Cheryl Clark Lant as general president of the Primary, with Margaret Swensen Lifferth as first counselor and Vicki Fujii Matsumori as second counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called General Authorities and the Primary general presidency to take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2004

### Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: The Auditing Department of the Church is independent of all other Church departments and operations and has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts and expen-

ditures of funds and the safeguarding of Church assets. The auditing staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church

funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. After receiving authorization to expend Church funds, Church departments administer approved budgets and expend funds in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, con-

tributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2004 have been administered and recorded in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2004

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2004:

#### Number of Church units

Stakes .....	2,665
Missions .....	338
Districts .....	646
Wards and branches .....	26,670

#### Church membership

Total membership .....	12,275,822
Increase in children of record during 2004 .....	98,870
Converts baptized during 2004 ..	241,239

#### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	51,067
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#### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2004 .....	3
(Accra Ghana, Copenhagen Denmark, and Manhattan New York)	
Temples rededicated during 2004 ....	2
(Anchorage Alaska and São Paulo Brazil)	
Temples in operation .....	119

### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Neal A. Maxwell* of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Elder David B. Haight* of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Marjorie Pay Hinckley*, wife of President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church; *Sister Ruby Olson Haight*, widow of Elder David B. Haight; *Sister Dantzel White Nelson*, wife of Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Sarah Melissa Broadbent Paulsen Sorensen*, former counselor in the Primary general presidency and wife of Elder Lynn A. Sorensen, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Naomi Maxfield Shumway*, former Primary general president; *Sister Olive Eileen Robinson Dunyon Christensen*, former counselor in the Primary general presidency; *Sister Joan Blackhurst Spencer*, former Relief Society general secretary.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### **The lasting effects of an unkind word**

Many years ago, when I was called as a bishop, I had a desire for the bishopric to visit those who were less active in the Church and see if there was anything we could do to bring the blessings of the gospel into their lives.

One day we visited a man in his 50s who was a respected mechanic. He told me the last time he had been to church was when he was a young boy. Something had happened that day. He had been acting up in class and was being noisier than he should when his teacher became angry, pulled him out of class, and told him not to come back.

He never did.

It was remarkable to me that an unkind word spoken more than four decades earlier could have had such a profound effect. But it had. And, as a consequence, this man had never returned to church. Neither had his wife or children.

I apologized to him and expressed my sorrow that he had been treated that way. I told him how unfortunate it was that one word spoken in haste, and so long ago, could have the effect of excluding his family from the blessings that come from Church activity.

"After 40 years," I told him, "it's time the Church made things right."

I did my best to do so. I reassured him that he was welcome and needed. I rejoiced when this man and his family eventually returned to church and became strong and faithful members. In particular, this good brother became an effective home teacher because he understood how something as small as an unkind word could have consequences that extend throughout a lifetime and perhaps beyond.

### **The virtue of kindness**

Kindness is the essence of greatness and the fundamental characteristic of the

noblest men and women I have known. Kindness is a passport that opens doors and fashions friends. It softens hearts and molds relationships that can last lifetimes.

Kind words not only lift our spirits in the moment they are given, but they can linger with us over the years. One day, when I was in college, a man seven years my senior congratulated me on my performance in a football game. He not only praised how well I had done in the game, but he had noticed that I had showed good sportsmanship. Even though this conversation happened more than 60 years ago, and even though it's highly unlikely the person who complimented me has any recollection of this conversation, I still remember the kind words spoken to me that day by Gordon B. Hinckley, who would later become President of the Church.

The attributes of thoughtfulness and kindness are inseparably linked with President Hinckley. When my father passed away in 1963, President Hinckley was the first person to come to our home. I'll never forget his kindness. He gave my mother a blessing and, among other things, promised her that she had much to look forward to and that life would be sweet for her. These words have brought comfort to her and to me, and I'll never forget his kindness.

Kindness is the essence of a celestial life. Kindness is how a Christlike person treats others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes.

### **The kindness of Jesus Christ**

Jesus, our Savior, was the epitome of kindness and compassion. He healed the sick. He spent much of His time ministering to the one or many. He spoke compassionately to the Samaritan woman who was looked down upon by many. He instructed His disciples to allow the little

children to come unto Him. He was kind to all who had sinned, condemning only the sin, not the sinner. He kindly allowed thousands of Nephites to come forward and feel the nail prints in His hands and feet. Yet His greatest act of kindness was found in His atoning sacrifice, thus freeing all from the effects of death, and all from the effects of sin on conditions of repentance.

### **The kindness of Joseph Smith**

The Prophet Joseph Smith exemplified kindness in his life to everyone, old and young. One child who benefited from the Prophet's kindness remembered:

"My older brother and I were going to school, near to the building which was known as Joseph's brick store. It had been raining the previous day, causing the ground to be very muddy, especially along that street. My brother Wallace and I both got [our feet] in the mud, and could not get out, and of course, child-like, we began to cry, for we thought we would have to stay there. But looking up, I beheld the loving friend of children, the Prophet Joseph [Smith], coming to us. He soon had us on higher and drier ground. Then he stooped down and cleaned the mud from our little, heavy-laden shoes, took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped our tear-stained faces. He spoke kind and cheering words to us, and sent us on our way to school rejoicing."<sup>1</sup>

### **Kindness in the home**

There is no substitute for kindness in the home. This lesson I learned from my father. He always listened to my mother's advice. As a result, he was a better, wiser, and kinder man.

I have tried to follow my father's example and listen to my wife's point of view. I value her opinion. For example, when my wife begins a sentence with the words "I should think you would . . .," I instantly

pay attention and begin searching my mind for something I may have done wrong. Oftentimes before my wife has finished her sentence, I have already planned out in my mind a magnificent apology.

In truth, my wife is a model of kindness, gentleness, and compassion. And her insight, counsel, and support have been invaluable to me. Because of her, I too am a wiser and kinder person.

The things you say, the tone of your voice, the anger or calm of your words—these things are noticed by your children and by others. They see and learn both the kind and the unkind things we say or do. Nothing exposes our true selves more than how we treat one another in the home.

### **Build others rather than criticize**

I often wonder why some feel they must be critical of others. It gets in their blood, I suppose, and it becomes so natural, they often don't even think about it. They seem to criticize everyone—the way Sister Jones leads the music, the way Brother Smith teaches a lesson or plants his garden.

Even when we think we are doing no harm by critical remarks, consequences often follow. I am reminded of a boy who handed a donation envelope to his bishop and told him it was for him. The bishop, using this as a teaching moment, explained to the boy that he should mark on the donation slip whether it was for tithing, fast offerings, or something else. The boy insisted the money was for the bishop himself. When the bishop asked why, the boy replied, "Because my father says you're one of the poorest bishops we've ever had."

The Church is not a place where perfect people gather to say perfect things or have perfect thoughts or have perfect feelings. The Church is a place where imperfect people gather to provide encouragement, support, and service to each other as we press on in our journey to return to our Heavenly Father.



Each one of us will travel a different road during this life. Each progresses at a different rate. Temptations that trouble your brother may not challenge you at all. Strengths that you possess may seem impossible to another.

Never look down on those who are less perfect than you. Don't be upset because someone can't sew as well as you, can't throw as well as you, can't row or hoe as well as you.

We are all children of our Heavenly Father. And we are here with the same purpose: to learn to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

One way you can measure your value in the kingdom of God is to ask, "How well am I doing in helping others reach their potential? Do I support others in the Church, or do I criticize them?"

If you are criticizing others, you are weakening the Church. If you are building others, you are building the kingdom of God. As Heavenly Father is kind, we also should be kind to others.

### **Elder Talmage helps strangers in distress**

Elder James E. Talmage, a man who is remembered for his doctrinal teachings, showed great kindness to a neighbor family in distress. They were complete strangers to him. Before he was an Apostle, as a young father he became aware of great suffering at a neighbor's home whose large family was stricken with the dreaded diphtheria. He did not care that they were not members of the Church; his kindness and charity moved him to act. The Relief Society was desperately trying to find people to help, but no one would because of the contagious nature of the disease.

When he arrived, James found one toddler already dead and two others who were in agony from the disease. He immediately went to work, cleaning the untidy house, preparing the young body for burial,

cleaning and providing for the other sick children—spending the entire day doing so. He came back the next morning to find that one more of the children had died during the night. A third child was still suffering terribly. He wrote in his journal:

"She clung to my neck, . . . ofttimes coughing [germs] on my face and clothing, . . . yet I could not put her from me. During the half hour immediately preceding her death, I walked the floor with the little creature in my arms. She died in agony at 10 a.m."

The three children had all departed within the space of 24 hours. He then assisted the family with the burial arrangements and spoke at the graveside services.<sup>3</sup> This he did all for a family of strangers. What a great example of Christlike kindness!

### **"Love them"**

When we are filled with kindness, we are not judgmental. The Savior taught, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."<sup>4</sup> He also taught that "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."<sup>5</sup>

"But," you ask, "what if people are rude?"

Love them.

"If they are obnoxious?"

Love them.

"But what if they offend? Surely I must do something then?"

Love them.

"Wayward?"

The answer is the same. Be kind. Love them.

Why? In the scriptures, Jude taught, "And of some have compassion, making a difference."<sup>6</sup>

Who can tell what far-reaching impact we can have if we are only kind?

### Be models of kindness

My brothers and sisters, the gospel of Jesus Christ transcends mortality. Our work here is but a shadow of greater and unimaginable things to come.

The heavens opened to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He saw the living God and His Son, Jesus the Christ.

In our day a prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, walks the earth and provides direction for our time.

As our Heavenly Father loves us, we also should love His children.

May we be models of kindness. May we ever live up to the words of the Savior:

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”<sup>7</sup>

Of these truths I bear witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Margarette McIntire Burgess, in *Juvenile Instructor*, Jan. 15, 1892, 66–67.
2. See Mark 12:30–31.
3. See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (1972), 112–14.
4. Luke 6:37.
5. Matthew 7:2.
6. Jude 1:22.
7. John 13:35.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### The power of *Preach My Gospel*

I am very grateful to be able to discuss with you an exciting development that will make it easier for each of us to share with loved ones and friends the glorious message of the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. It has ignited the minds and hearts of our missionaries, for it equips them to teach their message with power and to bear testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His prophet Joseph Smith without the constraint of a prescribed dialogue. Developed primarily for full-time missionary use, this material has also proven to be most beneficial for parents who want to help children prepare for a mission. Young men and women as well as some couples are using the resource to get a head start before entering the missionary training centers. Some priesthood leaders have confirmed its worth in preparing Aaronic Priesthood brethren for missions. This tool is invaluable in assisting priesthood and auxiliary efforts to help new members become stronger in testimony and obedience. I speak of this new guide, *Preach My Gospel*, and its attendant plan-

ning tools, such as this *Missionary Daily Planner*.

May I share with you why I am so enthusiastic about *Preach My Gospel*? It has focused our missionary effort as never before. For years I have asked groups of missionaries, “What is the purpose of your mission?” Their individual responses differed greatly. Most did not have any concrete purpose to organize their efforts. Page 1 of this guide powerfully focuses missionaries on their true purpose: “Invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.” The contents then suggest how to do that as led by the Spirit.

### A new focus for a changed world

The former missionary materials were effective for their time, but the world has changed dramatically. The values which form the bedrock foundation of society are being assaulted by Satan and his allies. There has been an urgent need for an im-



proved way to share the fulness of the truth that God has placed on earth again. This includes an understanding of God's plan of happiness and of how it has been returned to earth through His singular prophet, Joseph Smith; also that the Church of Jesus Christ with the priesthood authority to act in His name is once again on earth in its fulness.

Well did President Hinckley teach:

"For many years now we have had a standard set of missionary lessons. Great good has come of this. . . . But unfortunately this method, in all too many cases, has resulted in a memorized presentation, lacking in Spirit and in personal conviction. . . .

"[Missionaries] should master the concepts of the lessons. But they should . . . teach the concepts in their own words under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

That principle is a foundation pillar of *Preach My Gospel*. Missionaries throughout the world now get into their minds and hearts the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, essential commandments, and the laws and ordinances of the gospel. These lessons are then given in their own words as guided by the Spirit. This focus has dramatically improved the effectiveness of missionaries who use it.

### Overview of *Preach My Gospel*

*Preach My Gospel* contains chapters that give extremely valuable information on how to recognize and understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There are scriptures on how to effectively study and how to refine personal teaching skills.

One chapter explains why the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion, how it can answer profound questions of the soul, how it can build faith and help others draw closer to God. Additional instruction shows how the Book of Mormon

is a tangible resource that an individual can use to confirm the truthfulness of our message.

A missionary is taught how to seek Christlike attributes such as hope, charity, and love, for love is the foundation of all meaningful missionary service.

Excellent suggestions are given for learning a mission language.

Clear, effective planning tools are provided to help a missionary use time more wisely.

Proven methods are shared to identify and prepare individuals to teach.

Practical guidance is given to help individuals make and keep commitments that lead to baptism, confirmation, and retention.

This guide contains tools to integrate the efforts of full-time missionaries, stake and ward leaders, and members. With that help, more new members can make a more secure transition into the family of the Church. There is greater assurance that those who, through baptism and confirmation, take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ and commit to obey His commandments will receive His promised blessings throughout life.

### Improvements in missionaries' teaching

Using the inspired content of *Preach My Gospel*, many missionaries have made dramatic improvements in their capacity to teach with conviction and to invite the confirming witness of the Holy Ghost. Recently I asked two assistants to a mission president to share the vision of Joseph Smith while I acted as the investigator. I planned to vigorously challenge them to see how they would respond. Yet the sincerity of their message, the purity of their intent, the skill with which it was delivered, even in a practice session, was so compelling that I could not do it.

You can observe this improvement yourself. Invite missionaries to present the first lesson to your family in your home.

Better yet, invite neighbors to come to your home to be taught by missionaries. Guided by the Spirit, in their own words they will explain how Father in Heaven has used prophets throughout the ages to communicate His plan of happiness to His children. Feel their testimony as they bear witness of the sublime vision in which God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith. The missionaries will skillfully unfold the subsequent events that restored the fulness of the gospel, with the authority to act in the name of God, on earth again. You can also accompany missionaries as they teach others these inspiring truths. Your presence will greatly strengthen those who hear these precious truths for the first time.

### Process of preparing *Preach My Gospel*

Intensive effort on the part of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, other General Authorities, and most capable teams of devoted, experienced staff members produced *Preach My Gospel* and its planning tools. Those who participated in its development are witnesses of the inspired direction of the Lord through the Holy Ghost in the conception, framing, and finalization of the materials in *Preach My Gospel*.

After extensive testing in 14 missions, *Preach My Gospel* was adjusted. That result was reviewed, modified, and approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. On October 15, 2004, a worldwide satellite broadcast introduced mission presidents and missionary leaders to *Preach My Gospel*. Every missionary throughout the world was given an English copy. While many did not speak English, they felt part of the renewal of our missionary effort. Interestingly, some foreign-language-speaking missionaries were motivated to learn English. Early this year, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese versions of *Preach My Gospel* were distributed. By the end of the year, we anticipate that the guide will

be available in most of the languages spoken by missionaries.

### All can benefit from *Preach My Gospel*

Missionaries are not alone in benefiting from *Preach My Gospel*:

- One mission president's wife studied and pondered every word in *Preach My Gospel*, including every scriptural reference. She then did something she had lacked the courage to do—she invited a close relative to study and ponder the Book of Mormon. That individual accepted her invitation and has been greatly benefited.

- Another family uses *Preach My Gospel* to help prepare their children for missions. They reported, "Our 17-year-old was the first to get an assignment. As expected, he looked for the shortest segment in the book. His lesson, however, was a 20-minute heartfelt expression of the principles, complete with scriptures and testimony."

- From a father preparing a son for missionary service: "*Preach My Gospel* has . . . given me perspective and clearer understanding of the purpose of life, my duties and responsibilities as a member of the Church, as a father, and as a husband. . . . It has also given me concrete tools to better pursue that journey." His son was called to be a missionary yesterday.

Much good has been accomplished in the brief seven months since *Preach My Gospel* was introduced, but the best is yet to come as we all become more proficient in the use of this extraordinary missionary tool.

### Rise to a new sense of commitment

I encourage you to use these materials in your presidencies, priesthood executive committee meetings, and ward councils to ensure that those who take upon themselves the covenants of baptism receive throughout their lives the full fruits of Church membership. Through the use of the new Progress Record for individuals

preparing for baptism, missionary and member efforts can be powerfully coordinated. I am confident that more new converts will find it easier to fulfill their desire to remain active, as members and missionaries work together using the principles in *Preach My Gospel*.

The First Presidency message in *Preach My Gospel* provides great motivation to missionaries. Perhaps it will encourage you in your own missionary efforts. It states:

“There is no more compelling work than this. . . . *Preach My Gospel* is intended to help you be a better-prepared, more spiritually mature missionary and a more persuasive teacher. . . . We challenge you to rise to a new sense of commitment to assist our Father in Heaven in His glorious work. . . . The Lord will reward and richly bless you as you humbly and prayerfully serve Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Can you catch the vision? You’ll be as excited as I am when in your personal life you begin to understand and use this missionary tool. Unlike prior full-time missionary resources, *Preach My Gospel* is available to any leader or member through Church distribution.

Probably the greatest benefit of *Preach My Gospel* will be seen in the lives of returned missionaries, who will be stronger parents, more able Church leaders, and better professionals because of the growth that comes from understanding and applying its inspired content.

On behalf of our missionaries worldwide, we express profound gratitude to all

who have participated in the preparation, printing, and distribution of *Preach My Gospel*. We are grateful for each mission president and missionary who is mastering its effective use. Ultimately we are grateful to the Lord for His inspiration. I encourage you to find out how this extraordinary resource can help in your missionary efforts, either as a parent preparing a child for a mission, a Church leader helping new converts, a member sharing the gospel, or an individual getting ready to serve. May the Savior bless and inspire you as you do so, for He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 19.
2. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), v.

#### President Monson

Thank you, Elders Wirthlin and Scott. The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Harold G. Hillam and Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Harold G. Hillam

### Influence of one man who left the Church

One of the talks that has had an everlasting impression on me is one given in a Saturday evening session of a stake conference years ago. The talk was given by a young mother. Here’s what she said:

“I have been doing the genealogy of my great-grandfather. He and his large family of sons and daughters were members of the Church.

“My great-grandfather,” she said, “left church one Sunday with his family, and they never returned—no indication why.”

She then said, "In my research, I have found that my great-grandfather has over 1,000 descendants."

And then she said, and this is the part I have not been able to forget, "Of those 1,000 descendants, I am the only one active in the Church today."

As she said these words, I found myself thinking, "Is it only 1,000, or could it be more?"

The answer is apparent. The spiritual influence that family might have had on their neighbors and friends did not happen. None of his sons or any of his daughters served as missionaries, and those they would have touched with their testimonies were not baptized, and those who were not baptized did not go on missions. Yes, there are probably many thousands who are not in the Church today, and not in this very meeting, because of that great-grandfather's decision.

As I heard her talk, I found myself thinking, "What a tragedy! Perhaps if I had been there at that time, I could have said something to the father, to the family, to the priesthood leaders that might have helped to prevent such a calamity to their family and to so many in the future generations that would follow."

Well, that opportunity of the past is lost. But we can now look to the present and to the future. I would say to those who find themselves in the same position as that great-grandfather: Would you consider what you might be doing to your family and to all those who come after you? Would you ponder the effects of your thoughts and your actions?

### **Put the doctrine to the test**

If there are any concerns about Church doctrine, consider the counsel given by President Gordon B. Hinckley to a large meeting of over 2,000 members in Paris, France, last year. He said: "I plead with you, my brothers and sisters, that if you

have any doubt concerning any doctrine of this Church, that you put it to the test. Try it. Live the principle. Get on your knees and pray about it, and God will bless you with a knowledge of the truth of this work."

### **Do not let pride deny posterity blessings**

If you feel you have been wronged, be ready to forgive. If there is, for some reason, an unpleasant memory, let it go. Where necessary, talk to your bishop; talk to your stake president.

To all, but especially to those who someday will be great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers, your eternal blessings and those of your posterity are far more important than any prideful reason which would deny you and so many others of such important blessings. In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin reminds us:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

### **Children can help steady the boat**

To you who are children in the homes of future errant great-grandfathers, you can continue to stand faithful; you can be a good example in the home and to those around you. You can do your part to bring peace and harmony in the home and with your associates. You can be the solution, and not the cause, of problems. Remember in the Book of Mormon when Father Lehi began to murmur, it was his righteous son Nephi who gave encouragement and found solutions to problems. So many times it is the righteous children who are able to steady the boat while sailing in turbulent waters.

### The love of a stake president

To you who are bishops and stake presidents, how I wish you could have been part of the meeting I attended with a handful of regional representatives. We heard Elder L. Tom Perry as he compared those who are prospective elders and those who are not active—the future great-grandfathers—to a thermometer. We were reminded that many of those individuals are more than just warm. They would come back if someone would just encourage and show the way.

I would like to tell you of a stake conference I was assigned to attend. It was a reorganization; the stake president and his counselors would be released, and a new presidency would be called. The stake president was young and had served wonderfully for almost 10 years. He was a spiritual giant, but he was also an administrative giant. In my personal interview with him, he told me how he had delegated much of the responsibility for the stake functions to his counselors and to the high council and had thus freed himself to interview those who needed encouragement. Individuals and couples were invited to come to his office. There he got to know them, counseled with them, and invited them to do better, to put their lives in order, and to receive the blessings available to those who follow the Lord. He helped them by putting them in the care of a capable leader, a teacher who helped them to understand the beauties of the doctrine. Then he told me that

in these interviews he would often ask if they would like a blessing. “I have placed my hands on the heads of many members of the stake,” he said.

The next day in the general session of the stake conference, I doubt I have ever seen so many tears—not because they felt the president should not be released, but for the deep love of a young stake president who had blessed their lives. I felt prompted to ask, “How many of you have had the hands of the president on your heads?” I was amazed at the number of people who raised their hands. I thought to myself at the time, “How many of these people will bless the name of this great man, not only now but throughout the eternities?” Yes, these will be the great-grandfathers who will, because of this loving leader, leave a legacy of generations of thousands who will call him blessed.

### The worth of souls

When we see the effect one person can have on the lives of so many, it perhaps is no wonder that the Lord reminded us, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

I pray we all might consider what we can do individually to assist those who will be the future great-grandparents, whether a little child, a teenager, or an adult, so that each will leave a righteous legacy of those who know and love the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Lynn G. Robbins

### Sacrifice is never convenient

In Charles Dickens’s timeless classic *A Christmas Carol*, Bob Cratchit hoped to spend Christmas Day with his family. “‘If quite *convenient*, Sir,’” he asked his employer, Mr. Scrooge.

“‘It’s *not convenient*,’ said Scrooge, ‘and it’s not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you’d think yourself ill used.’ . . .

“‘And yet,’ said Scrooge, ‘you don’t think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day’s wages for no work.’”

“The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

“‘A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December!’ said Scrooge.”<sup>1</sup>

For Scrooge—as with any selfish, or “natural,” man—sacrifice is never *convenient*.

The natural man has a tendency to think only of himself—not only to place himself first, but rarely, if ever, to place anyone else second, including God. For the natural man, sacrifice does not come naturally. He has an insatiable appetite for more. His so-called needs always seem to outpace his income so that having “enough” is forever out of reach, just as it was for the miser Scrooge.

### **Sacrifice is a hallmark of the faithful**

Because the natural man tends to hoard or consume everything, the Lord wisely commanded ancient Israel to sacrifice not the last and poorest of the flock, but the firstlings—not the leftovers of the field, but the firstfruits (see Deuteronomy 26:2; Mosiah 2:3; Moses 5:5). Genuine sacrifice has been a hallmark of the faithful from the beginning.

Among those who do *not* sacrifice there are two extremes: one is the rich, gluttonous man who won’t and the other is the poor, destitute man who believes he can’t. But how can you ask someone who is starving to eat less? *Is* there a level of poverty *so* low that sacrifice should not be expected or a family so destitute that paying tithing should cease to be required?

### **Sacrifice made by the widow of Zarephath**

The Lord often teaches using extreme circumstances to illustrate a principle. The story of the widow of Zarephath is an example of extreme poverty used to teach the doctrine that mercy cannot rob sacrifice any more than it can rob justice. In fact, the

truer measure of sacrifice isn’t so much what one gives to sacrifice as what one sacrifices to give (see Mark 12:43). Faith isn’t tested so much when the cupboard is full as when it is bare. In these defining moments, the crisis doesn’t create one’s character—it reveals it. The crisis is the test.

The widow of Zarephath lived in the days of the prophet Elijah, by whose word the Lord brought a drought upon the land for three and a half years (see Luke 4:25). The famine grew so severe that many were finally at the point of death. This is the circumstance in which we find the widow.

The Lord says to Elijah, “Arise, get thee to Zarephath . . . : behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee” (1 Kings 17:9). It is interesting that Elijah is not told to go to Zarephath until the widow and her son are at the point of death. It is at this extreme moment—facing starvation—that her faith will be tested.

As he comes into the city, he sees her gathering sticks.

“And he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

“And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (verses 10–12).

A “handful of meal” would be very little indeed, perhaps just enough for one serving, which makes Elijah’s response intriguing. Listen: “And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake *first*” (v. 13; italics added).

Now doesn’t that sound selfish, asking not just for the first piece, but possibly the only piece? Didn’t our parents teach us to let other people go first and especially for



a gentleman to let a lady go first, let alone a starving widow? Her choice—does she eat, or does she sacrifice her last meal and hasten death? Perhaps she will sacrifice her own food, but could she sacrifice the food meant for her starving son?

Elijah understood the doctrine that blessings come *after* the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6; D&C 132:5). He wasn't being selfish. As the Lord's servant, Elijah was there to give, not to take. Continuing from the narrative:

"But make me thereof a little cake *first* [the firstlings], and bring it unto me, and *after* make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah" (verses 13–16; italics added).

### **Paying tithing even when destitute**

One reason the Lord illustrates doctrines with the most extreme circumstances is to eliminate excuses. If the Lord expects even the poorest widow to pay her mite, where does that leave all others who find that it is not *convenient* or easy to sacrifice?

No bishop, no missionary should ever hesitate or lack the faith to teach the law of tithing to the poor. The sentiment of "They can't *afford* to" needs to be replaced with "They can't afford *not* to."

One of the first things a bishop *must* do to help the needy is ask them to pay their tithing. Like the widow, if a destitute family is faced with the decision of paying their tithing or eating, they should pay their tithing. The bishop can help them with their food and other basic needs until they become self-reliant.

In October of 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated many parts of Central America. President Gordon B. Hinckley was very concerned for the victims of this disaster, many of whom lost everything—food, clothing, and household goods. He visited the Saints in the cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, Honduras; and Managua, Nicaragua. And like the words of the loving prophet Elijah to a starving widow, this modern prophet's message in each city was similar—to sacrifice and be obedient to the law of tithing.

But how can you ask someone so destitute to sacrifice? President Hinckley knew that the food and clothing shipments they received would help them survive the crisis, but his concern and love for them went far beyond that. As important as humanitarian aid is, he knew that the most important assistance comes from God, not from man. The prophet wanted to help them unlock the windows of heaven as promised by the Lord in the book of Malachi (see Malachi 3:10; Mosiah 2:24).

President Hinckley taught them that if they would pay their tithing, they would always have food on their tables, they would always have clothing on their backs, and they would always have a roof over their heads.

### **Give the firstfruits, not the leftovers**

When serving a meal, it is much easier to set one more plate at the beginning of the meal than it is to find food for a late-comer once the meal is over and the food has been served. Likewise, isn't it actually easier to give the Lord the firstlings or the firstfruits than it is to hope that there are sufficient "leftovers" for Him? As the founder of our feast, shouldn't *He* be the guest of honor, the first to be served?

My loving mother, Evelyn Robbins, taught me the law of tithing when I was four years old. She gave me an empty Band-Aid box, the tin kind with a snapping

lid. She taught me to keep my tithing pennies in it and then take it to the bishop. I am eternally grateful for her, for that Band-Aid box, and for the blessings that have come from paying tithing.

### **Obey the law of sacrifice more fully**

In *A Christmas Carol*, Mr. Scrooge changed his ways—he was not the man he had been. Likewise, this is the gospel of repentance. If the Spirit is prompting us to more fully obey the law of sacrifice in our

lives, may we begin making that change today.

I am so grateful for the Savior, who was the perfect example of obedience through sacrifice—who offered “himself a sacrifice for sin” and became, in Lehi’s words, “the *firstfruits* unto God” (2 Nephi 2:7, 9; italics added). I bear witness of Him and of these, His doctrines, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTE**

1. *The Annotated Christmas Carol*, ed. Michael Patrick Hearn (1976), 69; italics added.

## **Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Only six months ago you faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ sustained me as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This calling came as a great surprise to many, but especially to our grandchildren, who said, “But he is our *Opa!* He is just a regular person. He played with us, and he used to cut our hair!”

After the October general conference, my wife and I talked to our children on the telephone, and one of our grandsons said, “Since we were so far away from you and could not be with you in Salt Lake City, at least you should have waved to us when you were giving your conference talk.” We have not yet been with our children and grandchildren until this general conference, and so I wave today, hoping to make a grandson happy. I also wave to all of you wonderful members, whose prayers and love are so important and appreciated by my wife and me.

### **Operating the bellows of an old organ**

In my growing-up years in Germany, I attended church in many different locations and circumstances—in humble back rooms, in impressive villas, and in very functional, modern chapels. All of these buildings had

one important factor in common: the Spirit of God was present; the love of the Savior could be felt as we assembled as a branch or ward family.

The Zwickau chapel had an old air-driven organ. Every Sunday a young man was assigned to push up and down the sturdy lever that operated the bellows to make the organ work. Even before I was an Aaronic Priesthood bearer, I sometimes had the great privilege to assist in this important task.

While the congregation sang our beloved hymns of the Restoration, I pumped with all my strength so the organ would not run out of wind. The eyes of the organist unmistakably indicated whether I was doing fine or needed to increase my efforts quickly. I always felt honored by the importance of this duty and the trust that the organist had placed in me. It was a wonderful feeling of accomplishment to have a responsibility and to be part of this great work.

### **A stained-glass window of the First Vision**

There was an additional benefit that came from this assignment: the bellows operator sat in a seat that offered a great view



of a stained-glass window that beautified the front part of the chapel. The stained glass portrayed the First Vision, with Joseph Smith kneeling in the Sacred Grove, looking up toward heaven and into a pillar of light.

During the hymns of the congregation and even during talks and testimonies given by our members, I often looked at this depiction of a most sacred moment in world history. In my mind's eye I saw Joseph receiving knowledge, witness, and divine instructions as he became a blessed instrument in the hand of our Heavenly Father.

I felt a special spirit while looking at the beautiful scene in this window picture of a believing young boy in a sacred grove who made a courageous decision to pray earnestly to our Heavenly Father, who listened and responded lovingly to him.

### **Holy Ghost testifies of the First Vision**

Here I was, a young boy in post-World War II Germany, living in a city in ruins, thousands of miles away from Palmyra in North America and more than a hundred years after the event actually took place. By the universal power of the Holy Ghost, I felt in my heart and in my mind that it was true, that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ and heard Their voices. The Spirit of God comforted my soul at this young age with an assurance of the reality of this sacred moment that resulted in the beginning of a worldwide movement destined to “roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). I believed Joseph Smith's testimony of that glorious experience in the Sacred Grove then, and I know it now. God has spoken to mankind again!

Looking back, I am grateful for so many friends who helped me in my youth to gain a testimony of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. First I exercised simple faith in their testimonies, and then I received the divine witness of the Spirit to

my mind and to my heart. I count Joseph Smith among those whose testimony of Christ helped me to develop my own testimony of the Savior. Before I recognized the tutoring of the Spirit testifying to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, my youthful heart felt that he was a friend of God and would therefore, quite naturally, also be a friend of mine. I knew I could trust Joseph Smith.

### **Testimony strengthened by others**

The scriptures teach us that spiritual gifts are given to those who ask of God, who love Him, and who keep His commandments (see D&C 46:9). “All have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12).

Today I know that my young testimony benefited greatly from the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and many friends in the Church who knew “by the Holy Ghost . . . that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 46:13). Their good examples, caring love, and helping hands blessed me to receive another special gift of the Spirit described in the scriptures as I was yearning for more light and truth: “To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue [faithfully]” (D&C 46:14). What a wonderful and precious gift this is!

### **How to receive the gift of faith**

As we truly humble ourselves, we will be blessed with this gift to have faith and to hope for things which are not seen but are true (see Alma 32:21). As we experiment upon the words given to us by the scriptures and the living prophets—even if we have only a desire to believe—and do not resist the Spirit of the Lord, our souls will be enlarged and our understanding will be enlightened (see Alma 32:26–28).

The Savior Himself explained this merciful principle clearly to all the world in His great intercessory prayer, given not only for His Apostles but for all the Saints, even for us today, wherever we might be living. He said:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20–21; italics added).

### **First Vision helps us believe in Christ**

This is how Joseph Smith’s First Vision blesses our own personal lives, the lives of families, and eventually the whole human family: we come to believe in Jesus Christ through the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Prophets and apostles throughout the history of mankind have had divine manifestations similar to Joseph’s. Moses saw God face-to-face and learned that he was a son of God “in the similitude of [His] Only Begotten” (see Moses 1:1–6). The Apostle Paul testified that the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus and made Paul one of His great missionaries (see Acts 26:9–23). Hearing Paul’s witness of his heavenly vision during the trial at Caesarea, the powerful King Agrippa admitted, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

And there were many other ancient prophets who also bore powerful testimony of Christ. All of these manifestations, ancient and modern, lead those who believe to the divine source of all righteousness and hope—to God, our Heavenly Father, and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

### **The fruits of the First Vision**

God has spoken to Joseph Smith for the purpose of blessing all of God’s chil-

dren with His mercy and love, even in times of uncertainties and insecurities, of wars and rumors of wars, of natural and personal disasters. The Savior said, “Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive” (3 Nephi 9:14). And all who accept this invitation will be “encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love” (Alma 26:15).

Through faith in the personal witness of the Prophet Joseph and the reality of the First Vision, through study and prayer, deep and sincere, we will be blessed with a firm faith in the Savior of the world, who spoke to Joseph “on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” (Joseph Smith—History 1:14).

Faith in Jesus Christ and a testimony of Him and His universal Atonement is not just a doctrine with great theological value. Such faith is a universal gift, glorious for all cultural regions of this earth, irrespective of language, race, color, nationality, or socioeconomic circumstance. The powers of reason may be used to try to understand this gift, but those who feel its effects most deeply are those who are willing to accept its blessings, which come from a pure and clean life of following the path of true repentance and living the commandments of God.

### **Gratitude for the Prophet Joseph Smith**

As we remember and honor the Prophet Joseph Smith, my heart reaches out to him in gratitude. He was a good, honest, humble, intelligent, and courageous young man with a heart of gold and an unshaken faith in God. He had integrity. In response to his humble prayer, the heavens opened again. Joseph Smith had actually seen a vision. He knew it, and he knew that God knew it, and he could not deny it. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:25.)

Through his work and sacrifice, I now have a true understanding of our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ, and I can feel the power of the Holy Ghost and know of Heavenly Father's plan for us, His children. For me, these are truly the fruits of the First Vision.

I am grateful that early in my life I was blessed with a simple faith that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that he saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a vision. He translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. That testimony has been confirmed to me over and over again.

As one of the least among you, but in my calling as one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, I testify that He truly lives, that He is the Messiah. I do have a personal witness of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I received this knowledge by the unspeakable peace and power of the Spirit of God. The desire of my heart and of my mind is to be pure and faithful in serving Him now and forever.

I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren. We've been richly fed.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the combined choir from the Ogden and Logan Utah Institutes for the beautiful music that they have provided this afternoon.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder W. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Another plea for senior missionaries

Four years ago I spoke in this setting about couples serving full-time missions. My prayer was that "the Holy Ghost [would] touch hearts, and somewhere a spouse . . . [would] quietly nudge his or her companion, and a moment of truth [—a moment of decision—would] occur."<sup>1</sup> One sister later wrote me about that experience. She said, "We were sitting in the comfort of our family room enjoying conference on television. . . . As you spoke, my heart was touched so deeply. I looked over at my husband, and he looked at me. That moment changed my life forever."

If you are or will soon be the age of a senior missionary, I come to you this afternoon to witness of the blessings that can change your life forever. Your Heavenly Father needs you. His work, under the direction of our Savior Jesus Christ, needs what you are uniquely prepared to give. Every missionary experience requires faith, sacrifice, and service, and these are always followed by an outpouring of blessings.

### The five F's

As we discuss these blessings, you will naturally consider what I have called the four F's: fear, family concerns, finding the

right mission opportunity, and financial challenges.<sup>2</sup> May I yet add another more important and powerful F—faith. Only through our faith can we heed God's counsel to “choose ye this day, whom ye will serve”<sup>3</sup>—“to serve the Lord God who made you.”<sup>4</sup> And only through a *trial* of our faith can we receive the miraculous blessings we seek for ourselves and our families. “For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until *after* their faith.”<sup>5</sup>

### Meeting fear with faith

Allow me to share some of the miraculous blessings from letters and accounts I have received over the past four years. A humble couple from Idaho met fear with faith when the Lord called them to Russia. They wrote the following acceptance letter: “No one would have imagined we would be called to this assignment. We have no idea how we will learn the language or manage to be of service, and although we accept with much trepidation, going completely on faith, we know that the Lord and His prophet know more than we do where we should serve.”

Ten months later the Stockholm Sweden Temple welcomed 30 Saints from a small branch in Russia led by this couple from Idaho who had barely begun to learn the Russian language. The scriptures tell us, “God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, God's work is carried out by His children, “that faith also might increase in the earth, . . . that the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

### “I will provide for their families”

Another couple faced family concerns with faith. A faithful sister wrote: “The decision to serve a mission was not hard. But

my 90-year-old mother was extremely apprehensive about our leaving. She took great comfort when she heard that our families would be blessed as we serve.”

A faithful brother expressed similar concerns about leaving his elderly parents, to which his father responded, “Don't use your mother and me as an excuse not to go on a mission with your wife. You pray about it and follow the guidance of the Spirit.”

To an earlier generation of missionaries called to leave their families, the Lord offered this reassurance: “And if they will do this in all lowliness of heart, . . . I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families.”<sup>8</sup>

Certainly family concerns are real and should not be considered lightly. But we cannot meet our family challenges without the blessings of the Lord; and when we sacrifice to serve as full-time missionary couples, those blessings will flow. For example, one couple worried about leaving their youngest daughter, who was no longer active in the Church. Her faithful father wrote:

“We prayed for her continually and fasted regularly. Then, during general conference, the Spirit whispered to me, ‘If you will serve, you will not have to worry about your daughter anymore.’ So we met with our bishop. The week after we received our call, she and her boyfriend announced they were engaged. Before we left for Africa, we had a wedding in our home. [Then we gathered our family together and] held a family council. . . . I bore testimony of the Lord and Joseph Smith . . . and told them I would like to give each of them a father's blessing. I started with the oldest son and then his wife and proceeded to the youngest . . . [including our new son-in-law].”

As we consider couple missionary service, it is appropriate to involve our families in the same way. In family council meetings, we can give our children the opportunity to express their support, offer special

assistance we may need, and receive priesthood blessings to sustain them in our absence. Where appropriate, we may be able to receive priesthood blessings from them as well. As the faithful father in this story blessed his family members, his son-in-law felt the influence of the Holy Ghost. The father wrote:

“By the end of our first year [the] heart [of our son-in-law] began to soften toward the Church. Just before we returned home from our mission, he and our daughter came to visit us. In his suitcase was the first set of Sunday clothes he had ever owned. They came to church with us, and after we returned home he was baptized. A year later they were sealed in the temple.”<sup>9</sup>

Though the details of this story may be unique, the principle is true for all who say to the Lord, “I’ll go where you want me to go.”<sup>10</sup> I testify that as we put our trust in the Lord, He will find the right missionary opportunity for us. As He said, “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”<sup>11</sup>

### **If you lack the means**

In considering missionary opportunities, many couples throughout the world have an abundant desire to serve but lack abundant means. If this is your situation, remember that the right mission call may not be to a far-off country with a strange-sounding name. The right call for you may be within your stake or area. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”<sup>12</sup> Counsel with your extended family and your bishop or branch president. As the Lord’s servants understand your temporal situation, you will be able to receive the eternal blessings of full-time missionary service.

If you cannot serve because of serious extenuating circumstances, would you consider making a financial contribution to help those who can? The reasonable sacrifice of your means will not only bless other missionaries and those they serve; it will bless you and your family as well.

### **Marvelous blessings of missionary service**

Now, to those who were not able to serve a mission in their youth, may I speak directly to you. Perhaps over the years you have been burdened by feelings of regret or felt less than adequate because you did not have a missionary opportunity to serve and grow when you were younger. My advice to you: look forward, not back. Begin preparing for your mission as a senior missionary couple today! Save a little money each month. Study the scriptures. Accept Church callings. Pray to feel the Lord’s love for others and receive His love and confidence in you. You can one day claim *all* the blessings of missionary service!

And what marvelous blessings they are! After 51 years of marriage, I was asked, “What part of life would you want to live over again?” I did not hesitate to reply, “When my wife and I served together in the great missionary work of the Lord.” The sentiments of another missionary couple echo those of my wife and myself: “Our decision to go on a mission brought new vigor, new emotions, new friends, new places, new challenges. It brought us closer together as husband and wife; we had a common goal and a real partnership. And best of all, it brought new spiritual growth instead of spiritual retirement.” Brothers and sisters, let us not go into spiritual retirement.

### **Challenge to bishops, branch presidents**

Now, may I extend a challenge to bishops and branch presidents throughout the world? Over the next six months, would it be possible for each of you to consider recommending one or more missionary couples beyond those presently planning to serve? Your greatest resource in meeting this challenge will be those senior members of your ward who have already served missions. In my own ward an inspired bishop called a special meeting of prospective and returned missionary couples. As we bore



our testimonies of sacrifice and service, the Spirit witnessed to us all that a call to serve is indeed a call to “know the richness of [the Lord’s] blessing[s].”<sup>13</sup>

I’ve heard of a stake president who has arranged a senior missionary class to inspire prospective missionary couples and help them prepare to serve. Priesthood leaders, as you prayerfully seek to encourage full-time missionary service, remember that when a couple is called, they not only help accomplish the work of the Lord throughout the world; they plant a seed of service in their families that will blossom for generations to come. I continue to be grateful for the influence of my parents, who served as couple missionaries in England and set an example for their posterity.

### **Seek a mission call**

Now, to you prospective missionary couples, please do not wait for your bishop to meet with you about serving a mission! Go to him. Share your feelings. Where missionary service is concerned, the Lord expects us to express our desires. As we do, we can trust that the same Spirit that prompts us to seek a mission call will inspire a prophet to call us to the right assignment.

### **Couple missionaries make a difference**

And there are so many calls! There are calls to teach the gospel to those who desire to receive the truth, including to youth in the Church Educational System; calls to work in welfare and humanitarian service; in temples; in family history centers, mission offices, and historic sites; calls to “do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and . . . promote the glory of him who is your Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

Consider these examples: A couple called to India helped a school for blind children build sanitary facilities and acquire braille typewriters. A couple in Hawaii nurtured a little branch of 20 members to 200

and prepared 70 members to attend the temple together. A couple in Peru arranged for medicine and Christmas toys to be provided to 550 children in an orphanage. A couple in Cambodia taught institute classes and gave leadership to a branch which, after only 10 months, grew to 180 members. A couple in Russia helped local farmers increase their yield of potatoes to 11 times that of the state farms, while a couple in the Philippines helped nearly 700 poorly nourished families learn to raise rabbits and cultivate vegetable gardens. A couple in Pennsylvania assisted 60 individuals, half of them members of other faiths, in preparing their family genealogical records. A couple in Ghana helped drill and refurbish wells, bringing water to 190,000 people in villages and refugee camps.

Whether or not the results of every mission are this obvious to mortal eyes, all those who serve make an invaluable contribution in the sight of the Lord, for all “have compassion, making a difference.”<sup>15</sup> Couple missionaries are role models and examples of strength to full-time missionaries and to priesthood and auxiliary leaders throughout the world. I express my gratitude for all these and the thousands of others who are serving in so many capacities, contributing millions of hours in service to their fellowman.

### **Return the Savior’s love through service**

My brothers and sisters, if you have felt stirrings to engage in this work, however quiet those feelings may be, do not procrastinate the day of your service. Now is the time to prepare; now is the time to be called, the time to sacrifice. Now is the time to share your gifts and talents, and now is the time to receive God’s blessings for you and your family. “There is a constant need for more couple missionaries,” President Gordon B. Hinckley has said.<sup>16</sup> As this work rolls forward, that need is increasing. Let us, in our richest years of experience, maturity, wisdom, and most of

all, our faith, rise to meet that need as only we can.

We, above all, have special reason to do so. From our life's experience we can look back and recognize the goodness of our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, to us and our families. As one faithful brother explained, "My wife and I would like to serve five missions—one for each of the beautiful children God has blessed us with!" Whatever blessings we have received individually, I testify that we have all received the greatest blessing of all: "God [our Heavenly Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"<sup>17</sup> and His Son, Jesus Christ, "loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life."<sup>18</sup> I bear my special witness that His atoning sacrifice is the ultimate expression of that love.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is our greatest privilege to return His love through sacrifice and service and claim His holy promise: "And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal."<sup>19</sup> That we may do so is my heartfelt prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 31; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 25.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 31; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 25.
3. Alma 30:8.
4. Moses 6:33.
5. Ether 12:12; italics added.
6. Mosiah 8:18.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 1:21, 23.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 118:3.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 31:1–2, 5.
10. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270.
11. John 12:26.
12. Matthew 6:32; 3 Nephi 13:32.
13. "Called to Serve," *Hymns*, no. 249.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 81:4.
15. Jude 1:22.
16. "To the Bishops of the Church," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27.
17. John 3:16.
18. 2 Nephi 26:24.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 98:13.

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The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 175th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald J. Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall,

the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald J. Staheli, with Clay Christensen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing “An Angel from on High.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “An Angel from on High.”

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## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

### **Our most distinguishing feature**

Nearly 70 years ago President David O. McKay, then serving as a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, asked this question to a congregation gathered for general conference:

“If at this moment each one [of you] were asked to state in one sentence . . . the most distinguishing feature of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what would be your answer?”

“My answer,” he replied, “would be . . . divine authority by direct revelation.”<sup>1</sup>

That divine authority is, of course, the holy priesthood.

President Gordon B. Hinckley added his testimony when he said: “[The priesthood] is a delegation of divine authority, different from all other powers and authorities on the face of the earth. . . . It is the only power on the earth that reaches beyond the veil of death.” “Without it there could be a church in name only, [a church] lacking authority to administer in the things of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Just four weeks ago President James E. Faust said to BYU students in their devotional: “[The priesthood] activates and governs all activities of the Church. Without priesthood keys and authority, there would be no church.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Priesthood is indispensable and unique**

I begin tonight with these three brief citations (to which scores of others could be added) to stress emphatically just one point: that the priesthood of God, with its keys, its ordinances, its divine origin and ability to bind in heaven what is bound on earth, is as *indispensable* to the true Church of God as it is *unique* to it and that without it there would be no Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In this commemorative year in which we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the 175th year since the organization of the Church, I wish to add my testimony of—and express my eternal gratitude for—the restoration of the holy priesthood,



this hallowed prerogative, this sovereign gift, and the role it plays in our lives on both sides of the veil.

### Loss and restoration of the priesthood

The essential function of the priesthood in linking time and eternity was made explicit by the Savior when He formed His Church during His mortal ministry. To His senior Apostle Peter, He said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Six days later He took Peter, James, and John to a mountaintop where He was transfigured in glory before them. Then prophets from earlier dispensations, including at least Moses and Elijah,<sup>5</sup> appeared in glory also and conferred the various keys and powers that each held.

Unfortunately those Apostles were soon killed or otherwise taken from the earth, and their priesthood keys were taken with them, resulting in more than 1,400 years of priesthood privation and absence of divine authority among the children of men. But part of the modern miracle and marvelous history we celebrate tonight is the return of those same heavenly messengers in our day and the restoration of those same powers they held for the blessing of all mankind.

In May of 1829 while translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith came across a reference to baptism. He discussed the matter with his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, and the two earnestly supplicated the Lord regarding the matter. Oliver wrote: “Our souls were drawn out in mighty prayer, to know how we might obtain the blessings of baptism and of the Holy Spirit. . . . *We diligently sought for . . . the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to administer in the same.*”<sup>6</sup>

In response to that “mighty prayer,” John the Baptist came, restoring the keys and powers of the Aaronic Priesthood,

which our young men in this audience tonight have been given. A few weeks later, Peter, James, and John returned to restore the keys and powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood, including the keys of the apostleship. Then when a temple had been built to which other heavenly messengers might come, there unfolded on April 3, 1836, a modern-day equivalent of that earlier Mount of Transfiguration, part of something President Hinckley once called the “Kirtland cascade” of revelation in which the Savior Himself, plus Moses, Elijah, and Elias, appeared in glory to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred keys and powers from their respective dispensations upon these men. That visit was then concluded with this thunderous declaration: “Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands.”<sup>7</sup>

### An unbroken chain of priesthood authority

Little wonder that the Prophet Joseph would include in those succinct and eloquent articles of our faith, “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and *by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority*, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”<sup>8</sup> Clearly, acting with divine authority requires more than mere social contract. It cannot be generated by theological training or a commission from the congregation. No, in the authorized work of God there has to be power greater than that already possessed by the people in the pews or in the streets or in the seminaries—a fact that many honest religious seekers had known and openly acknowledged for generations leading up to the Restoration.

It is true that some few in that day did not want their ministers to claim special sacramental authority, but most people longed for priesthood sanctioned by God and were frustrated as to where they might go to find such.<sup>9</sup> In that spirit the revelatory return of priesthood authority through Jo-

seph Smith should have eased centuries of anguish in those who felt what the famed Charles Wesley had the courage to say. Breaking ecclesiastically with his more famous brother John over the latter's decision to ordain without authority to do so, Charles wrote with a smile:

How easily are bishops made  
By man or woman's whim:  
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,  
But who laid hands on him?<sup>10</sup>

In responding to that challenging question, we in the restored Church of Jesus Christ can trace the priesthood line of authority exercised by the newest deacon in the ward, the bishop who presides over him, and the prophet who presides over all of us. That line goes back in an unbroken chain to angelic ministers who came from the Son of God Himself, bearing this incomparable gift from heaven.

And, oh, how we need its blessings—as a Church and as individuals and families within the Church. Just one illustration:

### **The priesthood's capacity to bless**

I spoke earlier of the Kirtland period of Church history. The years of 1836 and 1837 were as difficult as that young Church had ever faced—financially, politically, and internally. In the midst of that stress, Joseph Smith had the remarkable prophetic prompting to send some of his ablest men (ultimately the entire Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) abroad on missions. It was a bold, inspired move, one that would in the end save the Church from the perils of the day, but in the near term it imposed great burdens on the Saints—painful for those who went away and perhaps even more painful for those who stayed at home.

I quote from Elder Robert B. Thompson:

“The day appointed for the departure of the Elders to England having arrived, I [stopped at] the house of Brother [Heber C.] Kimball to ascertain when he would

start [on his journey], as I expected to accompany him two or three hundred miles, intending to spend my labors in Canada that season.

“The door being partly open, I entered and felt struck with the sight which presented itself to my view. I would have retired, thinking that I was intruding, but I felt riveted to the spot. The father was pouring out his soul to . . . [God, pleading] that He who ‘careth for sparrows, and feedeth the young ravens when they cry’ would supply the wants of his wife and little ones in his absence. He then, like the patriarchs, and by virtue of his office, laid his hands upon their heads individually, leaving a father's blessing upon them, . . . commending them to the care and protection of God, while he should be engaged preaching the Gospel in a foreign land. While thus engaged [in giving those blessings] his voice was almost lost in the sobs of those around [him], who [were trying in their youthful way to be strong but having a very hard time doing so.] . . . He proceeded, but his heart was too much affected to do so regularly. . . . He was obliged to stop at intervals, while . . . big tears rolled down his cheeks, an index to the feelings which reigned in his bosom. My heart was not stout enough to refrain,” said Brother Thompson. “In spite of myself I wept, and mingled my tears with theirs. At the same time I felt thankful that I had the privilege of contemplating such a scene.”<sup>11</sup>

That scene has been reenacted one way or another a thousand times, a hundred thousand times, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—a fear, a need, a call, a danger, a sickness, an accident, a death. I have been a participant in such moments. I have beheld the power of God manifest in my home and in my ministry. I have seen evil rebuked and the elements controlled. I know what it means to have mountains of difficulty move and ominous Red Seas part. I know what it means to have the destroying angel “pass by them.”<sup>12</sup> To have received the authority

and to have exercised the power of “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God,”<sup>13</sup> is as great a blessing for me and for my family as I could ever hope for in this world. And that, in the end, is the meaning of the priesthood in everyday terms—its unequaled, unending, constant capacity to bless.

### Praise to the man

With gratitude for such blessings, I join you and a choir of the living and the dead in singing in this commemorative year, “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!”<sup>14</sup>—and communed with Adam; Gabriel; Moses and Moroni; Elijah; Elias; Peter, James, and John; John the Baptist; and a host of others.<sup>15</sup> Truly “Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.”<sup>16</sup> May we, young and old, boys and men, fathers and sons, cherish the priesthood that through him was restored, priesthood keys and ordinances by which alone the power of godliness is manifest and without which it cannot be manifest.<sup>17</sup> I testify of the restoration of the priesthood and the indispensable “distinguishing feature” of the true Church of God that it has always been, in the name of Him whose priesthood it is, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 121.

2. “Priesthood Restoration,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1988, 71.
3. “Where Is the Church?” devotional address, Brigham Young University, Mar. 1, 2005, 8.
4. Matthew 16:19.
5. See Matthew 17:1–3.
6. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1968, 20; italics added.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 110:16; see also verses 1–15.
8. Articles of Faith 1:5; italics added.
9. See David F. Holland, “Priest, Pastor, Power,” *Insight*, fall 1997, 15–22 for a thorough examination of priesthood issues current in America at the time of the Restoration.
10. Quoted in C. Beaufort Moss, *The Divisions of Christendom: A Retrospect* (n.d.), 22.
11. Quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 108–9.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 89:21.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:1–3.
14. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
15. Joseph Smith had communion with many prophets and messengers from beyond the veil. For just a few of those mentioned in scripture, see Doctrine and Covenants 128:20–21.
16. *Hymns*, no. 27.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes

Tonight I speak to you young men, you whom President Gordon B. Hinckley has described as “the finest generation.”<sup>1</sup> Across the world we see your goodness. I pray that you will feel that my words are personally for you, a son of God, working hard to do what’s right.

I’d like to tell you of an experience of a faithful Latter-day Saint who is a good

friend of mine. I’ll refer to him only as “my friend” for reasons you will understand.

Working as a special agent for the FBI, my friend investigated organized crime groups transporting illegal drugs into the United States. On one occasion he and another agent approached an apartment where they believed a known drug dealer was distributing cocaine. My friend describes what happened:

"We knocked on the door of the drug dealer. The suspect opened the door and, upon seeing us, tried to block our view. But it was too late; we could see the cocaine on his table.

"A man and a woman who were at the table immediately began removing the cocaine. We had to prevent them from destroying the evidence, so I quickly pushed the drug suspect who was blocking the door to the side. As I pushed him, my eyes met his. Strangely, he did not appear angry or afraid. He was smiling at me.

"His eyes and disarming smile gave me the impression that he was harmless, so I quickly left him and started to move toward the table. The suspect was now behind me. At that instant, I had the distinct, powerful impression come into my mind: 'Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes.'

"I immediately turned back toward the suspect. His hand was in his large front pocket. Instinctively I grabbed his hand and pulled it from his pocket. Only then did I see, clutched in his hand, the semi-automatic pistol ready to fire. A flurry of activity followed, and I disarmed the man."<sup>2</sup>

Later, in another case, the drug dealer was convicted of murder and boasted that he would have also killed my friend had he not turned around at that very moment.

I have often thought of the communication that came into his mind: "Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes." This is what I want to talk to you about tonight.

### **We are here to choose good over evil**

Let's begin with what we know. Good comes from God; evil comes from the devil.<sup>3</sup> They are not, however, equal forces that are fighting each other in the universe. At the head of all that is good is the Christ—He who is the Only Begotten of the Father, who created our world and numerous others. Our Redeemer is a resurrected and perfect being.<sup>4</sup> I know He lives.

The devil, on the other hand, "persuadeth men to do evil."<sup>5</sup> "He [has] fallen from heaven, . . . [has] become miserable forever,"<sup>6</sup> and now works "that all men might be miserable like unto himself."<sup>7</sup> He is a liar and a loser.<sup>8</sup>

The power of the Savior and the power of the devil are not truly comparable. It would be like comparing the greatest army on earth to a runaway band of two-year-olds in the nursery armed with water pistols.<sup>9</sup>

On this planet, however, evil has been allowed a position of influence to give us the chance to choose between good and evil. The scripture says: "God gave unto man that he should act for himself. [And] man could not act for himself [unless] he was enticed by . . . one or the other."<sup>10</sup>

The choice between good and evil is at the very heart of our experience on earth. In the final review of our lives, it will not really matter if we were rich or poor, if we were athletic or not, if we had friends or were often forgotten.

We can work, study, laugh and have fun, dance, sing, and enjoy many different experiences. These are a wonderful part of life, but they are not central to why we are here.<sup>11</sup> The opportunity to choose good over evil is precisely why we are here.<sup>12</sup>

### **The choice is not always easy**

Not one of us would say, "I want to choose evil." We all want to choose the right. However, the choice of good over evil is not always easy because evil frequently lurks behind smiling eyes. Listen to these warnings:

"Take heed . . . that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God."<sup>13</sup>

"Ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you."<sup>14</sup>

"Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you."<sup>15</sup>

The message is: Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes!

I have known a few young men who began with every intention to stay firm in their loyalty to the Savior, but who slipped from the path because they did not see the evil behind eyes that appeared quite harmless. They saw the fun, the pleasure, the acceptance, but they did not see the other consequences.

### How to discern evil

How, then, can we discern the evil behind something that doesn't appear evil?

You already know the answers, but here are a few thoughts:

First, talk to your parents. Does that sound like a revolutionary idea? We fathers know we are far from perfect, but we love you, and along with your mothers we have a deep interest in your choosing the right.

Next, follow the prophet. These 15 men we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators are given divine power to see what we sometimes do not see. President Hinckley has given us clear and specific counsel about the evil behind the smiling eyes.<sup>16</sup> And you have the inspired guidance in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*.<sup>17</sup> As you apply President Hinckley's counsel, the Lord has promised that He "will disperse the powers of darkness from before you."<sup>18</sup> You will see the evil behind the smiling eyes, and its appeal will leave you.

Very importantly, let the Holy Ghost be your guide. The Lord has promised us that as we live righteously, the still, small voice will come into our minds and into our hearts.<sup>19</sup> You have felt this influence. You know this voice.<sup>20</sup>

The gift of the Holy Ghost is a spiritual gift. It is sensitive and will not be associated with unworthiness. You cannot offend or ignore it one day and expect it to strengthen you the next day. But as you heed its promptings and remain righteous,

it will grow stronger within you. The Holy Ghost warned my friend of physical danger; the Holy Ghost will also warn you of spiritual danger.

Finally, gain your own testimony of the Savior. Pray passionately. Read the Book of Mormon when no one is watching. Take time alone to think about who Jesus really is and how His life and sacrifice are important to you.

Remember the example of the young Joseph Smith. When he lit the candle at night to read the Bible, it was because he wanted to. When he went into the grove to pray, he went alone.<sup>21</sup>

As we increase our understanding and love for the Savior, His light will illuminate everything around us. We then will see evil for what it is.<sup>22</sup>

I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Words cannot describe His greatness and glory, His majesty and magnificence. He appeared with His Father to the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today. Brethren, we hold His holy priesthood. As we remain worthy, we will be blessed to see the evil behind the smiling eyes. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 69.
2. Personal correspondence, Mar. 7, 2005.
3. See Moroni 7:12.
4. See Luke 24:36–39; John 1:14; 3 Nephi 12:48; Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
5. Moroni 7:17.
6. 2 Nephi 2:18.
7. 2 Nephi 2:27.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:25; see also Bible Dictionary, "Devil," 656.
9. See Moses 1:1–22.
10. 2 Nephi 2:16.
11. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11; Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66–71; or *Ensign*, May 1997,

- 47–50; Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 66–70; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 49–51.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
  13. See Moroni 7:14.
  14. 3 Nephi 18:18.
  15. Doctrine and Covenants 50:3.
  16. See *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.
  17. See [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org). Click on “Serving in the Church,” “Aaronic Priesthood / Young Men,” “For the Strength of Youth.”
  18. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
  19. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
  20. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:36.
  21. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20.
  22. See Moses 1:1–22.

## Elder Robert C. Oaks

### Who’s on the Lord’s side?

This evening I would like to focus my comments on a favorite hymn’s rousing call to service: “Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who? / Now is the time to show” (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*, no. 260).

In this, the dispensation of the fulness of time, as we prepare for the final satanic battles in anticipation of the return of Christ to the earth, it is very important to know who is on the Lord’s side. The Lord needs to know on whom He can rely.

You would hope that every priesthood holder could be counted on to show up for service in the ranks of the Lord’s army. Today in the Church there are about three million priesthood holders, split evenly between the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthoods.

Unfortunately, far too many of these men, young and not so young, are missing, absent without leave, AWOL.

One day they each sat humbly while men of authority laid hands upon their heads and conferred the priesthood upon them. That day they all made a covenant of obedience and service with the Lord.

### Authority of the Aaronic Priesthood

To understand the importance of these covenants, we need to ask ourselves, “What is the priesthood?” Every alert deacon knows the answer to this question: the priesthood is the power to act in God’s name.

What does this mean to you deacons, teachers, and priests? First, it means you are authorized to pass, prepare, and bless the sacrament. Is this a big deal? Absolutely!

Who administered the first sacrament service that we have any record of? Of course the answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. The evening before His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prepared, blessed, and passed the sacrament to His disciples. So when we perform this sacred ordinance, we are actually standing in for the Savior Himself. That is special!

John the Baptist laid his hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the priesthood of Aaron and declared, “I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1). That is a significant responsibility for men of any age. With that charge, we are clearly on the Lord’s side.

### Authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood

What of the Melchizedek Priesthood? The 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants reads, “And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God” (v. 19). This priesthood holds the power to administer and lead, to bless and heal, to teach



and seal. These priesthood service activities clearly place the practicing brethren on the Lord's side.

One of the greatest examples of priesthood sealing power is the story of Nephi, son of Helaman. Because of his diligence in declaring the word of God, the Lord gave him sealing power that "whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Helaman 10:7). Nephi would have been a mighty leader in the Lord's army in any dispensation.

What a great act of trust it is on the part of our Father in Heaven to share with us a part of His power, that we might assist Him in His grand work as it rolls forth to fill the earth.

### **Conferral of priesthood authority**

Note how carefully we have been instructed on how to confer priesthood authority. When I turned 12 years old, my father, Charles Oaks, and my bishop, George Collard, laid their hands on my head and conferred upon me the Aaronic Priesthood and ordained me a deacon.

Several years later, then Elder Gordon B. Hinckley used this same heavenly directed procedure to ordain me a Seventy. Each ordination reflects additional divine trust and a new opportunity to serve on the Lord's side.

### **The battle for souls**

When armies are formed, battles are generally fought on vast battlefields. But this battle for souls is quite different. The conflict goes on each day in individual lives and pits the Lord's troops against Satan's forces of greed, selfishness, and lust.

The muscular young men of Helaman's 2,060 stripling warriors, shoulder to shoulder, imply the need for great physical strength to join their ranks. But there is room for every stout-hearted soul in this endeavor.

### **Weapons of eternal worth**

We have an 11-year-old grandson, Andrew, who is confined to a wheelchair, maybe for the rest of his life. He will be ordained a deacon in the fall and will join the priesthood army of the Lord. His physical handicap will not limit him in this war, because the weapons of choice are not spears and swords wielded on a chaotic field of battle.

Rather, the weapons of eternal worth reflecting the whole armor of God are *truth*, *righteousness*, *faith*, *prayer*, and the *word of God* (see Ephesians 6:13–18). These weapons are wielded in our minds, mouths, and movements. Every righteous thought, word, and deed is a victory for the Lord.

That is why Andrew has no handicap in this battle. His parents have taught him well. He stands ready to join the ranks of the priesthood brethren.

The stakes are extremely high. The prizes are the very souls of the sons and daughters of God—their eternal salvation. And these souls will be won or lost on the basis of virtue and cleanliness, on the basis of charity and service, and on the basis of faith and hope.

### **Take care of your wingman**

Andrew will join the deacons quorum in his home ward. They will teach him to pass the sacrament and to collect fast offerings. They will look after him, because that is what priesthood quorums are all about—caring for one another. In fact, that is how the Lord's priesthood army is organized—into quorums.

I spent a majority of my life as a pilot in the United States Air Force. The men of my squadron remain, to this day, a tight-knit group, keeping in close touch after 40 years.

In our training as fighter pilots, one of the first and most basic rules was, "Take care of your wingman. Constantly check

his six o'clock to make certain no enemy is sneaking up behind him."

If it is good advice to protect comrades in a fighter squadron, it is great advice to stay close to and protect our quorum members as we strive to stand firm on the Lord's side. We should be eager to go out and find them when they stray.

### **The end is drawing near**

Standing firm on the Lord's side is especially valuable today. Our prophet regularly points out that these are the last days. We know from the signs of the times that the end is drawing near. And Satan knows it as well. He and his forces never seem to sleep.

In a worldwide priesthood leadership training meeting, President Hinckley, noting the immoral conditions in the world, stated, "I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah."

He went on to say: "They and their wicked inhabitants were annihilated. We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters" ("Standing Strong and Immoveable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20).

I do not know how much more our prophet has to say for us to consider ourselves warned.

### **Prepare temporally and spiritually**

In a recent conference talk, Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated: "These signs of the Second Coming are all around us and seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity. . . . While we are powerless to alter the fact of the Second Coming and unable to know its exact time, we can accelerate our own preparation and try to influence the preparation of those around us. . . . We need to make both temporal and spiritual preparation for the events prophesied at the

time of the Second Coming" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 5–7; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 7–9).

And these statements of warning came well before a season of unprecedented hurricane destruction in the Caribbean area and the tsunami devastation in East Asia.

### **Now is the time**

Our hymn "Who's on the Lord's Side?" instructs us, "Now is the time to show." Now is the time to stand fast in our faith and on our principles, as did Captain Moroni. We are needed *now*; deacons, teachers, priests, bishops, elders, high priests, and patriarchs. Now is the time to show our appreciation for the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the time to show our faith through our obedience to such basic commandments as the laws of chastity and tithing, the Word of Wisdom, and keeping the Sabbath day holy.

Now is the time to warn our neighbors by sharing the gospel message with them. Now is the time to provide the world with an example of decency and modesty, an example of virtue and cleanliness. We should never squander our priesthood power, wallowing in the corruptive, corrosive filth and slime of pornography.

Now is the time to review the covenants we have made with the Lord at the waters of baptism, covenants we made when we accepted the oath and covenant of the priesthood, and covenants we have made in His holy temples.

Now is indeed the time to show we are on the Lord's side.

Brethren, this is His work. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fullness in these last days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Christ stands at the head of this Church, leading it forward through His living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. Christ will return to the earth to rule and reign, and we will each, one day, stand before Him to be judged on our thoughts, our deeds, and the desires of our hearts.



He is our Savior and our Redeemer, and I so testify in His holy name, amen.

### **President Monson**

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, it will be my privilege to address you.

## **President James E. Faust**

I wish to welcome those Brethren who were called and sustained this afternoon to be members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy. Each one is a man of faith and ability and commitment, and we certify to you that they are worthy in all respects to hold these offices.

My dear brethren of the great worldwide brotherhood of the priesthood, we commend you for your faithfulness and your dedication to the work of the Lord. We thank you for your commitment and your devoted service. You contribute much to the strength of the Church.

### **Lessons learned from serving a mission**

It is wonderful to be in this meeting with all of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was your age, I used to wonder, “What will be my place in this world, and how will I find it?” At that time, about my only firm goal was to serve a mission. When my mission call came, I served, and my mission became like the North Star to guide me into the other pursuits of my life. One of the important things I learned was that if I faithfully persevered in my Church callings, the Lord would open up the way and guide me to other opportunities and blessings, even beyond my dreams.

Serving a mission can do this for all you young men. A young man recently shared with me how much he had learned from his perseverance as a missionary. I draw from his experience some of the

things you can learn that would bring opportunities and blessings to you:

1. How to organize and use time wisely
2. The importance of hard work—that you reap what you sow
3. Leadership skills
4. People skills
5. The value of gospel study
6. Respect for authority
7. The importance of prayer
8. Humility and dependence on the Lord<sup>1</sup>

### **Persevere to achieve your potential**

When I went to Granite High School in Salt Lake City in the 1930s, I had some friends who excelled in athletics, drama, music, and speech. Some of them went on to achieve success in life, but too many of those gifted and able young people did not persevere and failed to achieve their potential. In contrast, several less visible young men and women at the same school worked diligently, persevered, and continued with their education and became outstanding doctors, engineers, educators, lawyers, scientists, businessmen, artisans, electricians, plumbers, and entrepreneurs.

Success is usually earned by persevering and not becoming discouraged when we encounter challenges. Paul Harvey, the famous news analyst and author, once said:

“Someday I hope to enjoy enough of what the world calls success so that someone will ask me, ‘What’s the secret of it?’ I shall say simply this: ‘I get up when I fall down.’”<sup>2</sup>

### Madame Curie's example of perseverance

An outstanding example of perseverance is Madame Marie Curie, who worked together with her French physicist husband, Pierre Curie, "in an old abandoned leaky shed without funds and without outside encouragement or help, trying to isolate radium from a low-grade uranium ore called pitchblende. And after their 487th experiment had failed, Pierre threw up his hands in despair and said, 'It will never be done. Maybe in a hundred years, but never in my day.' Marie confronted him with a resolute face and said, 'If it takes a hundred years, it will be a pity, but I will not cease to work for it as long as I live.'"<sup>3</sup> She was eventually successful, and cancer patients have benefited greatly from her perseverance.

### Perseverance saves Lorenzo Snow's life

Perseverance is demonstrated by those who keep going when the going gets tough, who don't give up even when others say, "It can't be done." In 1864 the First Presidency assigned Apostles Ezra T. Benson and Lorenzo Snow, along with Elders Alma Smith and William W. Cluff, on a mission to the Hawaiian Islands. From Honolulu they took passage on a small boat to the little harbor of Lahaina. As they approached the reef, the surf was running high and a heavy swell struck the boat, carrying it about 50 yards and leaving it in a trough between two huge waves. When the second swell struck, the boat capized into the foaming sea.

The people on the shore manned a lifeboat and picked up three of the brethren, who were swimming near the submerged boat. But there was no sign of Brother Snow. Hawaiians accustomed to the surf swam in every direction to search for him. Eventually one of them felt something in the water, and they pulled Brother Snow to the surface. His body was stiff,

and he looked like he was dead as they hauled him into the boat.

Elder Smith and Elder Cluff laid Brother Snow's body across their laps and quietly administered to him, asking the Lord to spare his life that he might return to his family and home. When they reached the shore, they carried Brother Snow to some large empty barrels lying on the beach. Laying him face downward on one of them, they rolled him back and forth to expel the water he had swallowed.

After the elders worked over him for some time, without any indication of life, the bystanders said that nothing more could be done for him. But the determined elders would not give up. So they prayed again, with the quiet assurance that the Lord would hear and answer their prayers.

They were impressed to do something rather unusual for that day and time. One of them placed his mouth over Brother Snow's in an effort to inflate his lungs, alternately blowing in and drawing out air, imitating the natural process of breathing. Taking turns, they persevered until they succeeded in inflating his lungs. A little while later they perceived faint indications of returning life. "A slight wink of the eye, which, until then, had been open and death-like, and a very faint rattle in the throat, were the first symptoms of returning vitality. These grew more and more distinct, until consciousness was fully restored." With their perseverance and the smile of merciful Providence, all four of the Lord's servants survived and were able to complete their missions.<sup>4</sup>

Elder Snow went on to become the President of the Church. While serving in that office, he stabilized the Church's funds by urging the members to pay their tithes and offerings.

You brethren will be interested to know that the Alma Smith in this story was the boy who was shot in the hip at Haun's Mill, destroying the hip joint and socket. His mother dressed the terrible wound

with some balsam and then was inspired to have him lie on his face for five weeks. A flexible gristle grew in place of the missing joint and socket so that he was able not only to live a normal life, but also to serve a mission to Hawaii and give a lifetime of service to the Church.<sup>5</sup>

### **Perseverance of latter-day prophets**

Our latter-day prophets are all examples of determination through priesthood, prayer, and work. Joseph Smith's perseverance made possible the Restoration of all things. All of his life he was treated with contempt and ridicule—from the time he first related the account of the First Vision to a preacher of a prominent religion. But he never faltered, and he left with us his unwavering testimony:

"I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; . . . I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it."<sup>6</sup>

Brigham Young's life was the very essence of perseverance. He was always faithful and resolute. After Joseph Smith's death, he had the bold determination to bring 60,000 people from the comfort of their homes and productive lands to a barren wilderness. This great exodus was unlike any other in modern history. They came in wagons, on foot, and pulling handcarts. He and his followers made the desert blossom as a rose.

At the first press conference when President Gordon B. Hinckley was introduced to the press as the President of the Church in 1995, he was asked what his focus would be. He answered: "Carry on. Yes. Our theme will be to carry on the great work which has been furthered by our predecessors."<sup>7</sup> This is a great theme for all of us. We need to carry on and endure to the end.

One of the great accomplishments of President Hinckley's administration has been his extraordinary perseverance in building temples. Since he became the President of the Church, 87 temples have been dedicated, rededicated, or announced. This remarkable achievement in temple building is unequaled in the entire history of the world. Temples have a great effect for good and are increasingly blessing the world. As President George Q. Cannon said:

"Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence."<sup>8</sup>

### **Serve faithfully to the end**

Each of us should serve faithfully and diligently in our priesthood callings until the end of our days. Some might wonder, "How long do I have to be a home teacher?" My answer is that home teaching is a priesthood calling. To serve in the calling of a home teacher is a privilege as long as our bishop and priesthood leaders feel we are able to do so. Some of us knew Brother George L. Nelson, a prominent attorney in Salt Lake City who served as a bishop, stake president, and patriarch. He was completely committed to the Church. He was a home teacher at age 100. He said at that time, "I like being a home teacher. I hope I can always be a home teacher."<sup>9</sup> He died at age 101 and was faithful to the end.

Those who desire to be baptized into the Church are required by the Lord to have "a determination to serve him to the end."<sup>10</sup> President Joseph Fielding Smith, at age 94, said, "I have sought all my days to magnify my calling in that priesthood and

hope to endure to the end in this life and to enjoy the fellowship of the faithful saints in the life to come.”<sup>11</sup> As the Lord said, if we are to be His disciples, we must continue in His word.”<sup>12</sup> The Lord has blessed the Church and its members in remarkable ways because of their faithfulness and perseverance. I testify of the divinity of the holy work of the priesthood and do so in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Dan Kartchner, personal communication.
2. In Marvin J. Ashton, in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 126; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 89.
3. Sterling W. Sill, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 62.
4. See Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 276–81.
5. See “Amanda Smith,” in Andrew Jenson, comp., *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (1882–90), 5:83–88.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.
7. In Jeffrey R. Holland, “President Gordon B. Hinckley: Stalwart and Brave He Stands,” *Ensign*, June 1995, 2.
8. “The Logan Temple,” *Millennial Star*, Nov. 12, 1877, 743.
9. In Elinor G. Hyde, “At 100 Years Old, He’s Faithful Home Teacher,” *Church News*, June 6, 1998, 7.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 92; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 27.
12. See John 8:31.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

I too wish to express my welcome to those who have been called to new assignments at this conference and my hearty congratulations to those who have received honorable releases from their service. The work moves forward. We love each of you.

### The oath and covenant of the priesthood

My dear brethren, I am honored by the privilege to speak to you this evening. What a joy to see this magnificent Conference Center filled to capacity with those both young and old who hold the priesthood of God. To realize that similar throngs are assembled throughout the world brings to me an overwhelming sense of responsibility. I pray that the inspiration of the Lord will guide my thoughts and inspire my words.

President Joseph F. Smith made the following statement concerning the priesthood. Said he: “The Holy Priesthood is

that authority which God has delegated to man, by which he may speak the will of God. . . . It is sacred, and it must be held sacred by the people. It should be honored and respected by them, in whomsoever it is held.”<sup>1</sup>

The oath and covenant of the priesthood pertains to all of us. To those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is a declaration of our requirement to be faithful and obedient to the laws of God and to magnify the callings which come to us. To those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, it is a pronouncement concerning future duty and responsibility, that they may prepare themselves here and now.

Said President Marion G. Romney, a former member of the First Presidency: “Every bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood should give diligent and solemn heed to the implications of this oath and covenant which he has received. Failure to observe the obligations imposed by it is sure

to bring disappointment, sorrow, and suffering.”<sup>2</sup>

Added President Spencer W. Kimball: “One breaks [his] priesthood covenant by transgressing commandments—but also by leaving undone his duties. Accordingly, to break this covenant one needs only to do nothing.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Performing your duty**

A famed minister observed: “Men will work hard for money. [Men] will work harder for other men. But men will work hardest of all when they are dedicated to a cause. . . . Duty is never worthily performed until it is performed by one who would gladly do more if only he could.”<sup>4</sup>

The performance of one’s duty brings a sense of happiness and peace. Wrote the poet:

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw that life was duty.  
I acted, and behold—  
Duty was joy.<sup>5</sup>

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, “It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of [your] holy Priesthood to [so] magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows . . . that the people will be glad to follow you.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Magnifying your calling**

What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it, to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men.

And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his

duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Poet and author Robert Louis Stevenson reminded us, “I know what pleasure is, for I have done good work.”

Brethren, let us remember the counsel of King Benjamin: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Rescuing those who are less active**

Let us reach out to rescue those who need our help and lift them to the higher road and the better way. Let us focus our thinking on the needs of priesthood holders and their wives and children who have slipped from the path of activity. May we listen to the unspoken message from their hearts. You will find it to be familiar:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.  
Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.<sup>8</sup>

The work of reactivation is no task for the idler or daydreamer. Children grow, parents age, and time waits for no man. Do not postpone a prompting; rather, act on it, and the Lord will open the way.

Frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required. As a bishop I felt prompted one day to call on a man whose wife was somewhat active, as were the children. This man, however, had never responded. It was a hot summer’s day when I knocked on the screen door of Harold G. Gallacher. I could see Brother Gallacher sitting in his chair reading the newspaper. “Who is it?” he queried, without looking up.

“Your bishop,” I replied. “I’ve come to get acquainted and to urge your attendance with your family at our meetings.”

“No, I’m too busy,” came the disdainful reply. He never looked up. I thanked

him for listening and departed the doorstep.

The Gallacher family moved to California shortly thereafter. Many years went by. Then, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I was working in my office one day when my secretary called, saying, "A Brother Gallacher who once lived in your ward is here in the office and would like to talk to you."

I responded, "Ask him if his name is Harold G. Gallacher who, with his family, once lived at Vissing Place on West Temple and Fifth South."

She said, "He is the man."

I asked her to send him in. We had a pleasant conversation together concerning his family. He told me, "I've come to apologize for not getting out of my chair and letting you in the door that summer day long years ago." I asked him if he was active in the Church. With a smile, he replied: "I'm a counselor in my ward bishopric. Your invitation to come out to church, and my negative response, so haunted me that I determined to do something about it."

Harold and I visited together on numerous occasions before he passed away. The Gallachers and their children filled many callings in the Church.

### **Priesthood is the perfect plan of service**

President Stephen L. Richards, who served as a counselor to President David O. McKay, declared, "The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.'" He continues: "This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service, and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.' . . . It is an instrument of service . . . and the man who fails to use it is apt to lose it, for we are plainly told by revelation that he who neglects it 'shall not be counted worthy to stand.'"9

### **Renovating a widow's home**

This past January I had the privilege of witnessing a profound act of service in the life of a woman who had lived in my ward when I served as bishop many years ago. Her name is Adele, and she and her two grown daughters—one of whom is handicapped—have lived for many years in the Rose Park area of the Salt Lake Valley. Adele, who is a widow, has struggled financially, and her life has often been difficult.

I had received a telephone call from an individual involved with the Gingerbread House Project inviting me to the unveiling of Adele's home, the renovation of which had been undertaken during a period of just over three days and nights by many kind and generous individuals, all working voluntarily with materials donated by numerous local businesses. During the time the makeover of her home had been accomplished, Adele and her two daughters had been hosted in a city a number of miles away, where they themselves had received some pampering.

I was present when the limousine bearing Adele and her daughters arrived on the scene. The group which had been waiting for them included not only family and friends but also many of the craftsmen who had worked night and day on the project. It was obvious they were pleased with the result and were anxious to see the reaction of Adele and her daughters.

The women stepped from the car, blindfolds in place. What a thrilling moment it was when the blindfolds were removed and Adele and her daughters turned around and saw their new home. They were absolutely stunned by the magnificent project which had been completed, including a redesign of the front, an extension of the home itself, and a new roof. The outside looked new and immaculate. They could not help but cry.



I accompanied Adele and others as we entered the home and were amazed at what had been accomplished to beautify and enhance the surroundings. The walls had been painted, the floor coverings changed. There were new furnishings, new curtains, new drapes. The cupboards in the kitchen had been replaced; there were new countertops and new appliances. The entire house had been done over from top to bottom, each room spotless and beautiful. Adele and her daughters were literally overcome. However, just as poignant and touching were the expressions on the faces of those who had worked feverishly to make the house new. Tears welled in their eyes as they witnessed the joy they had brought into the lives of Adele and her daughters. Not only had a widow's burden been made lighter, but countless other lives were touched in the process. All were better people for having participated in this effort.

### **Priesthood holders are agents of the Lord**

President Harold B. Lee, one of the great teachers in the Church, gave us this easy-to-understand counsel regarding the priesthood. Said he: "You see, when one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand."<sup>10</sup>

Now, some of you may be shy by nature, perhaps feeling yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, brethren, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that the Lord will shape the back to bear the burden placed upon it.

### **Lessons learned from a visit to Clarkston**

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching takes place other than in

the chapel or the classroom. Well do I remember that during the spring season some years ago, members of my ward and an adjoining ward took all the Aaronic Priesthood who eagerly looked forward to an annual outing commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. On this particular occasion we journeyed by bus 90 miles north to the Clarkston, Utah, cemetery. There, in the quiet of that beautiful setting, we gathered the youth around the grave of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. While we surrounded the beautiful granite shaft which marks his grave, Elder Glen L. Rudd, then the bishop of the other ward, presented the background of the life of Martin Harris and read from the Book of Mormon his testimony and that of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer. The young men listened with rapt attention, realizing they were standing at the grave site of one who had seen an angel and had actually beheld the plates with his own eyes. They reverently touched the granite marker designating the grave and pondered the words they had heard and the feelings they had felt.

Then we walked a short distance to a pioneer grave. The marker bore the name of John P. Malmberg and contained the verse:

A light from our household is gone.  
A voice we loved is stilled.  
A place is vacant in our hearts  
That never can be filled.

We talked with the boys about sacrifice, about dedication to truth. Duty, honor, service, and love—all were taught by that tombstone. In memory's eye I can see the boys reach for their handkerchiefs to wipe away a tear. Heard yet are the sniffles which testified that hearts were touched and commitments made. I believe each youth had determined to be a pioneer—one who goes before, showing others the way to follow.

We then retired as a group to a local park, where all enjoyed a picnic lunch. Before turning homeward, we stopped at the grounds of the beautiful Logan temple. It was a warm day. I invited the boys to stretch out on the spacious lawn and with me gaze at a sky of blue, marked by white, billowy clouds hurried along on their journey by a steady breeze. We admired the beauty of this magnificent pioneer temple. We talked of sacred ordinances and eternal covenants. Lessons were learned. Hearts were touched. Covenants and promises became much more than words. The desire to be worthy to enter temple doors lodged in those youthful hearts. Thoughts turned to the Master; His presence was close. His gentle invitation "Follow me" was somehow heard and felt.

### Great shall be their reward

To all who willingly respond to the sacred call of service comes the promise:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."<sup>11</sup>

My sincere prayer is that all of us may qualify for this divine promise, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 140.
2. In Conference Report, Mexico City Mexico Area Conference 1972, 73.

3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 497.
4. Harry Emerson Fosdick, in Emerson Roy West, comp., *Vital Quotations* (1968), 38.
5. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941).
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
7. Mosiah 2:17.
8. Naomi W. Randall, "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
10. In Conference Report, Mexico City Mexico Area Conference 1972, 77.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–6.

### President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 a.m. We encourage you to move your clocks one hour ahead this evening before retiring.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they provided and to all who helped to make this a great priesthood gathering.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Francisco J. Viñas of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, we've had a wonderful meeting. I wish to endorse all that has been said and to leave my blessing with you.

First, I'd like to say just a word concerning those we have sustained this after-

noon as members of the Quorums of the Seventy.

I am convinced that there are literally hundreds of brethren worthy and capable to serve as general officers of the Church. We see them everywhere. Those sustained



today have been chosen to fill particular responsibilities. In most cases this will involve sacrifice, which will be willingly made.

Among those sustained, as you have noted, is my 63-year-old son. I make it clear that I did not advance his name. That was done by others whose right it was to do so. I feel extremely sensitive about the matter of nepotism. As the lawyers say, I recused myself from participating. However, I believe he is worthy and qualified in every respect. In the first place, he had a great and wonderful mother. I wish I could recommend his father.

I mention this only because of my sensitivity concerning the matter of nepotism. Please do not hold it against him for his relationship to me. He's powerless to help it.

### **The growing evil of gambling**

Now, to go on to the subject that I wish to discuss tonight. I do so in response to a number of requests that have come to me concerning the position of the Church on a practice that is becoming more common among us, and particularly among our youth. That is the matter of gambling in various forms.

The story is told that one Sunday, Calvin Coolidge, onetime president of the United States and a man noted for few words, returned from church. His wife asked him what the preacher spoke about. He replied, "Sin." "What did he say?" she asked. "He was against it," was his reply.

I think I could answer the question concerning gambling just that briefly. We are against it.

Gambling is to be found almost everywhere and is growing. People play poker. They bet on horse races and dog races. They play roulette and work the slot machines. They gather to play in bars, saloons, and casinos and, all too often, in their own homes. Many cannot leave it alone. It becomes addictive. In so many cases it leads to other destructive habits and practices.

And so very many of those who become involved cannot afford the money it takes. In many cases it robs wives and children of financial security.

### **Popularity of poker among youth**

The game of poker, as it is called, is becoming a college and even a high school craze.

I read to you from a *New York Times* News Service article:

"For Michael Sandberg, it started a few years ago with nickel-and-dime games among friends.

"But last fall, he says, it became the source of a six-figure income and an alternative to law school.

"Sandberg, 22, essentially splits his time between Princeton, where he is a senior and a politics major, and Atlantic City, where he plays high-stakes poker. . . .

"Sandberg's is an extreme example of a gambling revolution on the nation's college campuses. Sandberg calls it an explosion, one spurred by televised poker championships and a proliferation of Web sites that offer online poker games.

"Experts say the evidence of gambling's popularity on campus is hard to miss. In December, for example, a sorority at Columbia University conducted its first, 80-player, poker tournament with a \$10 buy-in, a minimum amount required to play, while the University of North Carolina conducted its first tournament, a 175-player competition, in October. Both games filled up and had waiting lists. At the University of Pennsylvania, private games are advertised every night in a campus e-mail list" (Jonathan Cheng, "Poker Is Major College Craze," in *Deseret Morning News*, Mar. 14, 2005, A2).

The same thing is happening right here in Utah.

A mother writes me as follows:

"My 19-year-old son plays poker on the Internet, and the people on the Internet do not [seem to] care if you are not 21. All

you have to do is have a bank account with money in it. He has been playing steady for almost a year now. He used to have a job, which he quit because he is so addicted to the Internet and poker playing for money right now. He enters poker tournaments all the time, and, if he wins, that is the money that he [uses] to buy the things that he needs. All he does is sit and play on the Internet."

### **Gambling is creeping up on us**

I am told that Utah and Hawaii are now the only two states in the United States that have not legalized lotteries and gambling of various forms. From the letters I have received from members of the Church, it becomes apparent that some of our young people start by playing poker. They get the taste of getting something for nothing and then travel outside of the state to where they can gamble legally.

One writer says in a letter to me: "I can see this evil creeping up in so many lives lately. It is all over the TV. ESPN has something called Celebrity Poker and National Poker Championships."

She continues: "One of our friends invited my husband to sign up for the local poker championship game for a fee. His friend said, 'It's not gambling. Your money just goes into this big pot, and whoever wins gets the pot.'"

Is this gambling? Of course it is. Gambling is simply a process that takes money and does not offer a fair return in goods or services.

### **Lottery fever leaves most empty-handed**

We now have state lotteries on a very large scale. Once the law almost universally prohibited them. Now they are operated as a means of gaining revenue.

Some 20 years ago, speaking in conference, I said:

"Lottery fever recently peaked when New York State announced that three winning tickets would split \$41 million. People

[had] lined up to buy tickets. One winning ticket was held by 21 factory workers, with 778 second-place winners, and 113,000 who received token amounts. That may sound pretty good.

"But there were also 35,998,956 losers, each of whom had paid for a chance to win [and received nothing]" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 52).

Some American states have imposed heavy taxes on casinos as a source of revenue. The operating company also must have its profit. Then comes the winning ticket holder. All others who bought tickets are left empty-handed.

### **Most lose in gambling**

I am so grateful that when the Lord established this Church, He gave us the law of tithing. I talked at one time with an officer of another church which, I understand, relies on the playing of bingo for a substantial part of its income. I said to this man, "Have you ever considered tithing to finance your church?" He replied, "Yes, and oh, how I wish that we might follow this practice instead of playing bingo. But I do not expect this change in my lifetime."

Casinos have been opened on Indian reservations as a means of securing income for those who own them. A few win, but most lose. They have to if some win and if the house is to make its profit.

One of our young men recently said, "Pay five bucks to see a movie; pay five bucks to play poker—it is the same idea."

It is not the same idea. In one case you get something for which you pay; in the other case, only one picks up the winnings, and the others are left empty-handed.

Experience has shown that the playing of poker can lead to an obsession to gambling.

### **The Church's opposition to gambling**

From the early days of this Church, gambling has been denounced.

As far back as 1842, Joseph Smith described conditions when the Saints lived in Missouri. Said he:

“We made large purchases of land, our farms teemed with plenty, and peace and happiness were enjoyed in our domestic circle, and throughout our neighborhood; but as we could not associate with our neighbors . . . in their midnight revels, their Sabbath breaking, horse racing and gambling; they commenced at first to ridicule, then to persecute, and finally an organized mob assembled and burned our houses, tarred and feathered and whipped many of our brethren, and finally, contrary to law, justice and humanity, drove them from their habitations” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 1:139).

Brigham Young, in October of 1844, said this concerning Nauvoo: “We wish to suppress all grogshops, gambling houses, and all other disorderly houses or proceedings in our city, and to tolerate no intemperance or vice in our midst” (in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 1:242).

Presidents of the Church and counselors in the Presidency have repeatedly spoken concerning this evil. George Q. Cannon, counselor to three Presidents of the Church, said: “There are many evils in the world which young folks need to be guarded against. One of these is gambling. There are various forms of this evil but they are all bad and should not be indulged in” (*Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. [1974], 2:223).

President Joseph F. Smith stated, “The Church does not approve of gambling but strongly condemns it as morally wrong, and classes also with this gambling, games of chance and lottery, of all kinds, and earnestly disapproves of any of its members engaging therein” (“Editor’s Table,” *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1908, 807).

President Heber J. Grant counseled: “The Church has been and now is unalter-

ably opposed to gambling in any form whatever. It is opposed to any game of chance, occupation, or so-called business, which takes money from the person who may be possessed of it without giving value received in return. It is opposed to all practices the tendency of which is to . . . degrade or weaken the high moral standard which the members of the Church, and our community at large, have always maintained” (in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:245).

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “From the beginning we have been advised against gambling of every sort. The deterioration and damage comes to the person, whether he wins or loses, to get something for nothing, something without effort, something without paying the full price” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 6).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, who is with us tonight, in 1987 delivered a masterful discourse on this subject at what was then Ricks College. It was entitled “Gambling—Morally Wrong and Politically Unwise” (see *Ensign*, June 1987, 69–75).

To these statements of the position of the Church I add my own. The pursuit of a game of chance may seem like harmless fun. But there attaches to it an intensity that actually shows on the faces of those who are playing. And in all too many cases this practice, which appears innocent, can lead to an actual addiction. The Church has been and is now opposed to this practice. If you have never been involved in poker games or other forms of gambling, don’t start. If you are involved, then quit now while you can do so.

### **Choose wholesome activities instead**

There are better ways to spend one’s time. There are better pursuits to occupy one’s interest and energy. There is so much of wonderful reading available. We are not likely to ever get too much of it. There is music to be learned and enjoyed. There is just having a good time together—in danc-

ing, in hiking, in cycling, or in other ways—boys and girls together enjoying one another's company in a wholesome way.

### Study praises the youth of the Church

I have been reading a new book, recently published by the Oxford University Press, which has received considerable attention among us. It contains a study conducted by members of the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It deals with the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers. Those who conducted the study questioned young people of various faiths and traditions. (See Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* [2005].)

They reached the conclusion that our LDS youth know more about their faith, are more committed to it, and abide more closely by its teachings concerning social behavior than do their peers.

One of the researchers stated, "The LDS Church asks a lot of its teenagers, and . . . more often than not, they get it" (Steve Vaisey, in Elaine Jarvik, "LDS Teens Rank Tops in Living Their Faith," *Deseret Morning News*, Mar. 15, 2005, A3).

Our young people were found to be more likely to hold the same religious beliefs as their parents, to attend religious services once a week, to share their faith with others, to engage in fasting or some other form of self-denial, and to have less doubt about their religious beliefs.

Commentators on the study speak of our youth arising early in the morning to attend seminary. "It is hard to get up so early," one seminary student said. "But

there are blessings that come from doing it. It is a wonderful way to start the day."

The researchers point out that not all of our youth are perfect, but by and large they excel in a most remarkable way. I should add that there is no time to play poker for these high school students.

### Do not waste time in an aimless pursuit

My dear young friends to whom I speak tonight, you mean so very much to us. You are so very important. As members of this Church and as holders of the priesthood, you have so great a responsibility. Please, please do not fritter away your time or your talents in an aimless pursuit. If you do so, it will lessen your capacity to do worthwhile things. I believe it will dull your sensitivity to your studies in school. It will disappoint your parents, and as the years pass and you look back, you will be disappointed with yourselves.

The priesthood which you hold as young men carries with it the privilege of the ministering of angels. That companionship, I submit, is incompatible with indulgence in games of chance.

"Choose the right when a choice is placed before you" ("Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239).

May heaven's blessings rest upon you, I humbly pray, as I leave you my testimony of this work and my love for all who are engaged in it, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Francisco J. Viñas offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 175th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 3, 2005. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang “Now Let Us Rejoice” to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this morning to this, the fourth general session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with

John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Now Let Us Rejoice” and will now favor us with “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?”

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The choir sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the invocation.

The choir sang “What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?”

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### **President Hinckley**

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Sweet Is the Work.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us.

## President James E. Faust

### **Stand in holy places**

My dear brethren, sisters, and friends all over the world, it is a joy and a great responsibility to address you. I express my love, respect, and appreciation for each of you.

We are bombarded on all sides by a vast number of messages we don’t want or need. More information is generated in a single day than we can absorb in a lifetime. To fully enjoy life, all of us must find our

own breathing space and peace of mind.<sup>1</sup> How can we do this? There is only one answer. We must rise above the evil that encroaches upon us. We must follow the counsel of the Lord, who said, “It is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places.”<sup>2</sup>

We unavoidably stand in so many unholy places and are subjected to so much that is vulgar, profane, and destructive of

the Spirit of the Lord that I encourage our Saints all over the world, wherever possible, to strive to stand more often in holy places. Our most holy places are our sacred temples. Within them is a feeling of sacred comfort. We should seek to be worthy to take our families to the temple to be sealed together for eternity. We should also search for the records of our kindred dead so that they too can be sealed to us in one of the temples. We must strive for holiness by being “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>3</sup> In this way we can maintain and strengthen our own individual relationship with our God.

### **Becoming holy**

Holiness is the strength of the soul. It comes by faith and through obedience to God’s laws and ordinances. God then purifies the heart by faith, and the heart becomes purged from that which is profane and unworthy. When holiness is achieved by conforming to God’s will, one knows intuitively that which is wrong and that which is right before the Lord. Holiness speaks when there is silence, encouraging that which is good or reproving that which is wrong.

Holiness is also a standard of righteousness. In some remarks by President Brigham Young in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on February 16, 1862, he used the expression “Holiness to the Lord.” He then further explained what “Holiness to the Lord” meant to him. I quote: “Thirty years’ experience has taught me that every moment of my life must be holiness to the Lord, resulting from equity, justice, mercy and uprightness in all my actions, which is the only course by which I can preserve the Spirit of the Almighty to myself.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Leave the world and go to the temple**

Last year one of my grandsons took his wife to New York City with their parents to

attend the beautiful new Manhattan temple. The hustle and bustle and noise of the thousands of people outside was deafening. As the taxi pulled up in front of the temple, Katherine, my grandson’s wife, began to cry. Even on the outside of the temple she felt its sacredness. They entered, left the noisome world, and worshiped in the house of the Lord. It was a sacred and unforgettable experience for them.

As President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us, “There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His Spirit in an environment of holiness and peace.”<sup>5</sup> Truly, Joseph Smith’s prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple has been answered: “And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that . . . it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.”<sup>6</sup>

At the funeral of Patriarch Joseph Smith Sr., his feelings about the temple were described in these words:

“To dwell in the house of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple, was his daily delight; and in it he enjoyed many blessings, and spent many hours in sweet communion with his heavenly Father. He has trod its sacred aisles, solitary and alone from mankind, long before the king of day has gilded the eastern horizon; and he has uttered his aspirations within its walls, when nature has been asleep. In its holy enclosures have the visions of heaven been opened to his mind, and his soul has feasted on the riches of eternity.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Holiness to the Lord**

I am grateful that our temples all bear the words “The House of the Lord, Holiness to the Lord.” This reminder of holy places has roots that go back to the Old Testament. Zechariah reminds us that the day will come when “there [shall] be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO



THE LORD. . . . Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts.”<sup>8</sup> I greatly admire the door handles in the Salt Lake Temple. They are so artfully designed, each bearing that reminder “Holiness to the Lord.”

As a boy in southern Utah over 65 years ago, I used to feel a thrill when the words “Holiness to the Lord” would appear on some of the buildings in the little towns. Those golden words were often a central adornment for most important buildings, such as the co-op store and the bishops’ storehouse. I have in my possession some stock certificates of ZCMI, a pioneer mercantile institution. They bear the signatures of John Taylor, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, and David O. McKay. Printed on every stock certificate are the words “Holiness to the Lord.” I wonder what has become of these mottoes of holiness? Have they vanished with so many other reminders of faith and devotion?

### **Blessings of temple attendance**

The days of our lives will be greatly blessed as we frequent the temples to learn the transcending spiritual relations we have with Deity. We need to try harder to be found standing in holy places. Temple ceremonial covenants and observances are means to help secure holiness of character. In our desire to create in our people more commitment to the holy work of the temples, we must urge them to look deeper to the profound spiritual meaning to be found there. As Paul reminded us, “For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”<sup>9</sup>

In our day President Gordon B. Hinckley has told us: “If every man in this church who has been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood were to qualify himself to hold a temple recommend, and then were to go to the house of the Lord and renew his covenants in solemnity before God and witnesses, we would be a better people. There

would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us.”<sup>10</sup>

The Saints should do their family research and attend the temple because they are moved by the Holy Spirit to do so. We should go to the temple, among other reasons, to safeguard our personal holiness and that of our families.

### **Homes should be holy places**

In addition to temples, surely another holy place on earth ought to be our homes. The feelings of holiness in my home prepared me for feelings of holiness in the temple. Before I went on my first mission to Brazil, my mother lovingly handmade a piece of temple clothing for me to wear when I went to the temple. It is now old and frayed, but it is a special, sacred symbol of Mother’s love for that which is holy.

Thanks to my dear wife, Ruth, I can say that our home has been a place where we have sought to honor the spirit of holiness to the Lord. We did not always succeed. Of course not. But we tried. When I was overwhelmed as a young father with the responsibility of providing temporally for my family, taking care of my Church callings and many other civic duties, Ruth would lovingly and gently bring me back to my parental responsibility in our home.

For example, she would remind me when it was time for home evening and then tenderly suggest what we might appropriately study in our home evenings. She would also help me keep track of important family events such as birthdays and activities of the children when they needed my time and support. She still does

that important and appreciated service. If we really want our homes to be places of holiness, we will try harder to do those things that are conducive to the Spirit of the Lord.

### Chapels are holy places

Our chapels are dedicated to the Lord as holy places. We are told we should go to the house of prayer and offer up our sacraments upon His holy day.<sup>11</sup> Partaking of the sacrament is a solemn and sacred privilege. In our chapels we are instructed in principles of the gospel, children are blessed, members are confirmed and given the gift of the Holy Ghost, and testimonies of the truthfulness of the gospel are borne. A convert in Texas said, when she walked through the chapel door, there was a feeling of holiness that she had never before experienced in her life.

### Strive each day for greater holiness

We must try harder to be a holy people. We live in the fulness of times. So much has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This places upon us a special relationship to the Lord. We are the beneficiaries, guardians, and caretakers of these responsibilities under the delegation, authority, and direction of President Hinckley, who holds all the keys. As children of the Lord, we should strive every day to rise to a higher level of personal righteousness

in all of our actions. We need to guard constantly against all of Satan's influences.

As President Brigham Young taught, "Every moment of [our lives] must be holiness to the Lord, . . . which is the only course by which [we] can preserve the Spirit of the Almighty to [ourselves]." May the Lord bless each and all of us in our special responsibility to find holiness to the Lord by standing in holy places. That is where we will find the spiritual protection we need for ourselves and our families. That is the source of help to carry forth the word of the Lord in our time. Standing in holy places will help us rise above the evil influences of our time and draw us closer to our Savior. I testify that if we do this, the Lord will bless us forever and we will be made mighty "in faith and in works."<sup>12</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Jeff Davidson, "'Overworked Americans' or Overwhelmed Americans?" *Business Horizons*, Jan.-Feb. 1994, 62-66.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 101:22.
3. 1 Timothy 4:12.
4. *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 1862, 313.
5. "Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 109:13.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:194.
8. Zechariah 14:20-21.
9. 2 Corinthians 3:6.
10. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
12. Helaman 10:5.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### High standards for missionary service

Brothers and sisters, a few weeks ago Sister Ballard and I enjoyed speaking to the missionaries at the Provo Missionary Training Center. We were thrilled to see their radiant, eager faces and feel the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. These fine

missionaries are well on their way to carrying the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. We thank parents, bishops, stake presidents, and especially our young people for responding to the prophet's call for more thorough spiritual preparation to serve the Lord.



As we “raised the bar” for missionary service, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “This work is rigorous. It demands strength and vitality. It demands mental sharpness and capacity. It demands faith, desire, and consecration. It demands clean hands and a pure heart.”

He went on to say: “The time has come when we must raise the standards of those who are called . . . as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We simply cannot permit those who have not qualified themselves as to worthiness to go into the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel” (“Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 17).

Today we call for more qualified missionaries, young men who have prepared to serve by accepting the challenge of our prophet “to practice self-discipline, to live above the low standards of the world, to avoid transgression and take the high road in all their activities” (“Missionary Service,” 17).

### **Prepare every young man**

The work of the Lord in our 339 missions is expanding, so we must increase our efforts to see that every 12-year-old young man is worthily ordained a deacon; every 14-year-old, a teacher; every 16-year-old, a priest; and every 18- to 19-year-old worthily receives the Melchizedek Priesthood. We can do this by filling the hearts of our young men with love for the Lord, understanding and appreciation of His Atonement, and a clear vision of the marvel of the Restoration.

When our youth understand the significance of the Restoration of the gospel and know for themselves that God is our Heavenly Father and He loves all of His children, that Jesus is the Christ, and that together They personally visited Joseph Smith to open this, the final dispensation of time, they will want to help carry this message to the world. When our youth see

the Book of Mormon as tangible evidence that the message of the Restoration is true, they will be filled with a desire to do their part in teaching these truths to our Heavenly Father’s children.

We learned from the missionaries at the Missionary Training Center what would have helped them most to prepare for their mission. Above all else they wished they had:

- Learned the doctrine better through focused scripture study.
- Learned how to study and to pray sincerely.
- Been more disciplined and worked harder.
- Understood better what is expected.
- Had more teaching opportunities.
- And had more searching interviews by bishops and parents.

Brothers and sisters, together we can teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, in its simplicity and power, to all of our youth in the Church. Working with parents, we can help them prepare for a mission and a lifetime of service. Let us go forward to search for every one of our precious youth, regardless of their activity level, illuminating the Light of Christ that is within them. President Boyd K. Packer said:

“The Light of Christ is as universal as sunlight itself. Wherever there is human life, there is the Spirit of Christ. Every living soul is possessed of it. . . . It is the inspirer of everything that will bless and benefit mankind. It nourishes goodness itself” (“The Light of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 13).

So we know that all have within them the Light of Christ. Our responsibility as parents, teachers, and leaders is to kindle that light in our youth until the flame of testimony burns deep within their hearts and souls and then to encourage each one of them to take that flame and use it to help kindle the Light of Christ in others.

Of course, the adversary knows this and is working overtime to influence some of our youth to disregard the teachings of

the Church. That is why parents, leaders, and teachers need to counsel together and know every young man and young woman—every one. Whether they are active or not, we need to know them.

### **The need for more missionaries**

It is true that the bar has been raised for our missionaries. This means that the bar has been raised for parents and leaders as well. We will need to increase our faith and expand our efforts to give every young man the opportunity to serve.

President Hinckley also expressed this concern: “We need more missionaries. The message to raise the bar on missionary qualifications was not a signal to send fewer missionaries but . . . a call for parents and leaders to work with young men earlier to better prepare them for missionary service and to keep them worthy of such service. All young men who are worthy and who are physically and emotionally able should prepare to serve in this most important work” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27).

Similarly, with reference to young women, the President said: “There has been some misunderstanding of earlier counsel regarding single sisters serving as missionaries. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot. But it should be kept in mind that young sisters are not under obligation to go on missions. They should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men, but some will wish to go” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” 27).

Brothers and sisters, there is an incredible amount of work that needs to be done. The Spirit of the Lord is brooding over many of the nations of the world. Doors previously locked are opening to us. We need more hardworking, testimony-enriched missionaries in order to reach more of our Heavenly Father’s children who are now at a place where we can reach

them. These are our brothers and sisters, and we have the responsibility to teach them the message of the Restoration.

### **Blessings of missionary service**

We know that great things happen in the lives of those who faithfully serve full-time missions. Missionary service is not easy, but it is infinitely worth it. Those who serve and return home with honor have established a pattern of living and serving that will bless their own lives and the lives of generations to follow. They return better prepared to be strong leaders and teachers in the organizations of the Church. They return better prepared to be righteous fathers and mothers and able to teach their children the gospel. Full-time missionary service is a blessing for those whom the missionaries find and teach as well as for the missionaries themselves.

### **Find one more young man**

Now we have a special request for you bishops and branch presidents. We are aware that you already know those who have cleared the bar and are preparing to accept mission calls during this year. What we are asking leaders in every unit to do is to counsel together with parents and pray to find at least *one more* young man, above those already committed, who can be called to serve.

If the over 26,000 wards and branches in the Church will send all of those whom they are already planning to send into the mission field plus *one more*, the ranks of our full-time missionaries will swell and we will move much closer to our divine mandate to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Of course, these missionaries need to be worthy, faithful, healthy, and fully committed. Perhaps this *one more* may not be ready right now. So we ask parents and stake and ward council members to rely upon the discerning power of the Holy Spirit to know whom you can help to be ready for a call this year.

As you reach out to them, please remember the experience of a friend of mine. He had never owned a horse in his life until he married a wonderful woman who loves horses. Wanting to impress his new bride, he announced one evening that he was going to the pasture to teach a colt how to be led. He weighed more than the colt. He knew more than the colt. He assumed all he would need to do was pull on the lead rope and sooner or later the colt would follow. He was confident that the process would be short and simple.

He attached the lead rope to the halter, got in front of the colt, and pulled. The colt resisted. My friend pulled harder, and the colt planted his legs more firmly. So he really pulled, and the colt fell over. The process was repeated several times until my friend made this assessment: in just four or five minutes he had successfully taught the colt to fall over. All he had to do was get in front of the colt, pick up the rope, and over it would go.

His wife, watching this process, finally suggested that instead of getting in front of the colt and pulling, he might try wrapping the rope around the colt and simply walking alongside. To my friend's chagrin, it worked.

There seems to be something inside each of us that resists being told or pushed or pulled. But if someone puts an arm around a young man and walks alongside him, he is likely to follow along with a desire to serve. Please remember this as you strengthen the testimony of *one more* who can serve.

### **Making missionary service a tradition**

May I make three suggestions for your consideration to help establish a rich tradition of missionary service in your family, stakes, wards, or branches?

First, make sure all of our youth understand who they are. From their earliest days in Primary, our children sing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). Help

them to know what it really means to be a child of God. Remind them that they are here at this particular time in the history of the world, with the fulness of the gospel at their fingertips, because they made valiant choices in the premortal existence. Our youth need to stand firm for righteousness and truth. They need the vision of the blessings that can be theirs as they demonstrate their love for Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through their willingness to serve.

Second, teach the doctrine. While activities and social events have their appropriate place in our overall youth program, it is the doctrine that converts and commits. Our youth have a right to expect that their parents and Church leaders and teachers will see that they know and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost will confirm the truth to their hearts and will ignite the Light of Christ in their souls. And then you will have *one more* fully prepared missionary. Yesterday, Elder Richard G. Scott suggested that *Preach My Gospel*, the new guide that our missionaries are now using to teach the gospel, can be a good resource to help you.

Finally, we recognize that it may not be wise for some of our young men and young women to face the rigors and challenges of a full-time mission. If priesthood leaders excuse any of you from full-time missionary service, we ask you and your families to accept the decision and move forward. You can prepare to participate in the saving ordinances of the temple and find other ways to be of service. And we ask all of our members to be supportive and to show great love and understanding in assisting all of our faithful youth in their various Church callings.

Brothers and sisters, I add my testimony of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ and pray that He will bless all of us in our efforts to inspire and motivate more of our youth and couples to serve a full-time mission. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David E. Sorensen

### A military dream put on hold

#### *Recommendation for a full-time mission*

In the early 1950s the United States was at war on the Korean peninsula. Because of the draft policy of the government at that time, young men were not allowed to serve missions but instead were required to join the military. Knowing this, I enrolled in the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps when I went to college. My goal was to become an officer like my oldest brother. However, when I made a visit home for the Christmas holiday, my home-ward bishop, Vern Freeman, invited me into his office. He advised me that a young Church leader by the name of Brother Gordon B. Hinckley had negotiated an agreement with the U.S. government permitting each ward in the Church in the United States to call one young man to serve a mission. This young man would receive an automatic deferment from the military during his mission.

Bishop Freeman said he had been praying about it and felt he should recommend me to serve as a full-time missionary representing our ward. I explained to him that I had already made other plans—I had enrolled in the Army ROTC and expected to become an officer! My bishop gently reminded me that he had been prompted to recommend me to serve a mission at that particular time. He said, "Go home and talk to your parents and come back this evening with your answer."

I went home and told my father and mother what had happened. They said the bishop was inspired, and I should happily accept the Lord's invitation to serve. My mother could see how disappointed I was at the prospect of not becoming an army officer right away. She quoted:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>1</sup>

That night I went back to the bishop's office and accepted his invitation. He told me to go to the Selective Service Office and advise them of my decision.

When I did so, to my surprise the lady who was chairman of the Selective Service Office told me, "If you accept a mission call, you will receive your draft notice before you can reenter Army ROTC. You will serve as an enlisted man, not as an officer."

#### *Standing by convictions brings opportunity*

Despite this unexpected change, my mission was wonderful. It changed the course of my life as it does for those who serve. But true to their word, the government sent an induction letter drafting me into the U.S. Army about one month before my mission release.

After boot camp and military police school, I found myself assigned to an army base to work as a military policeman. One night I was given an all-night assignment to escort a convoy of prisoners from one camp to another.

During the night the convoy stopped at a halfway point for a rest. The commanding officer instructed us to go into the restaurant and drink coffee so we could stay awake the rest of the night. Right away he noticed that I declined. He said, "Soldier, you need to drink some coffee to stay awake the rest of this trip. I do not want any prisoners escaping or causing trouble on my watch."

I said, "Sir, I respectfully decline. I am a Mormon, and I don't drink coffee."

He didn't care for my answer, and he again admonished me to drink the coffee.

Again, I politely refused. I took my place at the rear of the bus, my weapon in hand, praying in my heart that I would stay

awake and never have to use it. The trip ended uneventfully.

A few days later the same commanding officer invited me into his office for a private interview. He told me that even though he had worried that I would not be able to stay awake during the all-night trip, he appreciated that I had stood by my convictions. Then to my amazement he said his assistant was being transferred and he was recommending me to be his new assistant!

For most of the next two years I had many opportunities for leadership and managerial assignments. As it turned out, the positive experiences during my military service were more than I had ever dreamed possible.

### **Faith and obedience are the answer**

From this simple story—and many more like it over the course of my life—I have learned that faith and obedience are the answers to our concerns, cares, and suffering. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the power that can change our lives and lead us to salvation.

How can we build this faith? Through our actions. We must “go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded,”<sup>2</sup> just as Nephi counseled. We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts, as my mother so lovingly taught me. Gratefully, many times when we exercise faith to do the Lord’s will, we find that we are richly blessed for our obedience.

### **Even the faithful sometimes suffer**

Sometimes, though, we find that even when we do our best to serve the Lord, we still suffer. You may know someone who faces these most challenging of circumstances. Consider the parent whose child becomes ill, for whom everyone prays and fasts with all their heart and soul, but who ultimately dies; or the missionary who sac-

rifices to go on a mission, then develops a terrible illness that leaves him or her severely disabled or in chronic pain; or the woman who lives her life as faithfully and obediently as she can but is never able to have the children she hopes for; or the wife who does her very best making a good home for her family and raising her children but whose husband leaves her.

The scriptures have many examples of people who were saved after showing great faith, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. But the scriptures also have many examples of devout people who did not get divine intervention during a crisis. Abinadi was burned at the stake; John the Baptist was beheaded; Alma and Amulek’s followers were cast into the flames. To do well does not mean everything will always turn out well. The key is to remember that faith and obedience are still the answers—even when things go wrong, perhaps especially when things go wrong.

### **Solace from the Savior during adversity**

Remember the Lord has promised that He will help us as we face adversity. He has particular compassion for those who suffer. It was He who said, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”<sup>3</sup>

As part of the Atonement, our Savior suffered all things. He knows physical and emotional pain; He knows the sorrow of loss and betrayal. But He showed us that ultimately love, patience, humility, and obedience are the path to true peace and happiness. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” But then, to warn us to look for more than just worldly comfort, Jesus added, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”<sup>4</sup> The world sees peace as the absence of conflict or pain, but Jesus offers us solace despite our suffering. His life was not free of conflict or pain, but it was free of fear and full of meaning. The Apostle Peter wrote:

"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: . . .

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."<sup>5</sup>

We who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior must rely wholly on the merits of Christ. He will save us after all we can do. When we courageously exercise our faith and when we go forward relying on the merits of Christ, He will bless us and guide us in all of our efforts. He will strengthen us and bring us peace in the time of our trials. "For we walk by faith, not by sight."<sup>6</sup> I pray that each of us can better learn to put our trust in the Lord and to increase our faith in Him.

### **President Hinckley is a living seer**

Now, brothers and sisters, in closing I wish to mention one other topic. Over the past years I have been blessed to be able to observe President Hinckley closely, and I want to remind you that President Hinckley

is not only a living prophet but also a living seer. He sees things that others do not see. He has the gift of discernment; he is an optimist and a realist. I wish to express my gratitude to the Lord for preserving President Hinckley's life and permitting him and his noble counselors to lead the Church for these past 10 years. Through President Hinckley's divine guidance, the Church has received many far-reaching blessings, many that are not obvious. I strongly encourage each of you to more closely follow his counsel and guidance, for truly "a seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus is the Christ. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. President Gordon B. Hinckley is our living prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Proverbs 3:5–6.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. Matthew 5:4.
4. John 14:27.
5. 1 Peter 2:20–21, 23.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:7.
7. Moses 6:36.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Sweet Is the Work."

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## **Sister Kathleen H. Hughes**

### **The importance of Christlike friends**

A few weeks ago my husband and I attended a temple session. As we entered, we were greeted by a temple worker, a dear friend from our ward. That greeting began a remarkable experience for us. We were met and served, more than any time I remember, by many people we knew: friends from previous wards, friends from the community, men and women we had served with in various callings. The last person I encountered was a young woman I didn't recognize. She was lovely, and when she be-

gan to speak, I immediately remembered: Robin, one of the young women in my Laurel class when I was first a Young Women president. As we visited and exchanged memories and life updates, she told me how much that time had meant to her. I felt the same way.

I left the temple feeling moved by so much kindness, aware how important friends have been to me throughout my life. The Lord has touched my spirit time and again, and more often than not, His touch has reached me through the hand of a friend.



### A father's example of friendship

Thirty-eight years ago this month, Dean and I, then newlyweds, traveled to New Mexico to visit my parents. While we were there, my father took us on a day trip into the mountains in the northern part of the state. In the afternoon we encountered a car stranded on the roadside with a flat tire. The driver told my father that his spare was also flat and he needed a ride to the nearest town to get the tire fixed. My father, seeing the man's family inside the car, said to him, "You'll never be able to get to town and back before dark. But listen, you have the same size wheel as mine. Take my spare, and the next time you come to Albuquerque, bring it back to me."

The stranger, shocked by the offer, said, "But you don't even know me."

Daddy's response, typical for him, was, "You're an honest man, aren't you? You'll bring the tire back."

A few weeks later I asked my dad about the spare tire. He told me that it had been returned.

My father, now in his 90th year, still goes about his life the same way. Most people his age *receive* meals-on-wheels, but my dad *delivers* food to the "aged." He's often at the bedside of friends who are ill or dying. He goes out with his chain saw, helping the Rotary club with their annual cleanup efforts. As I think of Daddy's life and actions, I'm reminded of President Boyd K. Packer's thought: he's "active in the gospel" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 87; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 82). His life, as the hymn suggests, touches lives for good, and in the touching, all are enriched (see "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good," *Hymns*, no. 293). My father understands friendship.

### Recognizing the love of the Lord

As a Relief Society presidency, we sometimes hear women say that they don't feel the love of the Lord. But perhaps they

would feel more of His love if they looked for His hand in the actions of those who care for them. It may be a member of their branch or ward, a neighbor, or even a stranger who blesses them and manifests Christ's love. Elder Henry B. Eyring instructed us: "You are called to represent the Savior. Your voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, your hands to lift the same as His hands" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 80; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 76). If we can lift others in Christ's name, surely we can also be lifted.

One home teacher I know faithfully made monthly visits to an elderly widow. More than just visit, however, each fall he winterized the sister's air conditioner and checked the filter on her furnace. Was that God's love or the love of the home teacher? The answer, of course, is both.

What greater gift dost thou bestow,  
What greater goodness can we know  
Than Christlike friends, whose gentle  
ways  
Strengthen our faith, enrich our days.  
[*Hymns*, no. 293]

### Treasured friends

I have been blessed throughout my life with Christlike friends—from friends of my youth to the many people who have blessed our family in all the wards we have lived in. Their faith and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, their service, their wise and gentle instruction have enriched our lives. Some of my friends are very different from me. We disagree about things, and we can even irritate each other. But friendship allows for differences—in fact, it embraces them. I love to visit stakes made up of people from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and ethnic origins.

I'm experiencing right now a special dimension of sisterhood and friendship as I serve with Sisters Parkin and Pingree and the other women in the auxiliary presidencies and boards. These are *good* women.

Oh, how I love them. After three years together, my dear sisters in the presidency know me well. They know my faith and testimony, but they also know my insecurities and worries. They know that when I'm tired after a long training trip, I'm not my best self. But I feel their love and patience, and I know they still think the best of me. Their testimonies and prayers bolster me. Their laughter brightens my day. In every sense we are sisters.

I have had similar experiences with my own family. One of my younger sisters has been struggling with cancer the past few months. We don't live close, but phone calls bring her near. We have shared love, prayers, memories, and tender testimonies as she has gone through this difficult ordeal. My sisters are treasured friends. So are my brothers, my dear husband, my children, and my grandchildren (no matter how noisy those grandchildren are).

### **Overcome hurt feelings and become one**

In the early years of the Restoration, new members gathered to create Zion. Zion was both a place and purpose—a spirit. We no longer gather in the same way. Our branches and wards are now our Zion. But they take on the spirit of Zion only when members care for one another. Sadly, we sometimes hear of women and men who have had their feelings hurt and become alienated by other Church members. If you are on either side of this dilemma—the offender or the one who has been offended—seek forgiveness; see your own part in the fault. Remember Christ's admonition to us: "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

### **Joseph—friend to humanity and the Lord**

I recently had the opportunity to speak to a woman who asked me about Joseph Smith. She was clearly skeptical about his calling and mission. As I spoke to her, the

words of the Lord to Oliver Cowdery came to me: "Stand by my servant Joseph, faithfully" (D&C 6:18). I hope that on that day, and at every moment in my life, it can be said of me, "She stood by Joseph." I want to be his friend.

Joseph Smith himself was a great friend to many. He said, "Friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism'; [it is designed] to revolutionize and civilize the world, and cause wars and contentions to cease and men to become friends and brothers" (*History of the Church*, 5:517).

And yet he knew that friendship was more than an abstraction. He learned one day that a brother's house had been burned by enemies. When Church members said they felt sorry for him, the Prophet took some money from his pocket and said, "I feel sorry for this brother to the amount of five dollars. How much do you . . . feel sorry [for him]?" (in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* [1974], 150).

Do we feel about friendship as the Prophet Joseph did? Do we turn our good feelings into practical assistance? God knows the needs of His children, and He often works through us, prompting us to help one another. When we act on such promptings, we tread on holy ground, for we are allowed the opportunity to serve as an agent of God in answering a prayer.

### **Be a friend to the Savior**

Brothers and sisters, if we are friends to the Prophet Joseph, then we are friends to the Savior as well. Do we live lives that proclaim "devotion to the Savior's name"? (see *Hymns*, no. 293). Joseph Smith did, and in this year as we honor the man who ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times, we should remember not only his friendship to humanity, but his friendship and dedication to the Lord. The Prophet said: "I will try to be contented with my lot, knowing that God is my friend. In Him



I shall find comfort” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [1984], 239; spelling and punctuation standardized).

It should be obvious to each of us that our ultimate friendship should be with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Savior has affectionately said to us, “I will call you friends, for you are my friends” (D&C 93:45). His greatest desire for us, His brothers and sisters, is to bring us back to our Father. And the way for us is clear: Develop in our lives, to the degree that we can, the qualities and attributes of Christ; obey His commandments, and do His work and His will.

As I think back to the day I was greeted in the temple by so many I loved, I like to imagine that our daily lives can be equally blessed. I felt a love that seemed a glimpse of the pure love of Christ—the charity that should fill our hearts. I picture

wards and branches where friends of all ages and backgrounds stand together and model their lives on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

I bear you my testimony today that Christ lives. I give thanks for Him. I pray that I may always be His friend and that in doing so, I will be your friend as well. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

We shall now hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Following the singing, it will be my privilege to address you. The choir will then sing “Praise to the Man,” and the benediction will be offered by Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A message for converts

My message is to those who are converts to the Church. More than half the members of the Church today chose to be baptized after the age of eight. So you are not the exception in the Church. To you I wish to say how much the Lord loves you and trusts you. And even more, I wish to tell you how much He depends on you.

You felt His love at least to some degree when you were baptized. Years ago I took a young man, 20 years of age, into the waters of baptism. My companion and I had taught him the gospel. He was the first in his family to hear the message of the restored gospel. He asked to be baptized. The testimony of the Spirit made him want to follow the example of the Savior, who was baptized by John the Baptist even though He was without sin.

As I brought that young man up out of the waters of baptism, he surprised me by throwing his arms around my neck and whispering in my ear, tears streaming down his face, “I’m clean; I’m clean.” That same young man, after we laid our hands on his head with the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood and conferred on him the Holy Ghost, said to me, “When you spoke those words, I felt something like fire go down from the top of my head through my body, all the way to my feet.”

Your experience will have been unique to you, but to some degree you felt the magnitude of the blessing which came to you. Since then, you have felt the reality of the promises made to you and the promises you made. You have felt the cleansing that came from your baptism, because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. And you have felt the change in your heart as the

Holy Ghost has become your companion. Your desires have begun to change.

### **The desire to be bound forever as a family**

When someone tells me that he or she is a convert to the Church, I ask, “Has anyone else in your family accepted the gospel?” When the answer is “Yes,” there follows an excited description of the happy miracle in the life of a parent or a brother or sister or a grandparent. There is joy in knowing that someone in his or her family is sharing the blessing and the happiness. When the answer is “No, so far I am the only member,” he or she will almost always speak of parents, saying something like this, “No, not yet. But I am still trying.” And you can tell from the sound in the voice that the convert will never stop trying, not ever.

The Lord knew you would have those feelings when He allowed you to receive the covenants which are blessing your life. He knew you would feel a desire for your family to share the blessings you felt coming into the Church. Even more, He knew how that desire would increase when you came to know the joy of the promises He makes to us in sacred temples. There, for those who qualify, He lets us make covenants with Him. We promise to obey His commandments. And He promises us, if we are faithful, that we may live with Him in glory in families forever in the world to come.

In His loving-kindness, He knew you would have a desire to be bound forever to your parents and their parents. You may have had a grandfather like mine, who always seemed to treasure my visits. I thought I was his favorite grandchild until my cousins told me they felt the same way. He is gone now. All my grandparents and their ancestors have died. Many of your ancestors died never having the chance to accept the gospel and to receive the blessings and promises you have received. The Lord is fair, and He is loving.

And so He prepared for you and me a way for us to have the desire of our hearts to offer to our ancestors all the blessings He has offered us.

The plan to make that possible has been in place from the beginning. The Lord gave promises to His children long ago. The very last book of the Old Testament is the book of the prophet Malachi. And the last words are a sweet promise and a stern warning:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”<sup>1</sup>

Some of those words are crucial to understand. The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the end of the world. Jehovah, the Messiah, will come in glory. The wicked will all be destroyed. We live in the last days. Time could be running out for us to do what we have promised to do.

### **Elijah restored the sealing power**

It is important to know why the Lord promised to send Elijah. Elijah was a great prophet with great power given him by God. He held the greatest power God gives to His children: he held the sealing power, the power to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven. God gave it to the Apostle Peter. And the Lord kept His promise to send Elijah. Elijah came to the Prophet Joseph Smith on April 3, 1836, just after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the first temple built after the Restoration of the gospel. Joseph described the sacred moment:

“Another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be

sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

“Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Missionary work in the spirit world**

As you came into the Church, you have felt your heart being turned toward family, both those who are living and those who are in the spirit world. The Lord provided another vision to help you know what to do with those feelings.

After Joseph Smith, the Lord called other prophets to lead His Church. One was Joseph F. Smith. He saw in vision what happened in the spirit world when the Savior appeared there between the time of His death and His Resurrection.<sup>3</sup> President Smith saw the joy of the spirits when they learned that the Savior had broken the bands of death and that because of His Atonement they could be resurrected. And he saw the Savior organize His servants among the spirits to preach His gospel to every spirit and offer the chance to choose the covenants and the blessings which are offered to you and which you want for your ancestors. All are to have that chance.

President Smith also saw the leaders the Savior called to take the gospel to Heavenly Father’s children in the spirit world. He named some of them: Father Adam, Mother Eve, Noah, Abraham, Ezekiel, Elijah, prophets we know from the Book of Mormon, and some from the last days, including Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff. Think of the power of those missionaries to teach the gospel and to touch the hearts of your ancestors. It is not surprising that Wilford Woodruff said while he lived

that he believed few, if any, of the ancestors of the Latter-day Saints in the spirit world would choose to reject the message of salvation when they heard it.<sup>4</sup>

### **Performing ordinances for ancestors**

Many of your deceased ancestors will have received a testimony that the message of the missionaries is true. When you received that testimony, you could ask the missionaries for baptism. But those who are in the spirit world cannot. The ordinances you so cherish are offered only in this world. Someone in this world must go to a holy temple and accept the covenants on behalf of the person in the spirit world. That is why we are under obligation to find the names of our ancestors and ensure that they are offered by us what they cannot receive there without our help.

For me, knowing that turns my heart not only to my ancestors who wait but to the missionaries who teach them. I will see those missionaries in the spirit world, and so will you. Think of a faithful missionary standing there with those he has loved and taught who are your ancestors. Picture as I do the smile on the face of that missionary as you walk up to him and your ancestors whom he converted but could not baptize or have sealed to family until you came to the rescue. I do not know what the protocol will be in such a place, but I imagine arms thrown around your neck and tears of gratitude.

If you can imagine the smile of the missionary and your ancestor, think of the Savior when you meet Him. You will have that interview. He paid the price of the sins of you and all of Heavenly Father’s spirit children. He is Jehovah. He sent Elijah. He conferred the powers of the priesthood to seal and to bless out of perfect love. And He has trusted you by letting you hear the gospel in your lifetime, giving you the chance to accept the obligation to offer it to those of your ancestors who did not have your priceless opportunity. Think

of the gratitude He has for those who pay the price in work and faith to find the names of their ancestors and who love them and Him enough to offer them eternal life in families, the greatest of all the gifts of God. He offered them an infinite sacrifice. He will love and appreciate those who paid whatever price they could to allow their ancestors to choose His offer of eternal life.

### **Hearts bound together**

Because your heart has already been turned, the price may not seem high. You begin by doing simple things. Write down what you already know about your family. You will need to write down the names of parents and their parents with the dates of birth or death or marriage. When you can, you will want to record the places. Some of that you will know from memory. But you can also ask relatives. They may even have some certificates of births, marriages, or deaths. Make copies and organize them. If you learn stories about their lives, write them down and keep them. You are not just gathering names. Those you never met in life will become friends you love. Your heart will be bound to theirs forever.

You can start searching in the first few generations going back in time. From that you will identify many of your ancestors who need your help. Someone in your own ward or branch of the Church has been called to help you prepare those names for the temple. There they can be offered the covenants which will free them from their spirit prisons and bind them in families—your family—forever.

### **Ancestors look down in hope**

Your opportunities and the obligations they create are remarkable in the whole history of the world. There are more temples across the earth than there have ever been. More people in all the world have felt the Spirit of Elijah move them to record the identities of their ancestors

and facts of their ancestors' lives. There are more resources to search out your ancestors than there have ever been in the history of the world. The Lord has poured out knowledge about how to make that information available worldwide through technology that a few years ago would have seemed a miracle.

With those opportunities there comes greater obligation to keep our trust with the Lord. Where much is given, much is required.<sup>5</sup> After you find the first few generations, the road will become more difficult. The price will become greater. As you go back in time, the records become less complete. As others of your family search out ancestors, you will discover that the ancestor you find has already been offered the full blessings of the temple. Then you will have a difficult and important choice to make. You will be tempted to stop and leave the hard work of finding to others who are more expert or to another time in your life. But you will also feel a tug on your heart to go on in the work, hard as it will be.

As you decide, remember that the names which will be so difficult to find are of real people to whom you owe your existence in this world and whom you will meet again in the spirit world. When you were baptized, your ancestors looked down on you with hope. Perhaps after centuries, they rejoiced to see one of their descendants make a covenant to find them and to offer them freedom. In your reunion, you will see in their eyes either gratitude or terrible disappointment. Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands. You will have more than your own strength as you choose to labor on to find them.

A few nights ago I had a dream. I saw a piece of white paper with a name on it I did not know and a date I could only partially read. I got up and went to the records of my family. The last name on the slip of paper is from a line which came into my mother's ancestry 300 years ago in a place called Eaton Bray. Someone is anxious for

a long wait to end. I have not yet found that person. But I have found again the assurance that a loving God sends help in answer to prayer in this sacred work of redeeming our families, which is His work and His glory and to which we have pledged our hearts. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Malachi 4:5–6.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138.
4. See “Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff,” *Millennial Star*, May 28, 1894, 339–40.
5. See Luke 12:48.

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The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Remembering the Prophet Joseph

My brothers and sisters, as we have been reminded, we will commemorate next December the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In the meantime, many things will occur in celebration of this significant occasion.

Books will be published, symposia participated in by various scholars, pageants, a new motion picture, and a great many other things.

In anticipation of this, I have felt, as 15th in succession from his great pinnacle of achievement, to offer my testimony of his divine calling.

### The great things which God has revealed

I hold in my hand a precious little book. It was published in Liverpool, England, by Orson Pratt in 1853, 152 years ago. It is Lucy Mack Smith’s narrative of her son’s life.

It recounts in some detail Joseph’s various visits with the angel Moroni and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

The book tells that upon hearing of Joseph’s encounter with the angel, his brother Alvin suggested that the family get together and listen to him as he detailed “the great things which God has revealed to you” (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph*

*Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors of Many Generations* [1853], 84).

I take that statement as the subject of my talk—the great things which God has revealed through Joseph the Prophet. Permit me to name a few of many doctrines and practices which distinguish us from all other churches, and all of which have come of revelation to the youthful Prophet. They are familiar to you, but they are worth repeating and reflecting on.

### The nature of Deity

The first of these, of course, is the manifestation of God Himself and His Beloved Son, the risen Lord Jesus Christ. This grand theophany is, in my judgment, the greatest such event since the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord in the meridian of time. We have no record of any other event to equal it.

For centuries men gathered and argued concerning the nature of Deity. Constantine assembled scholars of various factions at Nicaea in the year 325. After two months of bitter debate, they compromised on a definition which for generations has been the doctrinal statement among Christians concerning the Godhead.

I invite you to read that definition and compare it with the statement of the boy Joseph. He simply says that God stood be-

fore him and spoke to him. Joseph could see Him and could hear Him. He was in form like a man, a being of substance. Beside Him was the resurrected Lord, a separate being, whom He introduced as His Beloved Son and with whom Joseph also spoke.

I submit that in the short time of that remarkable vision, Joseph learned more concerning Deity than all of the scholars and clerics of the past.

In this divine revelation there was reaffirmed beyond doubt the reality of the literal resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This knowledge of Deity, hidden from the world for centuries, was the first and great thing which God revealed to His chosen servant.

And upon the reality and truth of this vision rests the validity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **The Book of Mormon**

I speak next of another very important thing which God revealed.

The Christian world accepts the Bible as the word of God. Most have no idea of how it came to us.

I have just completed reading a newly published book by a renowned scholar. It is apparent from information which he gives that the various books of the Bible were brought together in what appears to have been an unsystematic fashion. In some cases, the writings were not produced until long after the events they describe. One is led to ask, "Is the Bible true? Is it really the word of God?"

We reply that it is, insofar as it is translated correctly. The hand of the Lord was in its making. But it now does not stand alone. There is another witness of the significant and important truths found therein.

Scripture declares that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Book of Mormon has come forth by the gift and power of God. It speaks as a voice from the dust in testimony of the Son of God. It speaks of His birth, of His ministry, of His crucifixion and resurrection, and of His appearance to the righteous in the land Bountiful on the American continent.

It is a tangible thing that can be handled, that can be read, that can be tested. It carries within its covers a promise of its divine origin. Millions now have put it to the test and found it to be a true and sacred record.

It has been named by those not of our faith as one of 20 books ever published in America that have had the greatest influence upon those who have read them.

As the Bible is the testament of the Old World, the Book of Mormon is the testament of the New. They go hand in hand in declaration of Jesus as the Son of the Father.

In the past 10 years alone, 51 million copies have been distributed. It is now available in 106 languages.

This sacred book, which came forth as a revelation of the Almighty, is indeed another testament of the divinity of our Lord.

I would think that the whole Christian world would reach out and welcome it and embrace it as a vibrant testimony. It represents another great and basic contribution which came as a revelation to the Prophet.

### **The priesthood**

Another is the restored priesthood. Priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. That authority is the keystone of any religion. I have read another book recently. It deals with the Apostasy of the primitive Church. If the authority of that Church was lost, how was it to be replaced?

Priesthood authority came from the only place it could come, and that is from



heaven. It was bestowed under the hands of those who held it when the Savior walked the earth.

First, there was John the Baptist, who conferred the Aaronic, or lesser priesthood. This was followed by a visitation of Peter, James, and John, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, who conferred upon Joseph and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood, which had been received by these Apostles under the hands of the Lord Himself when in life He said:

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

How beautiful is the unfolding of the pattern of restoration which led to the organization of the Church in the year 1830, 175 years ago this week. The very name of the Church came of revelation. Whose church was it? Was it Joseph Smith’s? Was it Oliver Cowdery’s? No, it was the Church of Jesus Christ restored to earth in these latter days.

### **The potential for families to be eternal**

Another great and singular revelation given to the Prophet was the plan for the eternal life of the family.

The family is a creation of the Almighty. It represents the most sacred of all relationships. It represents the most serious of all undertakings. It is the fundamental organization of society.

Through the revelations of God to His Prophet came the doctrine and authority under which families are sealed together not only for this life but for all eternity.

I think that if we had the capacity to teach effectively this one doctrine, it would capture the interest of millions of husbands and wives who love one another and who love their children, but whose marriage is in effect only “until death do you part.”

### **Innocence of children; method of baptism**

The innocence of little children is another revelation which God has given through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph. The general practice is the baptism of infants to take away the effects of what is described as the sin of Adam and Eve. Under the doctrine of the Restoration, baptism is for the remission of one’s individual and personal sins. It becomes a covenant between God and man. It is performed at the age of accountability, when people are old enough to recognize right from wrong. It is by immersion, in symbolism of the death and burial of Jesus Christ and His coming forth in the Resurrection.

### **Salvation for the dead**

I go on to mention another revealed truth.

We are told that God is no respecter of persons, and yet in no other church of which I am aware is provision made for those beyond the veil of death to receive every blessing which is afforded the living. The great doctrine of salvation for the dead is unique to this Church.

Men boast that they are “saved” and in the same breath admit that their forebears have not been and cannot be saved.

Jesus’s Atonement in behalf of all represents a great vicarious sacrifice. He set the pattern under which He became a proxy for all mankind. This pattern under which one man can act in behalf of another is carried forward in the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Here we serve in behalf of those who have died without a knowledge of the gospel. Theirs is the option to accept or reject the ordinance which is performed. They are placed on an equal footing with those who walk the earth. The dead are given the same opportunity as the living. Again, what a glorious and wonderful provision the Almighty has made through His revelation to His Prophet.

### The eternal nature of man

The eternal nature of man has been revealed. We are sons and daughters of God. God is the Father of our spirits. We lived before we came here. We had personality. We were born into this life under a divine plan. We are here to test our worthiness, acting in the agency which God has given to us. When we die, we shall go on living. Our eternal life is comprised of three phases: one, our premortal existence; two, our mortal existence; and three, our postmortal existence. In death we die to this world and step through the veil into the sphere we are worthy to enter. This, again, is a unique, singular, and precious doctrine of this Church which has come through revelation.

### Modern revelation

I offer this brief summary of the tremendous outpouring of knowledge and authority from God upon the head of His prophet. Were there time, I could speak of others. There is one more that I must mention. This is the principle of modern revelation. The article of faith which the Prophet wrote declares:

“We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

A growing church, a church that is spreading across the earth in these complex times, needs constant revelation from the throne of heaven to guide it and move it forward.

With prayer and anxious seeking of the will of the Lord, we testify that direction is received, that revelation comes, and that the Lord blesses His Church as it moves on its path of destiny.

### Go forward in faith

On the solid foundation of the Prophet Joseph’s divine calling and the revelations

of God which came through him, we go forward. Much has been accomplished in bringing us to this present day. But there is much more to be done in the process of taking this restored gospel to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).

I rejoice in the opportunity of association with you as we go forward in faith. The burden is at times heavy, as you well know. But let us not complain. Let us walk in faith, each doing our part.

### An incomparable outpouring

In this year of celebration, through our own performance, let us honor the Prophet, through whom God has revealed so much.

The sun rose on Joseph’s life on a cold day in Vermont in 1805. It set in Illinois on a sultry afternoon in 1844. During the brief 38½ years of his life, there came through him an incomparable outpouring of knowledge, gifts, and doctrine. Looked at objectively, there is nothing to compare with it. Subjectively, it is the substance of the personal testimony of millions of Latter-day Saints across the earth. You and I are honored to be among these.

As a boy I loved to hear a man who, with a rich baritone voice, sang the words of John Taylor:

The Seer, the Seer, Joseph, the Seer! . . .  
I love to dwell on his memory dear;  
The chosen of God and the friend of  
man,  
He brought the priesthood back again;  
He gazed on the past and the future,  
too, . . .  
And opened the heavenly world to view.  
[“The Seer, Joseph, the Seer,” *Hymns*  
(1948), no. 296]

He was truly a seer. He was a revealer. He was a prophet of the living God who has spoken to his own and all future generations.



To this I add my solemn witness of the divinity of his calling, of the virtue of his life, and of the sealing of his testimony with his death, in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Man."  
Elder Shirley D. Christensen offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 175th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 3, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 175th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" At the conclusion of the singing, Elders L. Tom Perry and Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. They will be followed by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### What seek ye?

It is always difficult to follow this magnificent choir. Thank you, choir, again for your beautiful music.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

"And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?" (John 1:35–38).

We find a world today looking for answers to the question "What seek ye?" in so many different ways. Too many are

sowing seeds of a fruit that will not nourish an eternal soul.

### **Discussion on a train in Europe**

Let me illustrate with an experience the Europe Central Area Presidency had while traveling by train to a meeting. We were taking advantage of the time together by discussing our assignment. A man who was seated across the aisle became curious about our conversation. He finally asked, “Are you Protestant or Catholic?” We replied, “Neither. We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” He acknowledged that he had heard of the Church but then went on to say, “You’ll never get very far in this country. The government only recognizes the Catholic and Protestant churches. They are the only ones who receive government financial support. A church cannot exist without government financial support.”

We tried to explain that our Church manages very well without government help—that we use the Lord’s system of tithing. He insisted our Church would not get very far in his country and suggested that perhaps we should place our efforts in some other part of the world. Of course we testified that the Lord’s system does work and told him about all the chapels and temples we are constructing throughout the world without having to resort to borrowed funds to build them. He seemed very surprised but still unconvinced.

Seeing that we could not persuade him that a church could exist without government support, we tried to change the subject. I asked, “What will happen in your country with the changes that are occurring? The declining population and the influx of an increasing number of immigrants will eventually make you a minority in your own land.”

With great national pride, he replied, “This will never happen.”

I countered, “How can you support such a position with immigration exceeding

your country’s birthrate?” He kept insisting this would never happen in his country—“Why, they would close the borders of our land before they would allow it to occur.”

I pressed on, “How can you prevent it with your current trends?”

His next statement shocked me: “I’m 82 years old. I will be long gone before we have to face that problem.”

### **Apathy toward religion**

A major problem we face in preaching the gospel in this area of the world is the general apathy toward religion, toward things spiritual. Too many are very comfortable with their present lifestyle and feel no need to do more than “eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). They are not interested in anything but themselves—here and now.

Developing nations of the world are becoming so secular in their beliefs and actions that they reason that a human being has total autonomy. An individual does not have to give an account to anyone or anything except to himself and, to a limited extent, to the society in which he lives.

Societies in which this secular lifestyle takes root have a deep spiritual and moral price to pay. The pursuit of so-called individual freedoms, without regard to laws the Lord has established to govern His children on earth, will result in the curse of extreme worldliness and selfishness, the decline of public and private morality, and the defiance of authority.

### **The Church provides answers**

Such secular societies are described in Doctrine and Covenants 1:16: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”

For this reason the Lord’s Church was instructed to follow the prophet and seek something different from what the world

is seeking. Continuing on with verses 17–18 from section 1:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

“And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets.”

It was through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth—“line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). With divine assistance he translated and published the Book of Mormon. The Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were conferred upon him and Oliver Cowdery, and sacred ordinances were reinstituted for the saving of mankind.

We boldly declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides answers to the question “What seek ye?” Our Church is the means by which men and women find our Savior and His gospel. You who are gathered here in this vast congregation, and the even greater numbers of Saints viewing this conference throughout the world, are richly blessed, for you have sought and found the restored Church.

### **Seek the Savior through His Church**

The Church came into being as the result of a restoration and not a reformation. My recent experiences in central Europe certainly have deepened my respect for the role of those early Christian leaders who instituted a reformation. It began with their efforts to correct some of the errors in doctrine which had come into being during the long period of apostasy from the Church that had been established by our Savior during His earthly ministry. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, the Lord’s mouth-

piece, and the restorer of all things important to building the kingdom of God and preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we seek our Savior, it is important that we seek Him through His Church. It is through His restored Church that we receive all the saving ordinances necessary to return to Him.

### **Stories about finding new hope and faith**

I want all the members of the Church to know that I have learned from my current assignment that sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ involves challenges I had never before imagined. Yet every day I see new signs of hope, due mostly to the Lord’s blessings but also to the efforts of the leaders, members, and missionaries in that area of the world. Honest seekers of truth are finding answers to their questions—they are finding the Lord through His restored Church. Of the many examples I could give, let me give you three: a father, a young single adult, and a single sister who have found a new faith and a new hope in their lives.

#### *A father’s change of heart*

A family of four was initially contacted by sister missionaries, and from the very beginning the mother and her children often read in the Book of Mormon, prayed daily, and wanted to attend church. The father, however, resisted. Unlike his wife, he was not of a Christian faith, and he did not yet feel prepared to reevaluate his beliefs.

The sister missionaries were inspired to focus their teachings on Jesus Christ. In their words:

“We taught about Joseph Smith, of his faith in Christ, what we learn about Christ from the First Vision, and the Prophet’s testimony of our Savior. Everything we ever read together or challenged them to read as a family out of the Book of Mormon was teaching them more about our Redeemer. That is when we started seeing

the progress. They displayed a framed picture of Christ proudly in their family room—it was one we had given them as a gift.”

The father’s change of heart occurred when his wife announced that she wanted to be baptized and his sons decided to pray to know whether they should also be baptized. From that moment on, he read regularly in the Book of Mormon and prayed about baptism. His sincere desire to know whether the Church was true changed him, and he became a spiritual leader in his home. Just before he and his family were baptized, the father asked for a tithing slip and an envelope. He did not want to delay keeping the commandments for even one second.

#### *A reactivated brother shares the gospel*

In another case, a young brother was reactivated as the result of the establishment of the outreach initiative to bring into activity young single adults ages 18 to 30. On the first night of activities in one of our Church buildings, this brother was the only nonmissionary attending, but within a few weeks, he had brought about 30 people to family home evening and other activities.

This brother is a Web site designer—he and a partner started their own Web design business. He currently lives with two nonmembers, both of whom work at his Web design company. He is very bold about sharing his testimony. One of his co-workers previously had studied Christian theology, and this brother referred him to the missionaries working in the young single adult program. Now his co-worker is a regular attendee of the activities, and this reactivated brother assists the missionaries as they teach him by adding his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel to theirs.

#### *A young woman’s miraculous conversion*

In still another case, a young woman from Hamburg, Germany, was struggling to find spiritual meaning to her life. She began

to pray and ask God what she should do. One morning, after three days of some fasting and much prayer, she walked from her home to the bus stop. As she arrived, she realized she had left some keys at home that she needed that day. She returned home, picked up the keys, and walked again to the bus stop. She was quite distraught as she realized she had missed the bus she would have normally taken.

Meanwhile, two missionaries were traveling on a bus near the city of Hamburg. As they were traveling, they suddenly had an impression that they should talk to the first person they met after exiting the bus. The two elders got out of the bus and instantly saw this young woman. They spoke to her briefly about the Church and set up an appointment to teach her. She had an immediate feeling that somehow the elders were sent to her as an answer to her prayers. The good members of the Church joined with the missionaries in teaching her and helping her feel a special part of their ward. She accepted the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and was baptized. Now she is working in the ward Young Women program.

#### **The need for the Church**

The Lord, during His earthly ministry, recognized the need to have a structure in place to build faith in the hearts of the members of His Church and to keep them growing in His gospel. This family, this brother, and this sister all found the Savior through finding and being strengthened by His Church.

After the death of the Apostles, without central leadership to guide and direct it, the Church drifted into apostasy. This particular lesson of history is clear: It is necessary to have a centralized Church government, under the direction of the Savior, that provides the necessary doctrines and ordinances for salvation and exaltation.

The Bible gives abundant evidence that the Lord, during His earthly ministry,

established His Church with the proper authority and organization. For example, Paul declared:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–15).

We state in our sixth article of faith, “We believe in the same organization that

existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”

### **Seek, find, and build the Savior’s Church**

So we declare to the world that the priesthood has been restored, God’s government is on the earth, His pattern is established that will lead us back to His presence. We believe we have the best answer to the question “What seek ye?” As the Savior taught, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Just as a building is constructed one brick at a time, the Savior’s true Church is built one conversion, one testimony, one baptism at a time. May we all seek, find, and build His Church wherever we may be is my humble prayer, in the name of Him whom we seek, even Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

### **The growing problem of pornography**

Last summer Sister Oaks and I returned from two years in the Philippines. We loved our service there, and we loved returning home. When we have been away, we see our surroundings in a new light, with increased appreciation and sometimes with new concerns.

We were concerned to see the inroads pornography had made in the United States while we were away. For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.

At our last conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley devoted an entire talk to this subject, warning in the plainest terms that “this is a very serious problem even among us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 61). Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.

My fellow holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and also our young men, I wish to speak to you today about pornography. I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.

### **Evil acts both completed and contemplated**

In concentrating my talk on this subject, I feel like the prophet Jacob, who told

the men of his day that it grieved him to speak so boldly in front of their sensitive wives and children. But notwithstanding the difficulty of the task, he said he had to speak to the men about this subject because God had commanded him (see Jacob 2:7–11). I do so for the same reason.

In the second chapter of the book that bears his name, Jacob condemns men for their “whoredoms” (verses 23, 28). He told them they had “broken the hearts of [their] tender wives, and lost the confidence of [their] children, because of [their] bad examples before them” (v. 35). What were these grossly wicked “whoredoms”? No doubt some men were already guilty of evil acts. But the main focus of Jacob’s great sermon was not with evil acts *completed*, but with evil acts *contemplated*.

Jacob began his sermon by telling the men that “as yet, [they had] been obedient unto the word of the Lord” (Jacob 2:4). However, he then told them he knew their thoughts, that they were “beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable . . . unto God” (v. 5). “I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts” (v. 6), he added. Jacob was speaking as Jesus spoke when He said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28; see also 3 Nephi 12:28; D&C 59:6; 63:16).

### **Do not minimize the seriousness**

More than 30 years ago, I urged BYU students to avoid the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations” in what they read and viewed. I gave this analogy:

“Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval sys-

tem we call a brain. The brain won’t vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, brethren, I must tell you that our bishops and our professional counselors are seeing an increasing number of men involved with pornography, and many of those are active members. Some involved in pornography apparently minimize its seriousness and continue to exercise the priesthood of God because they think no one will know of their involvement. But the user knows, brethren, and so does the Lord.

Some have suggested that pornography should be a separate question in the temple recommend interview. It is already. At least five different questions should elicit a confession and discussion on this subject if the person being interviewed has the spiritual sensitivity and honesty we expect of those who worship in the house of the Lord.

### **Effects of pornography on spirituality**

One of the Savior’s most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

“Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23).

The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:

“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:27–28).



The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares:

“When we undertake to cover our sins, . . . behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality. “To be carnally minded is death”—spiritual death (Romans 8:6; see also 2 Nephi 9:39).

The scriptures repeatedly teach that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].” To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will “always remember him” (D&C 20:77). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. All such need to heed the Apostle Peter’s plea: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).

Brethren, you have noticed that I am not discussing the effects of pornography on mental health or criminal behavior. I am discussing its effects on spirituality—on our ability to have the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and our capacity to exercise the power of the priesthood.

### **Effects of pornography on relationships**

Pornography also inflicts mortal wounds on our most precious personal re-

lationships. In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography “has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 60).

At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously:

“I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him, and the loss has been incalculable.”

Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.

### **Addictive nature of pornography**

Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: “In my eyes, cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both. . . . Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]” (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).

## Pornography causes Spirit to withdraw

Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing “soft,” not “hard,” porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as “not as bad as” or “only one bad scene.” But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as “arousal on demand” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin.

King Benjamin’s great sermon describes the terrible consequences. When we withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord, we become an enemy to righteousness, we have a lively sense of our guilt, and we “shrink from the presence of the Lord” (see Mosiah 2:36–38). “Mercy hath no claim on that man,” he concluded; “therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (v. 39).

Consider the tragic example of King David. Though a spiritual giant in Israel, he allowed himself to look upon something he should not have viewed (see 2 Samuel 11). Tempted by what he saw, he violated two of the Ten Commandments, beginning with “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). In this way a prophet-king fell from his exaltation (see D&C 132:39).

## Being cleansed by repentance

But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean.

Alma the Younger described it:

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .

“ . . . The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. . . .

“And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:13–14, 17–20).

## Overcoming the addiction or temptation

My brethren who are caught in this addiction or troubled by this temptation, there is a way.

*First*, acknowledge the evil. Don’t defend it or try to justify yourself. For at least a quarter century our leaders have pleaded with men, and also with women and children, to avoid this evil.<sup>2</sup> Our Church magazines are full of warnings, information, and helps on this subject, with more than a score of articles published or to be published this year and last year alone.<sup>3</sup>

*Second*, seek the help of the Lord and His servants. Hear and heed President Hinckley’s words:

“Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 66; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 62).



*Third*, do all that you can to avoid pornography. If you ever find yourself in its presence—which can happen to anyone in the world in which we live—follow the example of Joseph of Egypt. When temptation caught him in her grip, he left temptation and “got him out” (Genesis 39:12).

Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths. Remember your covenants and be faithful in temple attendance. The wise bishop I quoted earlier reported that “an endowed priesthood bearer’s fall into pornography never occurs during periods of regular worship in the temple; it happens when he has become casual in his temple worship” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005).

We must also act to protect those we love. Parents install alarms to warn if their household is threatened by smoke or carbon monoxide. We should also install protections against spiritual threats, protections like filters on Internet connections and locating access so others can see what is being viewed. And we should build the spiritual strength of our families by loving relationships, family prayer, and scripture study.

*Finally*, do not patronize pornography. Do not use your purchasing power to support moral degradation. And young women, please understand that if you dress immod-

estly, you are magnifying this problem by becoming pornography to some of the men who see you.

Please heed these warnings. Let us all improve our personal behavior and redouble our efforts to protect our loved ones and our environment from the onslaught of pornography that threatens our spirituality, our marriages, and our children.

I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of the World, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Challenges for the Year Ahead* (pamphlet, 1974), 4–5; reprinted in “Things They’re Saying,” *New Era*, Feb. 1974, 18.
2. See, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 63–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 59–62; David E. Sorenson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 53–56; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 41–42; Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 95–98; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 66–67; David B. Haight, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 87–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 70–73.
3. See, for example, Rory C. Reid, “The Road Back: Abandoning Pornography,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2005, 46–51; Arianne B. Cope, “Internet Café,” *New Era*, Mar. 2005, 34–37; Nycole S. Larsen, “The Decision,” *Friend*, Mar. 2004, 40–41.

## Elder Robert J. Whetten

### Strengthen thy brethren

Responding to the question, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus answered: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two

commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>1</sup>

To ancient Israel and down through the generations of time, His prophets past and present have always taught this all-encompassing eternal truth—that to inherit eternal life we must have love in our souls: love for God our Eternal Father and love for our fellowmen.

In the closing hours of His earthly ministry, Jesus said to Peter, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>2</sup>

Peter had a testimony, borne of the Spirit, of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Peter knew, and his knowledge came by revelation. But his conversion, the change in his whole way of life and the nature of his very being, was more evident after the day of Pentecost, after receiving the heart-changing gift and witness of the Holy Ghost.

### **Be God’s instrument for blessing others**

Yes, brothers and sisters, like Peter before, we have testimonies, but is conversion a continuing process in your life? Isn’t each of us a work in progress in the hands of our Maker? Is God blessing others through you? Do you pray and ask whom the Lord would have you bless by lifting another’s burden? Do you love others as much as you love yourself?

When Jesus told the lawyer that in order to inherit eternal life he must love his neighbor as himself, the lawyer said unto Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus responded with His parable of the good Samaritan and then asked: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.”<sup>3</sup> With this parable, Jesus taught that each of us should exhibit an active love and benevolence toward every one of His Father’s children.

King Benjamin taught the Saints of his day: “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, . . . I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, . . . such as feeding the hungry, . . . visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both *spiritually and temporally*.”<sup>4</sup> Do you administer spiritual or temporal relief to those who need it? Do you reach out and strengthen the faith of

those coming into the fold, as asked by the prophets of our day?

### **Serving others is a measure of conversion**

Conversion means consecrating your life to caring for and serving others who need your help and sharing your gifts and blessings. The Lord didn’t say, “Tend my sheep when it is convenient or watch my sheep when you aren’t busy.” He said, “Feed my sheep and my lambs; help them survive this world; keep them close to you. Lead them to safety—the safety of righteous choices that will prepare them for eternal life.”<sup>5</sup>

Every unselfish act of kindness and service increases your spirituality. God would use you to bless others. Your continued spiritual growth and eternal progress are very much wrapped up in your relationships—in how you treat others. Do you indeed love others and become a blessing in their lives? *Isn’t the measure of the level of your conversion how you treat others?* The person who does only those things in the Church that concern himself alone will never reach the goal of perfection. Service to others is what the gospel and exalted life are all about.

In your journey through life, you are to reach out and bless the lives of your fellow travelers, to give of yourself to those who need you. “For whosoever will save his life,” the Master said, “shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Make the gospel a living reality**

James directed his epistle “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.”<sup>7</sup> His teachings may be applied to us, the Lord’s people who in a latter day would accept the restored gospel. He teaches principles that should guide your relationships with other members of the Church. He considers the commandment to “love thy neighbour as thyself” to be the “royal law.”<sup>8</sup> To James, a

testimony alone is not enough. The gospel has to become a living reality in your life. "And I will shew thee my faith by my works."<sup>9</sup> "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only."<sup>10</sup> James's definition of the converted is, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."<sup>11</sup> He ends his brief epistle with these words:

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul . . . and shall hide a multitude of sins."<sup>12</sup>

By reclaiming an errant brother, you save both him and yourself. Your sins are hidden or remitted because you ministered for the salvation of another.

### **No more strangers and foreigners**

Mine has been the great blessing of living my life in Latin America and witnessing firsthand the unfolding of the prophecies and promises made by His prophets and the Lord Himself.

"I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion. . . .

" . . . I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance."<sup>13</sup>

Literally hundreds of thousands have been gathered in from practically every nation in Latin America. Prophecies assure us that this growth will continue. Growth is our greatest challenge but also the greatest opportunity for each of us.

The Apostle Paul said to the new members in his day, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."<sup>14</sup>

It seems that where the Church has experienced rapid growth, too many are still

made to feel that they are *strangers and foreigners* and have been left by the wayside. If we are to see the promises fulfilled, we must do as Moroni described:

"And after they had been received unto baptism, . . . they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished . . . to keep them in the right way."<sup>15</sup>

### **Helping others come back**

Many active members believe that the less-active members and new converts who fall by the wayside behave differently because they don't believe the Church's doctrine. Studies made do not support this assumption. They show that almost all less-active members interviewed believe that God exists, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that the Church is true.

In numerous wards and branches there are many good, upright, honest men and women who just don't know how to come back to church. There are good mothers and fathers among them. They have just left, and no one has come to check up on them, leaving them with the idea that no one really cares. When men or women of faith visit these individuals and become their friends, strengthen them, pray with them, and teach them the gospel, they and their families will come back. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."<sup>16</sup> Who are "the least of these my brethren"? Might the Lord be referring to the newest coming into the fold or to those who have wandered into the shadows of inactivity and would return if extended the hand of true fellowship?

### **Strengthening new members**

In this great battle for the souls of men, the rules of engagement in missionary work are more clearly defined for each of us. Members are to accompany full-time mis-

sionary companionships as they teach the lessons and play a vital role in the conversion process of others. Missionaries are “to preach my gospel by the Spirit”<sup>17</sup> with words from their own hearts, words of truth treasured up by much study and prayer. Our missionaries’ roles in the continuing conversion process of others do not end at baptism. They are to continue to teach new members and others who need spiritual nourishment.

Recent letters from the First Presidency remind priesthood leaders of their responsibility to strengthen and support new members. “Fellowship should be extended by all in the ward. . . . Home teachers and visiting teachers can play a valuable role.” New members should be given “opportunities . . . to serve and contribute to the strength of the ward.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Loving others strengthens conversion**

Brothers and sisters, if the conversion and transformation process is to continue in each of us, new members and old alike, we must love, serve, and give spiritual nourishment to others. We must help others receive the full blessings of the Restoration, including the blessings of the temple.

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote a letter to the Saints in his day: “Dear Brethren:—It is a duty which every Saint ought to render to his brethren freely—to always love them, and ever succor them. To be justified before God we must love one another: . . . we can love our neighbor as ourselves, and be faithful in tribulation.”<sup>19</sup>

Our own prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said, “I would hope, I would pray, that each of us . . . would resolve to seek those who need help . . . and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives.”<sup>20</sup>

Love is not just a word or a declaration, but the first and great commandment, a commandment that demands action—“If ye love me, keep my commandments”<sup>21</sup> and “Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep.”<sup>22</sup>

You must do what our Savior and His prophets, both past and present, have always taught: serve, strengthen the faith, and nurture those who need your love and blessing. You have the Lord’s promise: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face . . . , and my Spirit shall be in your hearts.”<sup>23</sup>

Brothers and sisters, as you reach out in love to bless the life of another, you both will be blessed with His Spirit. The Lord teaches that both will “understand one another, and both [will be] edified and rejoice together.”<sup>24</sup>

It is my prayer that our Heavenly Father will bless each of us with that love for others “which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son.”<sup>25</sup> I bear witness that His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and that His gospel is a gospel of love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Matthew 22:36–40.
2. Luke 22:32.
3. Luke 10:29, 36–37.
4. Mosiah 4:26; italics added.
5. See John 21:15–16.
6. Mark 8:35.
7. James 1:1.
8. James 2:8.
9. James 2:18.
10. James 1:22.
11. James 1:27.
12. James 5:19–20.
13. 3 Nephi 21:1, 22.
14. Ephesians 2:19.
15. Moroni 6:4.
16. Matthew 25:40.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 50:14.
18. First Presidency letter, Dec. 22, 2004; see also First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 2005.
19. *History of the Church*, 2:229.

20. "Reach with a Rescuing Hand," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 86.
21. John 14:15.
22. John 21:17.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 50:22.
25. Moroni 7:48.

### President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry, Elder Oaks, and Elder Whetten.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Do What Is Right." Elders Adhemar Damiani and Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

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## Elder Adhemar Damiani

### Be of good cheer

How can we find peace in this world? How can we endure to the end? How can we overcome the difficulties and trials we are facing?

The Savior Jesus Christ said: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."<sup>1</sup>

As part of our mortal probation, we pass through affliction, pain, and disappointment. Only in Jesus Christ can we find peace. He can help us to be of good cheer and to overcome all the challenges of this life.

What does it mean to be of good cheer? It means having hope, not getting discouraged, not losing faith, and living life joyfully. "Men are, that they might have joy."<sup>2</sup> It means facing life with confidence.

The gospel of Jesus Christ gives us the strength and the eternal perspective to face what is coming with good cheer. We must, however, not underestimate the difficulties that are prophesied for our day.

What are some of these difficulties? How can we face them?

Some of these difficulties are lack of hope, lack of love, and lack of peace.

### Overcoming lack of hope

The prophet Moroni taught, "If ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity."<sup>3</sup> For many, the coming years may be years of despair. The greater the iniquity, the greater the despair will be.

The Savior said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."<sup>4</sup> As iniquity increases, true love disappears. As a result, fear, insecurity, and despair grow!

To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said:

"I . . . will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh . . . when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.

"And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst."<sup>5</sup>

We live in a time when peace has been taken from the earth.

On the other hand, we live in a glorious time, a time when the Lord has restored His priesthood. The true gospel has been restored. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth! We are helping to prepare the earth for the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come and personally reign.

## Purposes of trials

Why must we pass through trials in this life?

The Lord makes no secret that He will test our faith and our obedience. “We will prove them herewith,” He said, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>6</sup>

We learn from the book of Ecclesiastes: “All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; . . . as is the good, so is the sinner. . . . There is one event unto all.”<sup>7</sup> Tempests may occur in the life of the man who built his life upon the rock of the gospel, as well as in the life of the foolish who built his life upon the things of this world.<sup>8</sup>

## Reacting to trials

How should we react to these trials?

The Lord has said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”<sup>9</sup> Each day we must take up our cross and press forward—and not just linger on the sidelines of our eternal journey.

How can we know whether we are being tried or whether the Lord is punishing us?

Trials are opportunities for our growth. The Lord said, “My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.”<sup>10</sup>

When we are being tried, we should ponder and ask, “What does the Lord want me to do in this situation?”

The Lord spoke these comforting words to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”<sup>11</sup> We need to view each trial as an opportunity

for growth. Someday we will understand the *why*.

The Lord has said, “Whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance.”<sup>12</sup> The Lord loves each one of us. He wants us to be happy. This happiness comes by our faith in Jesus Christ, by our sincere and true repentance, by our obedience to His commandments, and by our endurance to the end.

## The Lord helps ease our burdens

Sometimes we might think that the Lord does not hear or answer our prayers. At such times we need to stop and ponder what we have done throughout our lives. If necessary we must put our lives in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed:

“I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions. . . .

“They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

“In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.”<sup>13</sup>

When we have the sincere desire to put our lives in harmony with the will of the Lord, He will always be ready to help ease our burdens.

## Faith gives hope and strength to endure

What destroys our good cheer and our hope?

Jesus Christ told the Twelve Apostles some of the things that can destroy our hope and make us give up: allowing ourselves to fall into temptation; not enduring affliction, tribulation, and persecution;



fearing “the cares” of the world; seeking wealth first; giving up instead of enduring to the end; and allowing false prophets to deceive us.<sup>14</sup>

What gives us courage and hope?

The Lord’s invitation to each of us is “come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus Christ has the power to give us rest from our pain and suffering.

The prophet Mormon taught:

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope. . . .

“ . . . And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity.”<sup>16</sup>

If we daily exercise faith, meekness, charity, and lowliness in heart, confessing that Jesus is the Christ, and accepting His Atonement, we will be blessed with the strength and hope to face and overcome the trials and pains of this life.

### **The Lord will not forsake us**

What are some of the Lord’s promises to each one of us?

“Be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you.”<sup>17</sup>

“Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.”<sup>18</sup>

Quoting the words of the prophet Ether: “Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men.”<sup>19</sup>

God is our Father. We are His children. He loves us. He desires our happiness here in this life and for all eternity. We are led by a true prophet of God today. Jesus is the Christ. Through Him we can find peace in this world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. John 16:33.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. Moroni 10:22.
4. Matthew 24:12.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:35–36.
6. Abraham 3:25.
7. Ecclesiastes 9:2–3.
8. See Matthew 7:24–27.
9. Luke 9:23.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 136:31.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–8.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 101:2, 7–8.
14. See Matthew 13:19–23.
15. Matthew 11:28.
16. Moroni 7:42, 44.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 61:36.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18.
19. Ether 12:4.

## **Elder Stephen B. Oveson**

My dear brothers and sisters, as we prepare to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley’s closing remarks at the end of this marvelous general conference, I fervently hope that each of us will feel how blessed we are to have received from prophets and apostles of the Lord the collective wisdom and exhortation that, if heeded

and followed, will help us steer our course ever closer to our Savior. We ought to be particularly grateful to live in a time when our Church leaders, though many are advanced in years, continue to receive the revelation and inspiration that moves the kingdom forward from day to day.

### Counsel from those who are bowed in years

As a young man I was given a very strong written admonition to prove myself a faithful and obedient son so that as I grew older and whenever I needed counsel and advice, I should go to my parents, though they be “bowed in years,” to receive from them wisdom, comfort, and guidance. My father passed away over 20 years ago, having been a great and exemplary source of wisdom for me all the days of my life, and we just laid my 101-year-old mother to rest beside her eternal companion last Monday. In her 100th year she affirmed her lifelong testimony in these words:

“The gospel is a way of life; it is part of the plan to help us avoid bitterness. More than ever, I believe that this life is good but that the next life is better” (in “Growing Old Graciously: Lessons from a Centenarian,” *Religious Educator* 5, no. 1 [2004], 11).

My mother often told me that she prayed for me and for our family every day. As she came closer and closer to the veil, her prayers were especially fervent and meaningful to me. Both of my parents, as well as my dear parents-in-law, endured or are enduring to the end in righteous paths, leaving a legacy of faithful dedication for all their posterity to follow.

President Ezra Taft Benson, in the November 1989 *Ensign*, is quoted as follows: “The Lord knows and loves the elderly among His people. It has always been so, and upon them He has bestowed many of His greatest responsibilities. In various dispensations He has guided His people through prophets who were in their advancing years. He has needed the wisdom and experience of age, the inspired direction from those with long years of proven faithfulness to His gospel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 4).

### Teachings from prophets who waxed old

These thoughts have caused me to reflect on the great sermons, blessings, testimonies, and admonitions that prophets and apostles throughout the ages have left, especially as they felt themselves waxing old or preparing to go down to the dust. Some of these parting passages are among our most noteworthy and quoted scriptures.

#### *From Old Testament times*

For instance, in Moses 6:57, Enoch states unequivocally, “Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell . . . in his presence.” These basic principles of the gospel were being taught from the time of Adam and Eve, passed down from generation to generation, as the scriptures attest, time and time again.

Joseph who was sold into Egypt left these words of counsel with the people of Israel: “I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Genesis 50:24).

Generations later, as the fulfillment of Joseph’s prophecy was about to be realized, Moses left his blessings with all the tribes of Israel and passed the mantle of leadership to Joshua, who led the people back into the promised land. As he was approaching his final days, Joshua left the immortal words to “choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Later prophets, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Malachi, left equally indelible testimonies throughout their ministries, prophesying of the coming Messiah and His infinite Atonement.



*From the Book of Mormon*

We find a similar pattern throughout the Book of Mormon in the emphasis given to the final addresses of Nephi, Jacob, and King Benjamin—whose mighty discourse changed the hearts of an entire nation—not to mention the masterful words of Abinadi, who boldly spoke knowing full well that his days were numbered: “Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father” (Mosiah 16:15). The list continues with Alma and his son Alma; also Helaman, the son of Helaman, who gave such priceless advice to his sons:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation . . . , which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

These and other Book of Mormon prophets, including Mormon himself, wrote for our day, knowing that we would need their knowledge and wisdom to aid us in these perilous times. The Book of Mormon itself ends with the incomparable charge of Moroni, the son of Mormon, as he tells us:

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you” (Moroni 10:32).

*From the New Testament*

We have similar “last testimonies” in the New Testament, such as Paul’s grand statement: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7), attesting to his having endured to the end.

We gain great insight into the growth of the mighty senior Apostle, Peter, in his statement: “And be clothed with humility:

for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5–6).

And certainly the greatest personage of all time to learn from is the risen Lord Himself, as He charged His Apostles and followers to “go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20).

*Common inspirational threads*

What a wealth of conviction and knowledge these collective scriptures give us. Can we find common inspirational threads running through each of them? I believe they are easily recognizable:

- That Christ, the Son of God, lives and is our Redeemer and Savior
- That we should follow Him and show our love for Him by remembering Him and humbly keeping His commandments
- That through His Atonement we are able to repent and be cleansed
- That we are His covenant people and should always keep the covenants that we have entered into
- That we need to spread His gospel throughout the world
- That we should have faith, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end

*From latter-day prophets*

In our dispensation, modern-day prophets of the Restoration reiterate time and again these same principles. In the teachings of President John Taylor we learn that “as the Son of Man, He endured all that was possible for flesh and blood to endure; as the Son of God He triumphed

over all, and forever ascended to the right hand of God" (*The Mediation and Atonement* [1882], 151).

One of my favorites, from President Spencer W. Kimball:

"To the testimonies of these mighty men and apostles of old—our brethren in the ministry of the same Master—I add my own testimony. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

"He is my friend, my Savior, my Lord, my God.

"With all my heart I pray that the Saints may . . . gain an eternal inheritance with him in celestial glory" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 110; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 73).

Our prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, continues to lead us with his powerful convictions, as he declared in a recent stake conference address:

"I have a testimony, real, burning, and vital, of the truth of this work. I know that God our Eternal Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ, my Savior and my Redeemer. It is He who stands at the head of this Church. All I desire is that I go forward with this work as He would have it go

forward" ("Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 5).

### Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Summarizing the testimonies of all the ancient and modern-day apostles and prophets are the immortal words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22–23).

I wish to add my own humble affirmation of the truthfulness of the aforementioned testimonies. I know that our Heavenly Father is literally the Father of our spirits and that Jesus Christ is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Lord, and, as we obey His commandments, our friend (see John 15:14). As we study the scriptures, may we have added insights into and greater appreciation for the power of testimony, especially as it is borne by those of great wisdom and advanced age, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David A. Bednar

### The tender mercies of the Lord

Six months ago I stood at this pulpit for the first time as the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Both then and even more so now, I have felt and feel the weight of the call to serve and of the responsibility to teach with clarity and to testify with authority. I pray for and invite the assistance of the Holy Ghost as I now speak with you.

This afternoon I want to describe and discuss a spiritual impression I received a few moments before I stepped to this pulpit during the Sunday morning session of

general conference last October. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf had just finished speaking and had declared his powerful witness of the Savior. Then we all stood together to sing the intermediate hymn that previously had been announced by President Gordon B. Hinckley. The intermediate hymn that morning was "Redeemer of Israel" (*Hymns*, no. 6).

Now, the music for the various conference sessions had been determined many weeks before—and obviously long before my new call to serve. If, however, I had been invited to suggest an intermediate hymn for that particular session of the con-

ference—a hymn that would have been both edifying and spiritually soothing for me and for the congregation before my first address in this Conference Center—I would have selected my favorite hymn, “Redeemer of Israel.” Tears filled my eyes as I stood with you to sing that stirring hymn of the Restoration.

Near the conclusion of the singing, to my mind came this verse from the Book of Mormon: “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

My mind was drawn immediately to Nephi’s phrase “the tender mercies of the Lord,” and I knew in that very moment I was experiencing just such a tender mercy. A loving Savior was sending me a most personal and timely message of comfort and reassurance through a hymn selected weeks previously. Some may count this experience as simply a nice coincidence, but I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are real and that they do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Often the Lord’s timing of His tender mercies helps us to both discern and acknowledge them.

### **What are the tender mercies of the Lord?**

Since last October I have reflected repeatedly upon the phrase “the tender mercies of the Lord.” Through personal study, observation, pondering, and prayer, I believe I have come to better understand that the Lord’s tender mercies are the very personal and individualized blessings, strength, protection, assurances, guidance, loving-kindness, consolation, support, and spiritual gifts which we receive from and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly the Lord suits “his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men” (D&C 46:15).

Recall how the Savior instructed His Apostles that He would not leave them

comfortless. Not only would He send “another Comforter” (John 14:16), even the Holy Ghost, but the Savior said that He would come to them (see John 14:18). Let me suggest that one of the ways whereby the Savior comes to each of us is through His abundant and tender mercies. For instance, as you and I face challenges and tests in our lives, the gift of faith and an appropriate sense of personal confidence that reaches beyond our own capacity are two examples of the tender mercies of the Lord. Repentance and forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience are examples of the tender mercies of the Lord. And the persistence and the fortitude that enable us to press forward with cheerfulness through physical limitations and spiritual difficulties are examples of the tender mercies of the Lord.

### *A sister feels the Lord’s tender mercies*

In a recent stake conference, the tender mercies of the Lord were evident in the touching testimony of a young wife and mother of four whose husband was slain in Iraq in December of 2003. This stalwart sister recounted how, after being notified of her husband’s death, she received his Christmas card and message. In the midst of the abrupt reality of a dramatically altered life came to this good sister a timely and tender reminder that indeed families can be together forever. With permission I quote from that Christmas card:

“To the best family in the world! Have a great time together and remember the true meaning of Christmas! The Lord has made it possible for us to be together forever. So even when we are apart, we will still be together as a family.

“God bless and keep y’all safe and grant this Christmas to be our gift of love from us to Him above!!!

“All my love, Daddy and your loving husband!”

Clearly, the husband’s reference to being apart in his Christmas greeting referred

to the separation caused by his military assignment. But to this sister, as a voice from the dust from a departed eternal companion and father, came a most needed spiritual reassurance and witness. As I indicated earlier, the Lord's tender mercies do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness, obedience, and humility invite tender mercies into our lives, and it is often the Lord's timing that enables us to recognize and treasure these important blessings.

### *Receiving tender mercies through a leader*

Some time ago I spoke with a priesthood leader who was prompted to memorize the names of all of the youth ages 13 to 21 in his stake. Using snapshots of the young men and women, he created flash cards that he reviewed while traveling on business and at other times. This priesthood leader quickly learned all the names of the youth.

One night the priesthood leader had a dream about one of the young men whom he knew only from a picture. In the dream he saw the young man dressed in a white shirt and wearing a missionary name tag. With a companion seated at his side, the young man was teaching a family. The young man held the Book of Mormon in his hand, and he looked as if he were testifying of the truthfulness of the book. The priesthood leader then awoke from his dream.

At an ensuing priesthood gathering, the leader approached the young man he had seen in his dream and asked to talk with him for a few minutes. After a brief introduction, the leader called the young man by name and said:

"I am not a dreamer. I have never had a dream about a single member of this stake, except for you. I am going to tell you about my dream, and then I would like you to help me understand what it means."

The priesthood leader recounted the dream and asked the young man about its

meaning. Choking with emotion, the young man simply replied, "It means God knows who I am." The remainder of the conversation between this young man and his priesthood leader was most meaningful, and they agreed to meet and counsel together from time to time during the following months.

That young man received the Lord's tender mercies through an inspired priesthood leader. I repeat again, the Lord's tender mercies do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness and obedience enable us to receive these important gifts and, frequently, the Lord's timing helps us to recognize them.

### *Tender mercies fortify and protect us*

We should not underestimate or overlook the power of the Lord's tender mercies. The simpleness, the sweetness, and the constancy of the tender mercies of the Lord will do much to fortify and protect us in the troubled times in which we do now and will yet live. When words cannot provide the solace we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply futile to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot yield adequate understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, truly we are blessed by the tender mercies of the Lord and made mighty even unto the power of deliverance (see 1 Nephi 1:20).

### **Who are they whom the Lord has chosen to receive His tender mercies?**

#### *Our hearts determine whether we are chosen*

The word *chosen* in 1 Nephi 1:20 is central to understanding the concept of the Lord's tender mercies. The dictionary indicates that *chosen* suggests one who is selected, taken by preference, or picked out. It also can be used to refer to the elect or

chosen of God (see *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, second ed. [1989], “Chosen”).

Some individuals who hear or read this message erroneously may discount or dismiss in their personal lives the availability of the tender mercies of the Lord, believing that “I certainly am not one who has been or ever will be chosen.” We may falsely think that such blessings and gifts are reserved for other people who appear to be more righteous or who serve in visible Church callings. I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are available to all of us and that the Redeemer of Israel is eager to bestow such gifts upon us.

To be or to become chosen is not an exclusive status conferred upon us. Rather, you and I ultimately determine if we are chosen. Please now note the use of the word *chosen* in the following verses from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are *chosen*. And why are they not *chosen*?

“Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:34–35; italics added).

I believe the implication of these verses is quite straightforward. God does not have a list of favorites to which we must hope our names will someday be added. He does not limit “the chosen” to a restricted few. Rather, it is *our* hearts and *our* aspirations and *our* obedience which definitively determine whether we are counted as one of God’s chosen.

Enoch was instructed by the Lord on this very point of doctrine. Please note the use of the word *choose* in these verses:

“Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

“And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they

should *choose* me, their Father” (Moses 7:32–33; italics added).

As we learn in these scriptures, the fundamental purposes for the gift of agency were to love one another and to choose God. Thus we become God’s chosen and invite His tender mercies as we use our agency to choose God.

### *The Father’s work—and our work*

One of the most well-known and frequently cited passages of scripture is found in Moses 1:39. This verse clearly and concisely describes the work of the Eternal Father: “For behold, this is *my work* and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (italics added).

A companion scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants describes with equal clarity and conciseness our primary work as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father. Interestingly, this verse does not seem to be as well known and is not quoted with great frequency. “Behold, this is *your work*, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength” (D&C 11:20; italics added).

Thus, the Father’s work is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children. Our work is to keep His commandments with all of our might, mind, and strength—and we thereby become chosen and, through the Holy Ghost, receive and recognize the tender mercies of the Lord in our daily lives.

### *Conference is a tender mercy*

The very conference in which we are participating this weekend is yet another example of the Lord’s tender mercies. We have been blessed to receive inspired counsel from the leaders of the Savior’s Church—timely counsel for our day and for our circumstances and for our challenges. We have been instructed, lifted, edified, called to repentance, and strengthened. The spirit of this conference has fortified our faith

and fueled our desire to repent, to obey, to improve, and to serve. Like you, I am eager to now act upon the reminders, counsel, and personal inspiration with which we have been blessed during this conference. And in just a few moments each of us will receive one of the Lord's tender mercies as we hear the concluding remarks and testimony of President Gordon B. Hinckley. Truly "the Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm 145:9).

#### *Tender mercies are available to all*

I am thankful for the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith and for the knowledge we have today about the Lord's tender mercies. Our desires, faithfulness, and obedience invite and help us to discern His mercies in our lives. As one of His servants, I declare my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior. I know that He lives and that His tender mercies are available to all of us. Each of us can have eyes to see clearly and ears

to hear distinctly the tender mercies of the Lord as they strengthen and assist us in these latter days. May our hearts always be filled with gratitude for His abundant and tender mercies. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren. Brothers and sisters, as we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from the Ogden and Logan Utah Institutes, and the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend our thanks to all who participated in any of these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session, and following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will favor us with "Sing We Now at Parting." The benediction will be offered by Elder William W. Parmley of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

#### **Strengthened faith and testimonies**

My beloved brethren and sisters, we have had a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. We have been taught many truths. Our testimonies have been strengthened, our faith quickened.

Through the miracle—and it is a miracle—of modern technology, these proceedings have been broadcast worldwide. Ninety-five percent of the membership of the Church in all the world could have participated with us.

It has been a time for the renewal of our faith in the great eternal verities which have come to us through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph. How blessed we

are. How fortunate we are in our knowledge of these transcendent truths.

#### **Reach out with love and concern**

But may I say, as I have said in the past, our membership in this Church, with eligibility for all of the blessings that flow therefrom, should never be any cause for self-righteousness, for arrogance, for denigration of others, for looking down upon others. All mankind is our neighbor. When asked which was the greatest commandment of the law, the Lord said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .



“[And] thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Regardless of the color of our skin, of the shape of our eyes, of the language we speak, we all are sons and daughters of God and must reach out to one another with love and concern.

Wherever we may live, we can be friendly neighbors. Our children can mingle with the children of those not of this Church and remain steadfast if they are properly taught. They can even become missionaries to their associates.

### **Commendation of youth**

We commend our wonderful youth, who for the most part stand up to the evils of the world, who push these evils aside and live lives pleasing to the Lord. We constantly pray that their parents will likewise live worthily in every respect.

### **Blessings of temple attendance**

We repeat what we have said before: make a habit of going to the house of the Lord. There is no better way to ensure proper living than temple attendance. It will crowd out the evils of pornography, substance abuse, and spiritual atrophy. It will strengthen marriage and family relations.

### **Humanitarian efforts bless countless lives**

Now, as a Church we have worked with others in lifting the sorrow and sufferings of those who are in distress. Our humanitarian efforts have literally blessed the lives of countless thousands not of our faith. In the terrible tsunami disaster, and in other disasters incident to conflict, disease, and hunger, we have done a great and marvelous work assisting others without worrying about who gets the credit.

In February of this year the president of the American Red Cross presented to the Church the Circle of Humanitarians Award, which is the highest honor given

by them. It is in recognition of the effort of the Church to extend the vaccination against measles to thousands and thousands of young people.

Likewise, Rotary International has recognized the Church for a contribution to bring about the eradication of polio in third-world countries where it still exists.

Countless lives have been saved, and much pain and misery have been avoided throughout their lives.

To the extent made possible by resources which come from the generosity of our people, we are reaching down to lift those in distress.

Surely the Lord is blessing us as a people, and we must reach out to bless His needy wherever they may be.

### **Blessing and testimony**

Now, as we leave for our homes, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you. Be faithful to the commandments of the Lord, and He will open the windows of heaven and shower down blessings upon you. I leave with you my benediction and my love. I leave with you my witness and my testimony that God our Eternal Father lives, that He is personal and real, that He is indeed our Father, that He listens to and will answer prayer. I give you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world, the only name under heaven whereby we may be saved, and I leave you my witness and my testimony that God and the Lord Jesus spoke in person to the boy Joseph and opened the curtains ushering in this great and final dispensation.

God bless you, my beloved brothers and sisters. Peace be with you now and always is my humble prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Sing We Now at Parting.”

Elder William W. Parmley offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from the Ogden and Logan Utah Institutes provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Jonathan G. Woodstock, Jerald F. Simon, and Brent T. Cottle directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the priesthood session. Ronald J. Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-fifth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 1 and 2, 2005**



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# Report of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 2005. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 1, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles

Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Redeemer of Israel." President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church's official Internet site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Redeemer of Israel" and will now favor us with "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "He, Watching over Israel."

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The growth of the kingdom of God

My brothers and sisters, I add my welcome to you to this great world conference of the Church. The spacious Conference Center in Salt Lake City is filled to capacity, and other halls in this area are likewise filled. We speak beyond here to you in many lands and climes. We welcome you, every one. We love you as brethren and sisters.

I was on a mission in the British Isles more than 70 years ago. Part of the British Empire was still intact. That empire was the most widely extended political family of nations on the face of the earth. It was said that the sun never set on the British Empire. The Union Jack flew around the world.

Great good came of that empire in many areas. But there was also tremen-



dous suffering. It came as a result of conquest, oppression, war, and conflict. The remains of British soldiers were buried in graves around the earth.

Now it is all gone. Rudyard Kipling wrote of its demise in his "Recessional":

Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire.  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
["God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,"  
*Hymns*, no. 80]

There is now another empire. It is the empire of Christ the Lord. It is the empire of the restored gospel. It is the kingdom of God. And the sun never sets on this kingdom. It has not come of conquest, of conflict, or war. It has come of peaceful persuasion, of testimony, of teaching, one here and another there.

As all of you are aware, this year we commemorate the 200th birthday of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the 175th anniversary of the organization of the Church.

The growth of the Church from its infancy to its present stature is phenomenal, and we have only scratched the surface.

### **Growth in temple building and service**

The building of temples is an indication of this growth. We now have 122 operating in many parts of the world. Our people are being greatly blessed by these. Every individual who qualifies for a temple recommend is also qualified as a faithful Latter-day Saint. He or she will be a full-tithe payer, will observe the Word of Wisdom, will have good family relationships, and will be a better citizen of the community. Temple service is the end product of all of our teaching and activity.

Last year 32 million ordinances were performed in the temples. This is more than have been performed in any previous year. At the moment, some of our temples are crowded to capacity and beyond. The

needs and desires of our faithful Saints must be met.

We have previously announced a new temple in the southeast quadrant of the Salt Lake Valley. We have two other excellent sites in the west and southwest areas of the valley through the kindness of the developers of these properties. The first one on which we will build is in the so-called Daybreak development, and this morning we make public announcement of that. You may ask why we favor Utah so generously. It is because the degree of activity requires it. But we are also moving forward with new temples in Rexburg and Twin Falls, Idaho; in Sacramento, California; in Helsinki, Finland; in Panama City, Panama; in Curitiba, Brazil; and another which I had better not name at this time because it has not yet been announced but soon will be. There are yet others under consideration. On all of those I have named, we have the property, and work in various degrees of completion is going forward.

We are grateful for the consecrations of our people which make all of this possible.

### **Technology aids temple proxy work**

One of the most troublesome aspects of our temple activity is that as we get more and more temples scattered across the earth, there is duplication of effort in proxy work. People in various nations simultaneously work on the same family lines and come up with the same names. They do not know that those in other areas are doing the same thing. We therefore have been engaged for some time in a very difficult undertaking. To avoid such duplication, the solution lies in complex computer technology. Preliminary indications are that it will work, and if this is so, it will be a truly remarkable thing with worldwide implications.

### Satellite transmission of conferences

Now, as many of you know, we have been conducting stake conferences through the use of satellite transmission. The Church has grown so large that it is no longer possible for members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities to visit individual stakes, except for reorganizations and divisions. Satellite transmission has made it possible for us to speak in Salt Lake City and be heard and seen in stake centers and other facilities around the globe. It is a miraculous and wonderful thing.

It is in this same way that many of you are participating in our conference today. We are joined together as a vast international family in music and prayer and in the instruction and testimony of our Brethren.

Thank you for all you do, you wonderful Latter-day Saints. Thank you for the tremendous efforts of Area Seventies, of bishoprics and stake presidencies, of auxiliary leaders, of temple and mission presidencies, and the many, many, many more

who give so generously of time, effort, and means to advance the kingdom of God on the earth.

I pray, my brethren and sisters, that the choicest blessings of heaven may rest upon you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "He, Watching over Israel."

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### President Monson

We shall now hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric. The choir and congregation will then join in singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

We will then hear from Sister Susan W. Tanner, Young Women general president. Following her remarks, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us. The choir will then sing "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Challenge to read the Book of Mormon

I look forward each month to the arrival of this wonderful magazine, the *Ensign*. It fortifies me with messages from the First Presidency, which are included in each issue. The August issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* brought with it a challenge from President Hinckley to read or reread the Book of Mormon before the end of the year.

Why does President Hinckley believe reading the Book of Mormon will be so beneficial to each of us? He states:

"Its appeal is as timeless as truth, as universal as mankind. It is the only book

that contains within its covers a promise that by divine power the reader may know with certainty of its truth.

"Its origin is miraculous; when the story of that origin is first told to one unfamiliar with it, it is almost unbelievable. But the book is here to be felt and handled and read. No one can dispute its presence. . . .

"No other written testament so clearly illustrates the fact that when men [and women] and nations walk in the fear of God and in obedience to His commandments, they prosper and grow, but when they disregard Him and His word, there comes a decay that, unless arrested by righteousness, leads to impotence and death"

("A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 4–5).

### **A voice of warning to this generation**

Why is the reading of the Book of Mormon so important to us today? It is because the major writers of the Book of Mormon fully understood that their writings were primarily for the people of a future generation rather than for the people of their own generation. Moroni wrote to our generation, "I speak unto you as if ye were present" (Mormon 8:35). The prophet Nephi stated:

"Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand" (2 Nephi 25:21).

The Book of Mormon is a voice of warning to this generation. See how vividly it describes conditions on the earth today:

"And no one need say [these records] shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.

"And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands;

"And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity" (Mormon 8:26–31).

### **A book written to bless us in our day**

President Ezra Taft Benson reaffirmed the fact that the Book of Mormon is of particular value to our time when he said:

"The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 63).

How often we read the record primarily as a history of a fallen people, failing to remember that it was compiled by inspired prophets for the purpose of helping us come unto Christ. The major writers of the Book of Mormon did not intend it to be a history book at all. In fact, Jacob said that his brother Nephi commanded him that he "should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people" (Jacob 1:2).

Each time we read the book we should probably ask ourselves: "Why did these writers choose these particular stories or events to include in the record? What value are they for us today?"

Among the lessons we learn from the Book of Mormon are the cause and effect of war and under what conditions it is justified. It tells of evils and dangers of secret combinations, which are built up to get power and gain over the people. It tells of the reality of Satan and gives an indication of some of the methods he uses. It advises us on the proper use of wealth. It tells us of the plain and precious truths of the gospel and the reality and divinity of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for all mankind. It informs us of the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days. It tells us of the purpose and principles of missionary work. It warns us against pride, indifference, procrastination, the dangers of false traditions, hypocrisy, and unchastity.

### **Have a specific plan for study**

Now it is up to us to study the Book of Mormon and learn of its principles and apply them in our lives.

The Book of Mormon begins with a great story on the importance of families having and using the scriptures. Lehi, a prophet-father, was warned that there were people who were seeking to take away his life because of his declarations concerning their wickedness. He was instructed to take his family and flee.

“And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 2:4).

After journeying some distance, Lehi had a dream in which the Lord said that they should not journey farther without returning to Jerusalem and obtaining the record of their fathers which was engraven on plates of brass. These plates also contained the words of the prophets and commandments of the Lord. The assignment was given to Lehi’s four sons to make the journey back to obtain the record.

Upon arriving at Jerusalem, they cast lots to decide who would go to the house of Laban and ask for the brass plates. The lot fell to Laman. He approached Laban, “and behold, it came to pass that Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee” (1 Nephi 3:13). Laman escaped with his life but without the brass plates.

One thing that strikes me about this first attempt is that the brothers did not seem to have a good plan. This teaches us an important lesson that we can apply to our study of the scriptures. Let us show our commitment to reading the Book of Mormon by approaching our study with a specific plan.

In his article in the *Ensign* and *Liahona*, President Hinckley issued “a challenge to members of the Church throughout the world and to our friends everywhere to read or reread the Book of Mormon.” Then he offered us a plan to accomplish the challenge: “If you will read a bit more than one and one-half chapters a day, you will be able to finish the book before the end of this year” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6). August and September are now past history. According to President Hinckley’s plan, we should be reading now in the book of Alma—somewhere between chapters 4 and 12. Are you ahead of schedule or behind?

### **Blessings of reading the Book of Mormon**

When the first attempt to get the brass plates failed, Nephi’s brothers wanted to give up and return to their family in the wilderness. But Nephi encouraged them to keep trying and proposed another approach to obtain the record:

“Let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord. . . .

“And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and desired him that he would give unto us the records . . . , for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things” (1 Nephi 3:16, 24).

Nephi’s example teaches us that the blessings of the scriptures are far more valuable than property and other worldly things. Pursuing the things of the world can sometimes give us momentary pleasures but not lasting joy and happiness. When we seek after the things of the Spirit, the rewards are eternal and will bring us the satisfaction we seek through this mortal experience.

President Hinckley has encouraged us to read the Book of Mormon to lift us above the things of the world, to enjoy the things of the Lord. He said, “Without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6). These blessings are far more valuable than material possessions.

### **Approach the challenge with faith**

When Nephi and his brothers offered to exchange their wealth for the brass plates, Laban stole their property and tried to take their lives. Thoroughly discouraged after yet another failed attempt, Laman and Lemuel again wanted to give up on what they felt was an impossible task. Nephi, however, was unwavering in his commitment to obey the Lord’s commandments. He reasoned with his brothers this way: “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not

mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?” (1 Nephi 4:1).

Approaching the assignment with faith in the Lord brought the desired result. As Nephi went forward to obtain the record, being led by the Spirit, Laban was delivered into his hands. Through his faith and obedience, Nephi secured for himself and his family the blessings of having the scriptures. Now, with the brass plates in their possession, Nephi and his brothers could return to their father in the wilderness and continue their journey.

If we will approach President Hinckley’s challenge with faith, we have the sure promise of our prophet of the blessings we will receive resulting from our study of the Book of Mormon. We will find, as Nephi and his family did, that the scriptures are “desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us” (1 Nephi 5:21). We can also receive the blessing Moroni promised as he closed his writings of the Book of Mormon:

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God” (Moroni 10:32).

### **Read the book to honor Joseph Smith**

This is the year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon provides convincing evidence of the Prophet Joseph’s ministry and of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. President Hinckley, in the last general conference in April, said this about the Book of Mormon:

“It is a tangible thing that can be handled, that can be read, that can be tested. . . . I would think that the whole Christian

world would reach out and welcome it and embrace it as a vibrant testimony. It represents another great and basic contribution which came as a revelation to the Prophet [Joseph]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 82).

I pray that each of us will read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year in response to the challenge of our current

prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, to honor the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. May we have a plan that we will follow in faith to taste and be filled with that which is of infinite and eternal value, even the word of God found in the Book of Mormon, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### **Gospel provides answers to all problems**

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation where you were suddenly required to remain silent while your point of view was misconstrued and belittled? Such a thing happened to me almost 25 years ago, and the frustration of that unfinished conversation has remained to this day.

As mission president, I had been invited, with others from the Church, to meet with the mayor of one of the cities in our mission. He was cordial as he welcomed us into his office. Our conversation touched upon concerns of the day. Eventually he asked why the Church was doing missionary work in his city.

This was not unexpected. An impression had come to me some weeks before that he would ask this question and what my response should be. I replied, "The gospel of Jesus Christ provides answers and solutions to all of the world's problems, including those confronting the good people of your city. This is why we are here."

I fully expected the mayor would want to know more. Instead, his mood changed. Skepticism then disdain took control of his countenance. He blustered about my naive approach to challenges in the world and brought our visit to an abrupt close. No further explanation was permitted.

This morning I should like to complete that conversation. I hope the good mayor

is listening because what follows is vital to a troubled world.

### **The gospel's teachings about calamities**

We are sobered by the terrible calamities of recent years. They occur with increasing frequency and intensity. Natural forces are ferocious in their scope, human assaults are merciless in their carnage, and unchecked appetites are leading to licentiousness, crime, and family decay approaching epic proportions. The tsunami in southern Asia and hurricanes in the United States, with their terrible tolls, are the most recent calamities capturing our attention. Hearts and hands from around the world reach out to those so profoundly affected. For a brief period differences yield to compassion and love.

We are indebted to those who, when buffeted by calamities, remind us of man's dependence upon God. A widow in a refugee camp, anguishing over the brutal slaying of her sons, weeps the words, "I must not lose my faith." Survivors, overwhelmed by Katrina's fury, send out the plea, "Pray for us."<sup>1</sup>

Causes of such calamities are the subject of seemingly endless debate. Commentators, politicians, scientists, and many others have opinions as to the causes.

The Lord Jesus Christ said concerning the restoration of His gospel:



“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.”<sup>2</sup>

Let us turn our attention to the reasons or purposes for such calamities. Fortunately, debate is not needed here because we have the fulness of Christ’s gospel on which we can rely. Search the words of the prophets in the Book of Mormon and the Bible; read the teachings of Jesus Christ in the 24th chapter of Matthew;<sup>3</sup> study the Lord’s latter-day revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>4</sup> Herein we learn the purposes of God in such matters.

### Adversity can bring us to the Savior

Calamities are a form of adversity, and adversity is a necessary part of Heavenly Father’s plan for the happiness of His children.

If our hearts are right before God, adversity will school us, help us overcome our carnal nature, and nurture the divine spark within us. Were it not for adversity, we would not know to “choose the better part.”<sup>5</sup> Adversity helps us see where we need to repent, to bring into subjection baser instincts, to embrace righteousness and enjoy “peace of conscience.”<sup>6</sup>

The more we cleave unto righteousness, the more we enjoy the protecting care of our Savior. He is the Creator and Lord of the universe. He will calm the winds and the waves.<sup>7</sup> His teachings and Atonement will heal the repentant soul. He is the Messiah or Deliverer, and because of Him, each of us can be in charge of his or her personal world, even as tragedies beset us. Listen to these truths:

“The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of

men from the fall. And because that *they are redeemed* from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; *to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.*

“Wherefore, *men are free according to the flesh*; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”<sup>8</sup>

We will do well to remember that the devil is the destroyer.

### We each control our personal world

It is true that in this life we are only as free as our mortal circumstances allow. We may not be able to stay the course of war in distant lands or with our puny arm hold back the tempests that rage or run freely when our body is imprisoned by failing health. *But it is verily true that such things do not ultimately control our personal world. We do!*

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.”<sup>9</sup>

And so, most honorable mayor, the gospel of Jesus Christ does provide answers to all of the world’s problems, *precisely because it provides solutions to the ills of every living soul.*

Every time calamity strikes, there is a corresponding sacred obligation that falls upon each of us to become better. We should ask ourselves, “What part of my life needs to change so that the weight of chastisement need not be felt?”

In the scriptures the Lord makes clear what He expects of us as such judgments descend. He says: “Gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours, and the enemy shall not overcome.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Righteousness makes us strong, prepared**

The Church and its members are commanded to be self-reliant and independent.<sup>11</sup> Preparation begins with faith, which enables us to weather vicissitudes as they come. We see earth life as a preparatory journey. Faith in the Lord and His gospel conquers fear and begets spirituality.

Spirituality grows as we “pray, and . . . walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> It is “the consciousness of victory over self and of communion with the Infinite.”<sup>13</sup>

Faith, spirituality, and obedience produce a prepared and self-reliant people. As we obey the covenant of tithing, we are shielded from want and the power of the destroyer. As we obey the fast and give generously to care for others, our prayers are heard and family fidelity increases. Similar blessings come as we obey the counsel of the prophets and live within our means, avoid unnecessary debt, and set aside sufficient of life’s necessities to sustain ourselves and our families for at least a year. This may not always be easy, but let us do our “very best,”<sup>14</sup> and our stores shall not fail—there shall be “enough and to spare.”<sup>15</sup>

And again the Lord says, “Be ye strong from henceforth; fear not, for the kingdom is yours.”<sup>16</sup>

Strength and resiliency come by righteous living. One is not righteous who is a saint on Sunday and a slacker the remainder of the week. Unchecked appetites are destructive and cause men to “trifle . . . with sacred things.”<sup>17</sup> President Brigham Young taught, “The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is, that they have not done as well as they knew how.”<sup>18</sup>

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the pathway to righteousness. Tragedies never triumph where personal righteousness prevails. Let us, therefore, heed the counsel of the Apostle Paul:

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Our grand millennial mission**

Our duty as Latter-day Saints is to prepare ourselves, this earth, and its inhabitants for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being prepared and being strong as the gospel teaches ensure happiness here and hereafter and make this “grand millennial mission” possible.

Our beloved President Hinckley has admonished: “Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships—in other words, to become more Christlike.”<sup>20</sup>



This admonition by the Lord's prophet points our way through these turbulent times. To all who suffer, our hearts reach out to you. May Heavenly Father, in His infinite mercy, make light your burdens and fill your lives with that peace which "passeth all understanding."<sup>21</sup> You are not alone. Our love and faith and prayers are joined with yours. Press forward in righteousness, and all will be well.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Evan Thomas, "The Lost City," *Newsweek*, Sept. 12, 2005, 44.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 37.
3. See also Joseph Smith—Matthew.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 45; 88; 101; 133.
5. "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe," *Hymns*, no. 180.
6. Mosiah 4:3.
7. See Matthew 8:25–27; Mark 4:39.
8. 2 Nephi 2:26–27; italics added.
9. *History of the Church*, 5:134–35.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 38:9.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:13–14; *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), 5.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
13. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 8; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, 31.
14. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Standing Strong and Immovable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 38:15.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 6:12.
18. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 89.
19. Romans 13:12–14.
20. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71; see also Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 3; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 4.
21. Philippians 4:7.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

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## Sister Susan W. Tanner

### Eternal importance of our bodies

I have just returned from a visit where I welcomed into the world our newest little granddaughter, Elizabeth Claire Sandberg. She is perfect! I was awestruck, as I am each time a baby is born, with her fingers, toes, hair, beating heart, and distinctive family characteristics—nose, chin, dimples. Her older brothers and sister were equally excited and fascinated by their tiny, perfect little sister. They seemed to sense a holiness in their home from the presence of a celestial spirit newly united with a pure physical body.

In the premortal realm we learned that the body is part of God's great plan of happiness for us. As it states in the family proclamation, "Spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal

Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). In fact, we "shouted for joy" to be part of this plan (Job 38:7).

Why were we so excited? We understood eternal truths about our bodies. We knew that our bodies would be in the image of God. We knew that our bodies would house our spirits. We also understood that our bodies would be subject to pain, illness, disabilities, and temptation. But we were willing, even eager, to accept these challenges because we knew that only with spirit and element inseparably connected could we progress to be-

come like our Heavenly Father (see D&C 130:22) and “receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33).

With the fulness of the gospel on the earth, we are again privileged to know these truths about the body. Joseph Smith taught: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the Celestial Kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The Devil has no body, and herein is his punishment” (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 60).

### **Satan’s deceptions about the body**

Satan learned these same eternal truths about the body, and yet his punishment is that he does not have one. Therefore he tries to do everything he can to get us to abuse or misuse this precious gift. He has filled the world with lies and deceptions about the body. He tempts many to defile this great gift of the body through unchastity, immodesty, self-indulgence, and addictions. He seduces some to despise their bodies; others he tempts to worship their bodies. In either case, he entices the world to regard the body merely as an object. In the face of so many satanic falsehoods about the body, I want to raise my voice today in support of the sanctity of the body. I testify that the body is a gift to be treated with gratitude and respect.

### **Treating our bodies as temples**

The scriptures declare that the body is a temple. It was Jesus Himself who first compared His body to a temple (see John 2:21). Later Paul admonished the people of Corinth, a wicked city teeming with all manner of lasciviousness and indecency: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

What would happen if we truly treated our bodies as temples? The result would be a dramatic increase in chastity, modesty, observance of the Word of Wisdom, and a similar decrease in the problems of pornography and abuse, for we would regard the body, like the temple, as a sacred sanctuary of the Spirit. Just as no unclean thing may enter the temple, we would be vigilant to keep impurity of any sort from entering the temple of our bodies.

Likewise, we would keep the outside of our bodily temples looking clean and beautiful to reflect the sacred and holy nature of what is inside, just as the Church does with its temples. We should dress and act in ways that reflect the sacred spirit inside us.

### **Modesty shows respect for our bodies**

A short while ago as I visited one of the great tourist-filled cities of the world, I felt an overwhelming sadness that so many people in the world had fallen prey to Satan’s deception that our bodies are merely objects to be flaunted and displayed openly. Imagine the contrast and my joy when I entered a classroom of modestly and appropriately dressed young women whose countenances glowed with goodness. I thought, “Here are eight beautiful girls who know how to show respect for their bodies and who know why they are doing it.” In *For the Strength of Youth* it says:

“Your body is God’s sacred creation. Respect it as a gift from God, and do not defile it in any way. Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. . . . The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside” ([2001], 14–15).

Modesty is more than a matter of avoiding revealing attire. It describes not only the altitude of hemlines and necklines but the attitude of our hearts. The word *modesty* means “measured.” It is related to

*moderate*. It implies “decency, and propriety . . . in thought, language, dress, and behavior” (in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 2:932).

### Physical pleasure must not be our god

Moderation and appropriateness should govern all of our physical desires. A loving Heavenly Father has given us physical beauties and pleasures “both to please the eye and to gladden the heart” (D&C 59:18), but with this caution: that they are “made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:20). My husband used this scripture to teach our children about the law of chastity. He said that the “word *extortion* . . . literally means to ‘twist out [or against].’ Our use of . . . the body must not be twisted [against] the divinely ordained purposes for which [it was] given. Physical pleasure is good in its proper time and place, but even then it must not become our god” (John S. Tanner, “The Body as a Blessing,” *Ensign*, July 1993, 10).

The pleasures of the body can become an obsession for some; so too can the attention we give to our outward appearance. Sometimes there is a selfish excess of exercising, dieting, makeovers, and spending money on the latest fashions (see Alma 1:27).

### Selflessness is true beauty

I am troubled by the practice of extreme makeovers. Happiness comes from accepting the bodies we have been given as divine gifts and enhancing our natural attributes, not from remaking our bodies after the image of the world. The Lord wants us to be made over—but in His image, not in the image of the world, by receiving His image in our countenances (see Alma 5:14, 19).

I remember well the insecurities I felt as a teenager with a bad case of acne. I

tried to care for my skin properly. My parents helped me get medical attention. For years I even went without eating chocolate and all the greasy fast foods around which teens often socialize, but with no obvious healing consequences. It was difficult for me at that time to fully appreciate this body which was giving me so much grief. But my good mother taught me a higher law. Over and over she said to me, “You must do everything you can to make your appearance pleasing, but the minute you walk out the door, forget yourself and start concentrating on others.”

There it was. She was teaching me the Christlike principle of selflessness. Charity, or the pure love of Christ, “envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own” (Moroni 7:45). When we become other-oriented, or selfless, we develop an inner beauty of spirit that glows in our outward appearance. This is how we make ourselves in the Lord’s image rather than the world’s and receive His image in our countenances. President Hinckley spoke of this very kind of beauty that comes as we learn to respect body, mind, and spirit. He said:

“Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth” (“Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11).

Oh, how I pray that all men and women will seek the beauty praised by the prophet—beauty of body, mind, and spirit!

### The spiritual and physical are linked

The restored gospel teaches that there is an intimate link between body, mind,

and spirit. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, the spiritual and physical are intertwined. When we follow the Lord's law of health for our bodies, we are also promised wisdom to our spirits and knowledge to our minds (see D&C 89:19–21). The spiritual and physical truly are linked.

I remember an incident in my home growing up when my mother's sensitive spirit was affected by a physical indulgence. She had experimented with a new sweet roll recipe. They were big and rich and yummy—and very filling. Even my teenage brothers couldn't eat more than one. That night at family prayer my father called upon Mom to pray. She buried her head and didn't respond. He gently prodded her, "Is something wrong?" Finally she said, "I don't feel very spiritual tonight. I just ate three of those rich sweet rolls." I suppose that many of us have similarly offended our spirits at times by physical indulgences. Especially substances forbidden in the Word of Wisdom have a harmful effect on our bodies and a numbing influence on our spiritual sensitivities. None of us can ignore this connection of our spirits and bodies.

### **We will receive a perfected body**

These sacred bodies, for which we are so grateful, suffer from natural limitations. Some people are born with disabili-

ties, and some suffer the pains of disease throughout their lives. All of us as we age experience our bodies gradually beginning to fail. When this happens, we long for the day when our bodies will be healed and whole. We look forward to the Resurrection that Jesus Christ made possible, when "the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). I know that through Christ we can experience a fulness of joy that is available only when spirit and element are inseparably connected (see D&C 93:33).

Our bodies are our temples. We are not less but *more* like Heavenly Father because we are embodied. I testify that we are His children, made in His image, with the potential to become like Him. Let us treat this divine gift of the body with great care. Someday, if we are worthy, we shall receive a perfected, glorious body—pure and clean like my new little granddaughter, only inseparably bound to the spirit. And we shall shout for joy (see Job 38:7) to receive this gift again for which we have longed (see D&C 138:50). May we respect the sanctity of the body during mortality so that the Lord may sanctify and exalt it for eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Fishermen gave warnings of the tsunami**

On December 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia, creating a deadly tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people. It was a terrible tragedy. In one day, millions of lives were forever changed.

But there was one group of people who, although their village was destroyed, did not suffer a single casualty.

The reason?

They knew a tsunami was coming.

The Moken people live in villages on islands off the coast of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). A society of fishermen, their lives depend on the sea. For hundreds and

perhaps thousands of years, their ancestors have studied the ocean, and they have passed their knowledge down from father to son.

One thing in particular they were careful to teach was what to do when the ocean receded. According to their traditions, when that happened, the “Laboon”—a wave that eats people—would arrive soon after.

When the elders of the village saw the dreaded signs, they shouted to everyone to run to high ground.

Not everyone listened.

One elderly fisherman said, “None of the kids believed me.” In fact, his own daughter called him a liar. But the old fisherman would not relent until all had left the village and climbed to higher ground.<sup>1</sup>

The Moken people were fortunate in that they had someone with conviction who warned them of what would follow. The villagers were fortunate because they listened. Had they not, they may have perished.

### **Prophets warn and lead to higher ground**

The prophet Nephi wrote about the great disaster of his day, the destruction of Jerusalem. “As one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity,” he said, “even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Since the days of Adam, the Lord has spoken to His prophets, and while His message differs according to the specific needs of the time, there is one consistent, never-changing theme: Depart from iniquity and journey to higher ground.

### **Prosperity can lead to wickedness**

As people heed the words of the prophets, the Lord blesses them. When they disregard His word, however, distress

and suffering often follow. Over and over, the Book of Mormon teaches this great lesson. In its pages we read of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent who, because of their righteousness, were blessed of the Lord and became prosperous. Yet often this prosperity turned into a curse in that it caused them to “harden their hearts, and . . . forget the Lord their God.”<sup>3</sup>

There is something about prosperity that brings out the worst in some people. In the book of Helaman we learn of one group of Nephites who experienced great loss and slaughter. Of them we read:

“And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, [and] denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation.”<sup>4</sup>

This sorrow would not have afflicted them “had it not been for their wickedness.”<sup>5</sup> If only they had heeded the words of the prophets of their day and journeyed to higher ground, their lives would have been dramatically different.

### **Solomon was left to his own strength**

The natural consequence that comes to those who depart from the way of the Lord is that they are left to their own strength.<sup>6</sup> While in the heat of our success we might assume that our own strength is sufficient, those who rely upon the arm of the flesh soon discover how weak and unreliable it truly is.<sup>7</sup>

For example, Solomon at first obeyed the Lord and honored His law. Because of this, he prospered and was blessed not only with wisdom but with wealth and honor. If he continued in righteousness, the Lord promised to “establish the throne of [his] kingdom upon Israel for ever.”<sup>8</sup>

But even after heavenly visitations, even after receiving blessings above all men, Solomon turned away from the Lord. Because of this, the Lord decreed that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant.”<sup>9</sup>

The name of that servant was Jeroboam. Jeroboam was an industrious man from the tribe of Ephraim whom Solomon had promoted to manage a portion of his laborers.<sup>10</sup>

### **Jeroboam loses promised blessings**

One day as Jeroboam was traveling, a prophet approached and prophesied that the Lord would rend the kingdom from Solomon and give ten of the twelve tribes of Israel to Jeroboam.

Through His prophet, the Lord promised Jeroboam if he would do what is right, “I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.”<sup>11</sup>

The Lord chose Jeroboam and promised remarkable blessings to him if only he would obey the commandments and journey to higher ground. After Solomon’s death, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, and ten of the twelve tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam.

After receiving such favor, did the new king obey the Lord? Unfortunately he did not. He set up golden calves and encouraged his people to worship them. He created his own “priesthood” by selecting whomsoever he would, consecrating them to be “priests of the high places.”<sup>12</sup> In short, in spite of the great blessings he had received from the Lord, the king was evil above all those before him.<sup>13</sup> In later generations, Jeroboam was the standard by which evil kings of Israel were compared.

Because of such wickedness, the Lord turned away from Jeroboam. As a result of the king’s wickedness, the Lord decreed that the king and all of his family would be destroyed until not one was left. This prophecy was later fulfilled to the let-

ter. The seed of Jeroboam perished from the earth.<sup>14</sup>

### **The tragic cycle**

Solomon and Jeroboam are examples of a great, tragic cycle so often illustrated in the Book of Mormon. When the people are righteous, the Lord prospers them. Prosperity often leads to pride, which leads to sin. Sin leads to wickedness and to hearts that become hardened to things of the Spirit. Eventually, the end of this road leads to heartbreak and sorrow.

This pattern is repeated not only in the lives of individual people but by cities, nations, and even the world. The consequences of ignoring the Lord and His prophets are certain and often accompanied by great sorrow and regret. In our day the Lord has warned that wickedness will ultimately lead to “famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven” until “the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God.”<sup>15</sup>

It is important to understand, however, that many fine and good people are affected by calamities of man and nature. The early Saints of this dispensation were persecuted and driven from their homes. Some lost their lives. But, perhaps because they had endured so much, they developed an inner strength that was a necessary preparation for the work they were yet to do.

The same happens in our day as well. Because we are not immune to calamities, we must learn from them.

### **Heeding the Lord brings blessings**

While the scriptures show the consequences of disobedience, they also show what can happen when people listen to the Lord and heed His counsel.

When the wicked city of Nineveh heard the warning voice of the prophet Jonah, they cried mightily to the Lord, repented, and were saved from destruction.<sup>16</sup>



Because the people in Enoch's day were evil, the Lord commanded Enoch to open his mouth and warn the people to turn from their wickedness and serve the Lord their God.

Enoch set aside his fears and did as he was commanded. He traveled among the people, crying with a loud voice, testifying against their works. The scriptures tell us that "all men were offended because of him." They spoke among themselves of "a strange thing in the land" and a "wild man" that had come among them.<sup>17</sup>

Although many hated Enoch, the humble believed his words. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground, and "they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish."<sup>18</sup> In their case, instead of prosperity leading to pride and sin, it led to compassion and righteousness. "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."<sup>19</sup>

After His Resurrection, the Savior came to the Americas. Because of His wondrous ministry, the people's hearts were softened. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground. They cherished His words and sought to follow His example.

They lived so righteously that there were no contentions among them, and they dealt justly one with another. They shared freely of their substance one with another, and they prospered exceedingly.

Of this people it was said that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."<sup>20</sup>

### **Follow the prophets to higher ground**

In our day we face a similar choice. We can foolishly ignore the prophets of God, depend on our own strength, and ultimately reap the consequences. Or we

can wisely draw near to the Lord and partake of His blessings.

King Benjamin described both paths and both consequences. He said that those who forsake the Lord will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment."<sup>21</sup>

But those who journey to higher ground and keep the commandments of God "are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."<sup>22</sup>

### **Choose to love God and love others**

How do we know which direction we are headed? When the Savior walked the earth, He was asked to name the greatest commandment. Without hesitation He said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>23</sup>

In these verses the Lord offers a clear way of knowing if we are on the right path. Those who journey to higher ground love the Lord with all their hearts. We see in their lives manifestations of that love. They seek their God in prayer and plead for His Holy Spirit. They humble themselves and open their hearts to the teachings of the prophets. They magnify their callings and seek to serve rather than be served. They stand as witnesses of God. They obey His commandments and grow strong in their testimonies of the truth.

They also love Heavenly Father's children, and their lives manifest that love.

They care for their brothers and sisters. They nurture, serve, and sustain their spouses and children. In the spirit of love and kindness, they build up those around them. They give freely of their substance to others. They mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.<sup>24</sup>

### The pathway of discipleship

This journey to higher ground is the pathway of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a journey that will ultimately lead us to exaltation with our families in the presence of the Father and the Son. Consequently, our journey to higher ground must include the house of the Lord. As we come unto Christ and journey to higher ground, we will desire to spend more time in His temples, because the temples represent higher ground, sacred ground.

In every age we are faced with a choice. We can trust in our own strength, or we can journey to higher ground and come unto Christ.

Each choice has a consequence; each consequence, a destination.

I bear witness that Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer, the living Son of the living God. The heavens are open, and a loving Heavenly Father reveals His word unto man. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the gospel was restored to earth. In our day a prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, lives and reveals the word of God to man. His voice sounds in harmony with those prophetic voices of all ages past.

"I invite every one of you," he has said, "wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength."<sup>25</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we are called to journey to higher ground.

We can avoid the sorrow and distress that come as a consequence of disobedience.

We can partake of peace, joy, and eternal life if we will heed the words of the prophets, be sensitive to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and fill our hearts with love for our Heavenly Father and our fellowman.

I leave my witness that the Lord will bless all who embark upon the paths of discipleship and journey to higher ground, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves," CBS News, *60 Minutes* transcript, Mar. 20, 2005, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.
2. 2 Nephi 25:9.
3. Helaman 12:2.
4. Helaman 4:12.
5. Helaman 4:11.
6. See Helaman 4:13.
7. See John 15:5: "Without me ye can do nothing."
8. See 1 Kings 9:4–5.
9. See 1 Kings 11:9–11.
10. See 1 Kings 11:28.
11. 1 Kings 11:38.
12. See 1 Kings 12:28–30; 13:33.
13. See 1 Kings 14:9.
14. See 1 Kings 15:29.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 87:6.
16. See Jonah 3:4–10.
17. See Moses 6:37–38.
18. Moses 7:17.
19. Moses 7:18.
20. 4 Nephi 1:16.
21. Mosiah 3:25.
22. Mosiah 2:41.
23. Matthew 22:37–40.
24. See Mosiah 18:9.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72.

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The choir sang "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

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## President Monson

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they've provided this morning. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Faust's remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President James E. Faust

### The light in their eyes

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends all over the world, I humbly seek your understanding and the aid of our Father's Spirit as I speak to you this morning.

I greatly appreciated the brief prophetic message of President Hinckley at the beginning of this conference. I testify that President Hinckley is our prophet, who richly enjoys the guidance of the Head of this Church, who is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I recently recalled a historic meeting in Jerusalem about 17 years ago. It was regarding the lease for the land on which the Brigham Young University's Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies was later built. Before this lease could be signed, President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, agreed with the Israeli government on behalf of the Church and the university not to proselyte in Israel.

You might wonder why we agreed not to proselyte. We were required to do so in order to get the building permit to build that magnificent building which stands in the historic city of Jerusalem. To our knowledge, the Church and BYU have scrupulously and honorably kept that nonproselyting commitment. After the lease had been signed, one of our friends insightfully remarked, "Oh, we know that you are not going to proselyte, but what are you going to do about the light that is

in their eyes?" He was referring to our students who were studying in Israel.

What was that light in their eyes which was so obvious to our friend? The Lord Himself gives the answer: "And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth *your eyes*, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings."<sup>1</sup> Where did that light come from? Again the Lord gives the answer: "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."<sup>2</sup> The Lord is the true light, "and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit."<sup>3</sup> This light shows in our countenances as well as in our eyes.

Paul Harvey, a famous news commentator, visited one of our Church school campuses some years ago. Later he observed: "Each . . . young face mirrored a sort of . . . sublime assurance. These days many young eyes are prematurely old from [countless] compromises with conscience. But [these young people] have that enviable headstart which derives from discipline, dedication, and consecration."<sup>4</sup>

### Gift of the Holy Ghost is a light to the eyes

Those who truly repent receive the Spirit of Christ and are baptized into this Church unto the remission of their sins. Hands are laid upon their heads, and through the priesthood of God they receive the Holy Ghost.<sup>5</sup> It is "the gift of

God unto all those who diligently seek him.”<sup>6</sup> As Elder Parley P. Pratt characterized it, the gift of the Holy Ghost is, “as it were, . . . joy to the heart, [and] light to the eyes.”<sup>7</sup> The Holy Ghost is that Comforter promised by the Savior before He was crucified.<sup>8</sup> The Holy Ghost gives worthy Saints both spiritual guidance and protection. It increases our knowledge and our understanding of “all things.”<sup>9</sup> This is of immense value at a time when spiritual blindness is increasing.

### **A yearning for the Spirit amid secularism**

Secularism is expanding in much of the world today. Secularism is defined as “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations.”<sup>10</sup> Secularism does not accept many things as absolutes. Its principal objectives are pleasure and self-interest. Often those who embrace secularism have a different look about them. As Isaiah observed, “The show of their countenance doth witness against them.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet with all the secularism in the world, many people hunger and yearn for the things of the Spirit and hearing the word of the Lord. As Amos prophesied:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

“And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.”<sup>12</sup>

Where can we hear the words of the Lord? We can hear them from our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the other General Authorities. We can also hear them from our stake presidents and bishops. Missionaries can hear them from their mission presidents. We can read them in the scriptures. We

can also hear the still, small voice which comes through the Holy Ghost. Hearing the words of the Lord lifts us out of spiritual blindness “into his marvellous light.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Dedication to absolutes brings light**

What are we doing to keep the light shining in our own eyes and countenances? Much of that light comes from our discipline, dedication, and consecration<sup>14</sup> to some important absolutes. The foremost of these absolutes is that there is a God who is the Father of our souls to whom we account for our actions. Second, that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Third, that the great plan of happiness requires obedience to God’s commandments. Fourth, that the greatest gift of God is eternal life.<sup>15</sup>

Other blessings add further to the light in our eyes. They are the gifts of the Spirit that come from the Savior.<sup>16</sup> Joy, happiness, fulfillment, and peace are the gifts of the Spirit that flow from the power of the Holy Ghost.

In terms of happiness here and in the eternities, many of our beliefs are blockbusters. They are huge, and some of them are unique to our faith. These precious beliefs are based upon our faithfulness and include the following, not necessarily in order of importance:

1. God and His Son are glorified personages. God the Father is our living Creator, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. We have been created in God’s image.<sup>17</sup> We know this because Joseph Smith saw Them, They talked to him, and he talked to Them.<sup>18</sup>

2. Temple blessings seal husband and wife together, not only for this life but for eternity. Children and posterity can be linked together by this sealing.

3. Every worthy male member of the Church can hold and exercise the priesthood of God. He can exercise this divine authority within his family and in the

Church under call by one who has authority.

4. Additional holy scriptures include the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

5. Living apostles and prophets speak the word of God in our day, under the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the prophet, seer, and revelator, the source of continuous revelation in our time.

6. The gift of the Holy Ghost is available to all members. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was asked “wherein [the LDS Church] differed . . . from the other religions of the day,” he replied that it was in “the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands . . . [and] that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>19</sup>

7. The ennobling of womanhood. Women have full equality with men before the Lord. By nature, the roles of women differ from those of men. This knowledge has come to us with the Restoration of the gospel in the fulness of times, with an acknowledgment that women are endowed with the great responsibilities of motherhood and nurturing. More opportunities have come to women since 1842, when the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the name of God, turned the key in their behalf than from the beginning of humankind on the earth.<sup>20</sup>

### **Light in a young nurse’s face**

Some years ago, Constance, a student nurse, was assigned to try and help a woman who had injured her leg in an accident. The woman refused medical help because she had had a negative experience with someone at the hospital. She was afraid and had become something of a recluse. The first time Constance dropped by, the injured woman ordered her out. On the second try, she did let Constance in. By now the woman’s leg was covered

with large ulcers, and some of the flesh was rotting. But still she didn’t want to be treated.

Constance made it a matter of prayer, and in a day or two the answer came. She took some foaming hydrogen peroxide with her for the next visit. As this was painless, the old woman let her use it on her leg. Then they talked about more serious treatment at the hospital. Constance assured her the hospital would make her stay as pleasant as possible. In a day or two the woman did get the courage to enter the hospital. When Constance visited her, the woman smiled as she said, “You convinced me.” Then, quite unexpectedly, she asked Constance, “What church do you belong to?” Constance told her she was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The woman said, “I knew it. I knew you were sent to me from the first day that I saw you. There was a light in your face that I had noticed in others of your faith. I had to put my trust in you.”

In three months’ time that festering leg was completely healed. Members of the ward where the old woman lived remodeled her house and fixed up her yard. The missionaries met with her, and she was baptized soon after.<sup>21</sup> All of this because she noticed the light in that young student nurse’s face.

Once when President Brigham Young was asked why we are sometimes left alone and often sad, his response was that man has to learn to “act as an independent being . . . to see what he will do . . . and try his independency—to be righteous in the dark.”<sup>22</sup> That becomes easier to do when we see the “gospel glow . . . radiating from . . . illuminated individuals.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Service brings light to our eyes**

Service in this Church is a marvelous blessing and privilege that brings light to our eyes and our countenances. As the Savior recommended, “Let your light so

shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”<sup>24</sup> Words cannot express the blessings that come to us through service in this Church. The Lord promises that if we magnify our callings, we will find happiness and joy.

### A personal bond with God brings light

Alma asks if we have received His image in our countenances.<sup>25</sup> A sacred light comes to our eyes and countenances when we have a personal bond with our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior and Redeemer. With this bond, our faces will mirror that “sublime assurance”<sup>26</sup> that He lives.

I bear my personal witness of the divinity of this holy work in which we are engaged. Testimonies come through revelation.<sup>27</sup> This testifying revelation came to my heart as a young boy. I do not recall any specific event that prompted this confirming revelation. It just seemed always to be part of my consciousness. I am grateful for this confirming knowledge that has made it possible to handle the vicissitudes of life which come to all of us.

We have been and will be stirred by the testifying messages of the Brethren and sisters in this conference. I believe this confirming experience should relate to you. You may very well receive an affirmation that what is said is true. Brigham Young taught, “Not only the Saints who are present, . . . but those of every nation, continent, or island who live the religion taught by our Savior and his Apostles, and also by Joseph Smith; . . . also bear the same testimony, their eyes have been quickened by the Spirit of God, and they see alike, their hearts have been quickened, and they feel and understand alike.”<sup>28</sup>

I know with all my heart and soul that God lives. I believe He will enlighten our lives with His love for each of us if we strive to be worthy of that love, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:11; italics added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
4. News broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967, typescript, 1.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
6. 1 Nephi 10:17.
7. *Key to the Science of Theology: A Voice of Warning* (1978), 61.
8. See John 14:26.
9. John 14:26.
10. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “secularism,” 1123.
11. 2 Nephi 13:9.
12. Amos 8:11–12.
13. 1 Peter 2:9.
14. See Paul Harvey, news broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.
17. See Genesis 1:26–27.
18. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–18.
19. *History of the Church*, 4:42.
20. See George Albert Smith, “Address to Members of the Relief Society,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1945, 717; see also Relief Society Minutes, Apr. 28, 1842, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 40.
21. See Constance Polve, “A Battle Won,” *New Era*, Apr. 1980, 44–45.
22. Brigham Young's Office Journal, Jan. 28, 1857, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
23. Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 67.
24. 3 Nephi 12:16.
25. See Alma 5:14.
26. Paul Harvey, news broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967.
27. See Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (1998), 35.
28. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 31.

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The choir sang “I Believe in Christ.” Elder Darwin B. Christenson offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 175th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

A choir of young women and young men from stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, provided the music. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 175th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

The choir will open these services by singing "Awake and Arise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Awake and Arise."

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance, who are participating by means of radio, television, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session is being furnished by a Young Women and Young Men choir from the stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will now sing "On a Golden Springtime." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "On a Golden Springtime."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the

First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may so manifest.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell

Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders John H. Groberg and David E. Sorensen as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. It is proposed that we release Elders F. Burton Howard, F. Melvin Hammond, and Harold G. Hillam as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We extend a release to Elders Darwin B. Christenson, Adhemar Damiani, H. Alldridge Gillespie, Stephen B. Oveson, Ned B. Roueché, and Dennis E. Simmons as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We also extend a release to Jairo Mazzagardi as an Area Seventy. All who wish

to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Neil L. Andersen and Ronald A. Rasband as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Sione M. Fineanganofa as an Area Seventy to succeed Pita R. Vamanrav, who recently passed away. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

### **President Faust**

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by the choir and congregation singing “High on the Mountain Top.” Elders Benjamín De Hoyos, C. Scott Grow, and Paul K. Sybrowsky of the Seventy will then address us.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

### **Misunderstandings about the priesthood**

My subject is priesthood authority in the family and in the Church.

My father died when I was seven. I was the oldest of three small children our widowed mother struggled to raise. When I was ordained a deacon, she said how pleased she was to have a priesthood holder in the home. But Mother continued to direct the family, including calling on which one of us would pray when we

knelt together each morning. I was puzzled. I had been taught that the priesthood presided in the family. There must be something I didn’t know about how that principle worked.

About this same time we had a neighbor who dominated and sometimes abused his wife. He roared like a lion, and she cowered like a lamb. When they walked to church, she always walked a few steps behind him. That made my mother mad. She was a strong woman who would not accept



such domination, and she was angry to see another woman abused in that way. I think of her reaction whenever I see men misusing their authority to gratify their pride or exercise control or compulsion upon their wives in any degree of unrighteousness (see D&C 121:37).

I have also seen some faithful women who misunderstand how priesthood authority functions. Mindful of their partnership relationship with their husband in the family, some wives have sought to extend that relationship to their husband's priesthood calling, such as bishop or mission president. In contrast, some single women who have been abused by men (such as in a divorce) mistakenly confuse the priesthood with male abuse and become suspicious of any priesthood authority. A person who has had a bad experience with a particular electrical appliance should not forego using the power of electricity.

Each of the circumstances I have described results from misunderstanding priesthood authority and the great principle that while this authority presides in both the family and the Church, the priesthood functions in a different way in each of them. This principle is understood and applied by the great Church and family leaders I have known, but it is rarely explained. Even the scriptures, which record various exercises of priesthood authority, seldom state expressly which principles apply only to the exercise of priesthood authority in the family or in the Church or which apply in both of them.

### **Relationship between family and Church**

In our theology and in our practice, the family and the Church have a mutually reinforcing relationship. The family is dependent upon the Church for doctrine, ordinances, and priesthood keys. The Church provides the teachings, authority, and ordinances necessary to perpetuate family relationships to the eternities.

We have programs and activities in both the family and the Church. Each is so interrelated that service to one is service to the other. When children see their parents faithfully perform Church callings, it strengthens their family relationships. When families are strong, the Church is strong. The two run in parallel. Each is important and necessary, and each must be conducted with careful concern for the other. Church programs and activities should not be so all-encompassing that families cannot have everyone present for family time. And family activities should not be scheduled in conflict with sacrament meeting or other vital Church meetings.

We need both Church activities and family activities. If all families were complete and perfect, the Church could sponsor fewer activities. But in a world where many of our youth grow up in homes where one parent is missing, not a member, or otherwise inactive in gospel leadership, there is a special need for Church activities to fill in the gaps. Our widowed mother wisely saw that Church activities would provide her sons with experiences she could not provide because we had no male role model in the home. I remember her urging me to watch and try to be like the good men in our ward. She pushed me to participate in Scouting and other Church activities that would provide this opportunity.

In a church where there are many single members, who do not presently have the companionship the Lord intends for all of His sons and daughters, the Church and its families should also have special concern for the needs of single adults.

### **Priesthood authority in family and Church**

Priesthood authority functions in both the family and the Church. The priesthood is the power of God used to bless all of His children, male and female. Some of our

abbreviated expressions, like “the women and the priesthood,” convey an erroneous idea. Men are not “the priesthood.” Priesthood meeting is a meeting of those who hold and exercise the priesthood. The blessings of the priesthood, such as baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, the temple endowment, and eternal marriage, are available to men and women alike. The authority of the priesthood functions in the family and in the Church according to the principles the Lord has established.

When my father died, my mother presided over our family. She had no priesthood office, but as the surviving parent in her marriage she had become the governing officer in her family. At the same time, she was always totally respectful of the priesthood authority of our bishop and other Church leaders. She presided over her family, but they presided over the Church.

### **Distinct uses in the family and the Church**

There are many similarities and some differences in the way priesthood authority functions in the family and in the Church. If we fail to recognize and honor the differences, we encounter difficulties.

*Keys.* One important difference between its function in the Church and in the family is the fact that all priesthood authority *in the Church* functions under the direction of the one who holds the appropriate priesthood keys. In contrast, the authority that presides *in the family*—whether father or single-parent mother—functions in family matters without the need to get authorization from anyone holding priesthood keys. This family authority includes directing the activities of the family, family meetings like family home evenings, family prayer, teaching the gospel, and counseling and disciplining family members. It also includes ordained fathers giving priesthood blessings.

However, priesthood keys are necessary to authorize the ordaining or setting

apart of family members. This is because the organization the Lord has made responsible for the performance and recording of priesthood ordinances is the Church, not the family.

*Boundaries.* Church organizations like wards, quorums, or auxiliaries always have geographic boundaries that limit the responsibility and authority of the callings associated with them. In contrast, family relationships and responsibilities are not dependent upon where different family members reside.

*Duration.* Church callings are always temporary, but family relationships are permanent.

*Call and release.* Another contrast concerns the initiation and termination of positions. In the Church, a priesthood leader who holds the necessary keys has the authority to call or release persons serving under his direction. He can even cause that they lose their membership and have their names “blotted out” (see Mosiah 26:34–38; Alma 5:56–62). In contrast, family relationships are so important that the head of the family lacks the authority to make changes in family membership. That can be done only by someone authorized to adjust family relationships under the laws of man or the laws of God. Thus, while a bishop can *release* a Relief Society president, he cannot sever his relationship with his wife without a *divorce* under the laws of man. Again, his sealing for eternity cannot be ended without a cancellation procedure under the laws of God. Similarly, a youth serving in a class or quorum presidency can be *released* by priesthood authority in the ward, but parents cannot *divorce* a child whose life choices are offensive to them. Family relationships are more enduring than Church relationships.

*Partnership.* A most important difference in the functioning of priesthood authority in the family and in the Church results from the fact that the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the



government of the Church is hierarchical. The concept of partnership functions differently in the family than in the Church.

The family proclamation gives this beautiful explanation of the relationship between a husband and a wife: While they have separate responsibilities, “in these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to *help one another as equal partners*” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; italics added).

President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a full partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent partners* or *limited partners* in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full partner*” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 315).

President Kimball also declared, “We have heard of men who have said to their wives, ‘I hold the priesthood and you’ve got to do what I say.’” He decisively rejected that abuse of priesthood authority in a marriage, declaring that such a man “should not be honored in his priesthood” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 316).

### **Righteous use of priesthood authority**

There are cultures or traditions in some parts of the world that allow men to oppress women, but those abuses must not be carried into the families of the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember how Jesus taught: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you . . .” (Matthew 5:27–28). For example, the Savior contradicted the prevailing culture in His considerate treatment of women. Our guide must be the gospel culture He taught.

If men desire the Lord’s blessings in their family leadership, they must exercise their priesthood authority according to the Lord’s principles for its use:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge” (D&C 121:41–42).

When priesthood authority is exercised in that way in the patriarchal family, we achieve the “full partnership” President Kimball taught. As declared in the family proclamation:

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, [and] compassion” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Church callings are performed according to the principles that govern all of us in working under priesthood authority in the Church. These principles include the persuasion and gentleness taught in the 121st section, which are especially necessary in the hierarchal organization of the Church.

The principles I have identified for the exercise of priesthood authority are more understandable and more comfortable for a married woman than for a single woman, especially a single woman who has never been married. She does not now experience priesthood authority in the partnership relationship of marriage. Her experiences with priesthood authority are in the hierarchical relationships of the Church, and some single women feel they have no voice in those relationships. It is, therefore, imperative to have an effective ward council, where male and female ward officers sit down together regularly to counsel under the presiding authority of the bishop.

### **Our theology centers on the family**

I conclude with some general comments and a personal experience.

The theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints centers on the family. Our relationship to God and the purpose of earth life are explained in terms of the family. We are the spirit children of heavenly parents. The gospel plan is implemented through earthly families, and our highest aspiration is to perpetuate those family relationships throughout eternity. The ultimate mission of our Savior's Church is to help us achieve exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and that can be accomplished only in a family relationship.

No wonder our Church is known as a family-centered church. No wonder we are distressed at the current legal and cultural deteriorations in the position of marriage and childbearing. At a time when the world seems to be losing its understanding of the purpose of marriage and the value of childbearing, it is vital that Latter-day Saints have no confusion about these matters.

### **Tribute to Elder Oaks's widowed mother**

The faithful widowed mother who raised us had no confusion about the eternal nature of the family. She always honored the position of our deceased father.

She made him a presence in our home. She spoke of the eternal duration of their temple marriage. She often reminded us of what our father would like us to do so we could realize the Savior's promise that we could be a family forever.

I recall an experience that shows the effect of her teachings. Just before Christmas one year, our bishop asked me, as a deacon, to help him deliver Christmas baskets to the widows of the ward. I carried a basket to each door with his greetings. When he drove me home, there was one basket remaining. He handed it to me and said it was for my mother. As he drove away, I stood in the falling snow wondering why there was a basket for my mother. She never referred to herself as a widow, and it had never occurred to me that she was. To a 12-year-old boy, she wasn't a widow. She had a husband, and we had a father. He was just away for a while.

I anticipate that glorious future day when the separated will be reunited and all of us will be made complete as the Lord has promised. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, whose priesthood authority and whose Atonement and Resurrection make it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

### **Praise and love for young women**

Father Time played a rude trick on me just a few months ago. I arose one morning all bright eyed and bushy tailed, greeted the dawn with a smile—only to realize suddenly that with the birthday to be celebrated that day I now had a teenage grandchild. I thought about it for a minute and then did what any responsible, dignified adult would do. I got back in bed and pulled the covers over my head.

Traditional joking aside about the harrowing experience of raising teenagers, I want to say to my own granddaughter and the vast majority of the youth of the Church whom I meet around the world how extraordinarily proud we are of you. Moral and physical danger exists almost everywhere around you and temptations of a dozen kinds present themselves daily, yet most of you strive to do what is right.

This afternoon I wish to raise my voice in praise of you, to express my love, my en-

couragement, and my admiration for you. Because this precious eldest grandchild of whom I spoke is a young woman, I am going to address my remarks to the young women of the Church, but I hope the spirit of what I say can apply to women and men of all ages. However, today, as Maurice Chevalier used to sing, I want to “thank heaven for little girls.”

### **You are literally a daughter of God**

First of all, I want you to be proud you are a woman. I want you to feel the reality of what that means, to know who you truly are. You are literally a spirit daughter of heavenly parents with a divine nature and an eternal destiny.<sup>1</sup> That surpassing truth should be fixed deep in your soul and be fundamental to every decision you make as you grow into mature womanhood. There could never be a greater authentication of your dignity, your worth, your privileges, and your promise. Your Father in Heaven knows your name and knows your circumstance. He hears your prayers. He knows your hopes and dreams, including your fears and frustrations. And He knows what you can become through faith in Him. Because of this divine heritage, you, along with all of your spiritual sisters and brothers, have full equality in His sight and are empowered through obedience to become a rightful heir in His eternal kingdom, an “[heir] of God, and joint-[heir] with Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Seek to comprehend the significance of these doctrines. Everything Christ taught He taught to women as well as men. Indeed, in the restored light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a woman, including a young woman, occupies a majesty all her own in the divine design of the Creator. You are, as Elder James E. Talmage once phrased it, “a sanctified investiture which none shall dare profane.”<sup>3</sup>

Be a woman of Christ. Cherish your esteemed place in the sight of God. He needs you. This Church needs you. The

world needs you. A woman’s abiding trust in God and unfailing devotion to things of the Spirit have always been an anchor when the wind and the waves of life were fiercest.<sup>4</sup> I say to you what the Prophet Joseph said more than 150 years ago: “If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.”<sup>5</sup>

All of this is to try to tell you how your Father in Heaven feels about you and what He has designed for you to become. And if for a time any of you are less visionary than this or seem bent on living beneath your privilege, then we express even greater love for you and plead with you to make your teenage years a triumph, not a tragedy. Fathers and mothers, prophets and apostles have no motive except to bless your life and to spare you every possible heartache we can spare you.

### **Wear modest clothing**

For you to fully claim Heavenly Father’s blessings and protection, we ask you to stay true to the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and *not* slavishly follow the whims of fads and fashions. The Church will never deny your moral agency regarding what you should wear and exactly how you should look. But the Church will always declare standards and will always teach principles. As Sister Susan Tanner taught this morning, one of those principles is modesty. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, modesty in appearance is *always* in fashion. Our standards are *not* socially negotiable.

The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is very clear in its call for young women to avoid clothing that is too tight, too short, or improperly revealing in any manner, including bare midriffs.<sup>6</sup> Parents, please review this booklet with your children. Second only to your love, they need your limits. Young women, choose your clothing the way you would choose your

friends—in both cases choose that which improves you and would give you confidence standing in the presence of God.<sup>7</sup> Good friends would never embarrass you, demean you, or exploit you. Neither should your clothing.

I make a special appeal regarding how young women might dress for Church services and Sabbath worship. We used to speak of “best dress” or “Sunday dress,” and maybe we should do so again. In any case, from ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord—and a dedicated LDS chapel is a “house of the Lord.” Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should *not* be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach. When we come to worship the God and Father of us all and to partake of the sacrament symbolizing the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we should be as comely and respectful, as dignified and appropriate as we can be. We should be recognizable in appearance as well as in behavior that we truly are disciples of Christ, that in a spirit of worship we are meek and lowly of heart, that we truly desire the Savior’s Spirit to be with us always.

### **Be more accepting of your bodies**

In this same vein may I address an even more sensitive subject. I plead with you young women to please be more accepting of yourselves, including your body shape and style, with a little less longing to look like someone else. We are all different. Some are tall, and some are short. Some are round, and some are thin. And almost everyone at some time or other wants to be something they are not! But as one adviser to teenage girls said: “You can’t live your life worrying that the world is staring at you. When you let people’s opinions make you self-conscious, you give away your power. . . . The key to feeling [confident] is to always listen to your inner

self—[the *real* you.]”<sup>8</sup> And in the kingdom of God, the real you is “more precious than rubies.”<sup>9</sup> Every young woman is a child of destiny and every adult woman a powerful force for good. I mention adult women because, sisters, you are our greatest examples and resource for these young women. And if you are obsessing over being a size 2, you won’t be very surprised when your daughter or the Mia Maid in your class does the same and makes herself physically ill trying to accomplish it. We should all be as fit as we can be—that’s good Word of Wisdom doctrine. That means eating right and exercising and helping our bodies function at their optimum strength. We could probably all do better in that regard. But I speak here of optimum health; there is no universal optimum size.

Frankly, the world has been brutal with you in this regard. You are bombarded in movies, television, fashion magazines, and advertisements with the message that looks are everything! The pitch is, “If your looks are good enough, your life will be glamorous and you will be happy and popular.” That kind of pressure is immense in the teenage years, to say nothing of later womanhood. In too many cases too much is being done to the human body to meet just such a fictional (to say nothing of superficial) standard. As one Hollywood actress is reported to have said recently:

“We’ve become obsessed with beauty and the fountain of youth. . . . I’m really saddened by the way women mutilate [themselves] in search of that. I see women [including young women] . . . pulling this up and tucking that back. It’s like a slippery slope. [You can’t get off of it.] . . . It’s really insane . . . what society is doing to women.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Don’t be preoccupied with the physical**

In terms of preoccupation with self and a fixation on the physical, this is more than social insanity; it is spiritually destructive, and it accounts for much of the unhappi-

ness women, including young women, face in the modern world. And if adults are preoccupied with appearance—tucking and nipping and implanting and remodeling everything that can be remodeled—those pressures and anxieties will certainly seep through to children. At some point the problem becomes what the Book of Mormon called “vain imaginations.”<sup>11</sup> And in secular society, both vanity *and* imagination run wild. One would truly need a great and spacious makeup kit to compete with beauty as portrayed in media all around us. Yet at the end of the day there would still be those “in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers” as Lehi saw,<sup>12</sup> because however much one tries in the world of glamour and fashion, it will never be glamorous enough.

### Universal qualities of loveliness

A woman not of our faith once wrote something to the effect that in her years of working with beautiful women, she had seen several things they all had in common, and not one of them had anything to do with sizes and shapes. She said the loveliest women she had known had a glow of health, a warm personality, a love of learning, stability of character, and integrity. If we may add the sweet and gentle Spirit of the Lord carried by such a woman, then this describes the loveliness of women in any age or time, *every* element of which is emphasized in and attainable through the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### The gospel will lift and bless you

May I conclude. Much has been said lately in entertainment media about the current craze for “reality shows.” I am not sure what those are, but from the bottom of my heart I share this gospel reality with the beautiful generation of young women growing up in this Church.

My solemn declaration to you is that the Father and the Son did *in very fact* appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith, himself

a young man called by God from your very age group. I testify that these divine beings spoke to him, that he heard Their eternal voices, and he saw Their glorified bodies.<sup>13</sup>

That experience was as real in its own setting as the Apostle Thomas’s was when the Savior said to him, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: . . . be not faithless, but [be] believing.”<sup>14</sup>

To my granddaughter and to every other young person in this Church I bear my personal witness that God is *in reality* our Father and Jesus Christ is *in reality* His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I testify that this *really* is the Church and kingdom of God on earth, that true prophets have led this people in the past and a true prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, leads it now. May you know the unending love the leaders of the Church have for you, and may you let the eternal realities of the gospel of Jesus Christ lift you above temporal concerns and teenage anxieties, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. Romans 8:17.
3. James E. Talmage, “The Eternity of Sex,” *Young Woman’s Journal*, Oct. 1914, 602.
4. See J. Reuben Clark, in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 21, for a lengthy tribute to women of the Church.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:605.
6. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 15.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
8. Julia DeVillers, *Teen People*, Sept. 2005, 104.
9. Proverbs 3:15.
10. Halle Berry, quoted in “Halle Slams ‘Insane’ Plastic Surgery,” *This Is London*, Aug. 2, 2004, [www.thisislondon.com/showbiz/articles/12312096?source=PA](http://www.thisislondon.com/showbiz/articles/12312096?source=PA).
11. 1 Nephi 12:18.
12. See 1 Nephi 8:27. See Douglas Bassett, “Faces of Worldly Pride in the Book of

Mormon,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 51, for an excellent discussion of this issue.

13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25.

14. John 20:27.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## Elder Benjamín De Hoyos

### Happiness is the purpose of the gospel

“Life is good, if we live in such a way to make it so.” This was a part of an inspirational message I read many years ago. What the message calls “a good life” comes as a result of the way we do things, of the words we choose to say, and even of the kind of thoughts we choose to have.

No one needs to feel alone on the road of life, for we are all invited to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him. Happiness is the purpose of the gospel and the purpose of the redeeming Atonement for all men.

The account in the book of Helaman expressed it in a concise way:

“Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful *unto all* who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.

“Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open *unto all*, even to those *who will* believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

“Yea, we see that *whosoever will* may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall . . . lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course . . . and land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

### Happiness comes from obedience

My beloved brothers and sisters, we need to recognize that “wanting to” is the determining factor which leads us to lay hold upon the word of God and be happy.

Perseverance in making correct decisions is what leads us to happiness.

Happiness comes as a result of our obedience and our courage in always doing the will of God, even in the most difficult circumstances. When the prophet Lehi warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they mocked him, and, as with other ancient prophets, they sought to take away his life. I quote the prophet Nephi:

“I . . . will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are *over all those* whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.”<sup>2</sup>

### Quitting a cigarette factory job

When I was serving as a missionary in northern Mexico, a few days after the baptismal service of the Valdez family we received a telephone call from Brother Valdez asking us to come to his house. He had an important question for us. Now that he knew the will of the Lord regarding the Word of Wisdom, and even though it would be difficult to find a new job, he wondered if he should continue to work for the cigarette company where he had worked for many years. Only a few days later Brother Valdez again asked us to come by and visit him. He had decided to quit his job because he was not willing to go against his convictions. Then with a smile and emotion in his voice, he told us that the very day he quit his old job, another company had called to offer him a much better position.



Yes, we find happiness in the midst of the trial of our faith. The Lord manifests Himself to us through His tender mercies, which we find along the road of happiness. We see with increased clarity His hand in our lives.

### **Joyful reunion with a missionary**

Happiness is a condition of the soul. This joyous state comes as a result of righteous living.<sup>3</sup>

Some years ago while I was serving as a mission president, my wife, Evelia, witnessed a touching scene of happiness when she saw a faithful family enter the chapel. This mother and her two small children had walked from their humble home under oppressive heat to church that day. They never imagined they would find Elder Cruz, the dedicated missionary who, the year before, had shared the message of the restored gospel with them. This wonderful surprise was key in their recognizing the great happiness the gospel had brought into their lives. The children ran to embrace him, and while tears of joy ran down the cheeks of Elder Cruz, the mother clasped his hands in hers and profoundly thanked him for all he had done to bless their family. Surely they found that happiness which is prepared and reserved for the Saints.<sup>4</sup>

### **True happiness is a conscious decision**

The Prophet Joseph stated, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.”<sup>5</sup>

After the struggles of the long journey to the promised land and after 30 years

of faithful efforts to keep the commandments of God,<sup>6</sup> the untiring prophet Nephi of the Book of Mormon summarized the history of his people by saying, “And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.”<sup>7</sup>

Happiness is defined in the Book of Mormon by the prophet-king Benjamin as “the blessed and happy state of those [who] keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual.”<sup>8</sup>

Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, life is good if we live in such a way to make it so. Believing, desiring, deciding, and choosing correctly are the simple actions that define an increase in happiness and an increase in the inner assurance that transcends this life.

Let us remember that the Lord Himself still calls to us saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>9</sup> I know that He lives and that He continually calls at our door. He has restored His Church and the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Even today He directs His Church and kingdom through our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

I leave with you my love and my humble testimony, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Helaman 3:27–30; italics added.
2. 1 Nephi 1:20; italics added.
3. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Joy,” 137.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:43.
5. *History of the Church*, 5:134–35.
6. See 2 Nephi 5:10.
7. 2 Nephi 5:27.
8. Mosiah 2:41.
9. Matthew 11:28.

## Elder C. Scott Grow

### Growth in Mexico fulfills prophecy

Thirty-six years ago I served a mission in southeast Mexico. At that time there were no stakes, with the largest cities in the mission having only two branches. There were limited opportunities for education and much poverty. With two or three exceptions, all the missionaries were from the United States.

I remember the people of the Nealtican Branch. All buildings in the town were made of adobe, except the Catholic cathedral and the LDS chapel. I remember standing in the small adobe house of the branch president. It had a dirt floor, windows with no glass, and a rug hanging over the entryway. There was no furniture in the house. His family had no shoes.

But they were a happy people. He told me that they had sold everything they had to buy bus tickets to the Mesa temple, where they were sealed for time and all eternity. Many of the branch members had done the same thing.

A month ago I returned to Mexico to serve in the Mexico North Area Presidency. The Mexico of today is much different from that of 36 years ago. Nealtican is the center of a thriving stake of Zion. Mexico has 200 stakes and a million members of the Church. Many stake and ward leaders are highly educated and financially secure. Thousands of young men and women from Mexico are serving full-time missions.

Truly the vision seen by Lehi and interpreted by Nephi is coming to pass. "And at that day shall the remnant of *our seed* know that they are of the *house of Israel*, and that *they* are the *covenant* people of the Lord; and then shall they *know* and come to the knowledge of their *forefathers*, and also to the knowledge of the *gospel* of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their *fathers by him*; where-

fore, they shall come to the knowledge of their *Redeemer*."<sup>1</sup>

### The Book of Mormon blesses all nations

Truly the people of Mexico and other Latin American countries are among the descendants of prophets. The Book of Mormon is their inheritance. Jesus Christ did minister unto their fathers.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ descended out of heaven, clothed in a white robe, and stood in the midst of their ancestors here in the Americas. He stretched forth His hand and said:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

". . . I am the light and the life of the world."<sup>2</sup>

"Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up."<sup>3</sup>

To the Church in our day, the Savior repeated that counsel when He said, "Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ is the light that we hold up as a standard to all nations. We offer the additional light of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

President Hinckley has challenged us to read or reread the Book of Mormon before year-end in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. By so doing, we honor Joseph Smith, who translated the Book of Mormon "by the gift and power of God."<sup>5</sup>

When the ancient prophet Moroni appeared to Joseph, he told him "that God had a work for [him] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people."<sup>6</sup>



That prophecy has come to pass. The name of Joseph Smith is known and revered throughout the world, even in the remote village of Nealtican, Mexico.

### **A young man in Mexico finds the Church**

Recently a member in Monterrey, Mexico, told me how the Book of Mormon changed his life. As a teenager, Jesús Santos was impressed by the LDS missionaries he saw walking down the dusty streets. He wanted to talk to them about their church but was told by a friend that you have to wait for them to contact you.

Many times he would go to the church building and look through the iron fence at the missionaries and the Mutual youth playing games. They seemed so wholesome, and he wanted to be part of them. He would lean his chin on the fence, hoping that they would notice him and invite him to participate with them. It never happened.

As Jesús recounted his story to me, he said, “It is sad. I was a young man and could have served a full-time mission.”

He moved to Monterrey, Mexico. *Nine* years later he was visiting a friend across town when the missionaries knocked at the door. His friend wanted to send them away. Jesús begged him to let the missionaries talk to them for just two minutes. His friend consented.

The missionaries talked about the Book of Mormon, how Lehi’s family traveled from Jerusalem to the Americas, and how the resurrected Jesus Christ visited Lehi’s descendants in America.

Jesús wanted to know more. He was especially intrigued by the picture depicting Christ’s appearance in America. He gave the missionaries his address. He waited for months, but they never made contact with him.

*Three* more years passed. Some friends invited his family to a family home evening. They gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon.

As soon as he began to read it, he knew the Book of Mormon was true. Finally, 12 years after he first became aware of the Church, he and his wife were baptized. So many years had been lost. If missionaries had just talked to him, if the Mutual youth had just noticed a lonely teenager looking over the fence, if the missionaries in Monterrey had found him at home, his life would have been different during those 12 years. Gratefully, member neighbors invited him for a family home evening and shared with him that book which has such great converting power, the Book of Mormon.

Today Jesús Santos serves as the president of the Monterrey Mexico Temple.

### **Invite others to read the Book of Mormon**

Jesus Christ gave us the Book of Mormon as the instrument to gather scattered Israel. At the time of His appearance in America, He told the people, “And when these things come to pass that thy *seed* shall begin to *know* these things—it shall be a *sign* unto them, that they may *know* that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the *covenant* which he hath made unto the people who are of the *house of Israel*.”<sup>7</sup>

The Book of Mormon is *its own witness* to the people of Latin America and of all nations. Its very coming forth in these latter days bears witness that God has once again begun to *gather scattered Israel*.

In my mind’s eye I can still see Jesús Santos as a ragged 18-year-old boy looking over the fence at the chapel. Can you see him? Can you invite him and others like him to be one with us? Whom do you know that would respond to your invitation to read the Book of Mormon? Will you invite them? Don’t wait.

### **The instrument to gather scattered Israel**

I testify that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. The Book of

Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the means whereby people from all nations shall be gathered into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church is founded upon apostles and prophets, just as it was in ancient days. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's anointed prophet on the earth today. Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer. This is His Church and His

kingdom. He is our King Immanuel. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 15:14; italics added.
2. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
3. 3 Nephi 18:24.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 115:5.
5. Book of Mormon introduction.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
7. 3 Nephi 21:7; italics added.

## Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky

### Seeking after the one who is lost

Many years ago, when our oldest children were six, four, and two, my wife and I sprang a pop quiz on them. We had been reading daily as a family from the Book of Mormon.

"Who was the man," my wife inquired, "who went into the forests to hunt, but, instead, prayed all day and into the night?"

After a few moments of silence, she ventured to help: "His name starts with an E . . . e . . . e . . . e."

From the corner of the room, our two-year-old called out, "Nos!"

This child was the one who was playing in the corner—the one we had thought was too little to understand. Enos! It was Enos who had gone into the forests to hunt but hungered for his own soul. Though his record does not say that he was lost in that forest, the story of Enos teaches us that he came out found—and then feeling a desire for the welfare of his brothers.

In the New Testament our Savior, Jesus Christ, teaches us the importance of seeking after the one who is lost:

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:4–5).

### Being found by friends and leaders

Since the Fall of Adam, all mankind are in a lost and fallen state. Like many of you, my being "found" started with two faithful missionaries. In the year 1913, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Elders C. Earl Anhder and Robert H. Sorenson taught my grandparents the gospel of Jesus Christ and baptized them. My parents taught me the importance of hard work, honesty, and integrity. However, in one short generation we became lost to activity in the Church and a knowledge of the gospel. Looking back, I recall at a very young age my playmates inviting me to Primary. My first Church experience was built around Primary friendships.

As a boy several months shy of my 12th birthday, one Saturday afternoon I answered a knock at my front door. Several of my friends—deacons dressed in white shirts and ties—sought me out to come to my very first priesthood meeting. Our leader walked beside me as we made our way down the hill to the Tabernacle on Temple Square. That was the April general conference priesthood session.

Lloyd Bennett was my Scoutmaster. Very often on a Saturday afternoon he would pick me up and take me to the Scout office to buy needed badges and supplies. As we rode, we talked. He became a trusted friend. Lloyd Bennett, like so many, took time for the one.

These wonderful friends and leaders understood Elder M. Russell Ballard's recent counsel to "find . . . *one more*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 72; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 71), and they understood what that entailed. Sometimes it's the one in the corner whom we hadn't considered.

### **A personal "Enos" experience**

My own Enos experience came at 18 years of age as I knelt in my army barracks in Fort Ord, California. After the lights were out and I knelt on a hard floor, like Enos I came away found. I was to serve a full-time mission. My heart is filled with gratitude for the many who assisted in helping me to come to know who I am and to know of Christ and His gospel. I came to understand that my way home is through our Savior Jesus Christ.

"And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else" (Alma 11:40).

### **The Lord will use us to find the one**

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah, in seeing our day when the gospel would be fully restored, declared:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders" (Isaiah 49:22).

As we care for the one, brothers and sisters, we see the fulfillment of that

prophecy. Can you see how you have been carried in arms and on shoulders—carried to safety?

What would our Savior do with the opportunities that we have to affect the one? As we apply that principle—*If Christ had my opportunities, what would He do?*—our decisions in life will be Christ-centered.

I know personally that our beloved Elder Neal A. Maxwell always sought to find the one. For, as Nephi, he labored "diligently to write, to persuade [all of us] to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God" (2 Nephi 25:23). I know that Elder Maxwell made more than one call to those, even to the one, whom he was trying to bring unto Christ.

Whether we are a Primary teacher, Young Men or Young Women leader, Scoutmaster, home teacher, visiting teacher, or friend, the Lord will use us, if we will listen, to seek out and find the one.

### **Missionaries seek after the one**

How grateful I am for the decision to serve a full-time mission, which became a great turning point in my life. Young men, you have the privilege of serving, even to labor diligently. Stay worthy; prepare to preach the gospel; do not delay—go and serve! Young women, you can do so much to build the kingdom. Dear seniors, we need you!

Our family had the privilege of serving in Canada with wonderful, dedicated elders, sisters, and senior missionaries. With heart to heart, with spirit to spirit, and in the strength of the Lord, they sought after the one and found him or her, as dedicated missionaries do the world over.

"And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer" (Mosiah 27:36).

### **Act upon promptings to find the one**

Each one of us can make a difference in someone's life, even his or her eternal life, but we must act; we must do; we must labor diligently. Perhaps you have received an impression to invite someone to return to church or to hear the message of the restored gospel for the first time. Go ahead, follow that impression. Why don't we all invite someone to come tomorrow and listen to a prophet's voice? Would you do that? Will you make that invitation today? With faith and a willing heart (even desire), we must trust that the Spirit will give us "in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what [we] shall say" (D&C 100:6). I know that to be so.

How grateful I am for this call to serve once again, this time in Australia. I express my eternal love and appreciation to my wife and our nine missionary-minded children for their love and support. I bear solemn witness that the fulness of the gospel is restored upon the earth, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Today we are led by a living prophet, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know that God lives, and I know that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It is in the Shepherd's loving arms and on His

shoulders that we are carried home. Like Enos, may I humbly say: "I must preach . . . unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have . . . rejoiced in it above that of the world" (Enos 1:26). To these truths I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We remind the brethren of general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the Young Women and Young Men choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Henry B. Eyring and M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then close this session by singing "On This Day of Joy and Gladness." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

## **Elder Henry B. Eyring**

### **Spiritual preparation for life's storms**

Most of us have thought about how to prepare for storms. We have seen and felt the suffering of women, men, and children, and of the aged and the weak, caught in hurricanes, tsunamis, wars, and droughts. One reaction is to ask, "How can I be prepared?" And there is a rush to buy and put away whatever people think they might need for the day they might face such calamities.

But there is another even more important preparation we must make for tests that are certain to come to each of us. That preparation must be started far in advance because it takes time. What we will need then can't be bought. It can't be borrowed. It doesn't store well. And it has to have been used regularly and recently.

What we will need in our day of testing is a spiritual preparation. It is to have developed faith in Jesus Christ so powerful that we can pass the test of life upon which

everything for us in eternity depends. That test is part of the purpose God had for us in the Creation.

### **Our test is to see if we will obey**

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us the Lord's description of the test we face. Our Heavenly Father created the world with His Son, Jesus Christ. We have these words to tell us about the purpose of the Creation:

"We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."<sup>1</sup>

So, the great test of life is to see if we will hearken to and obey God's commands in the midst of the storms of life. It is not to endure storms, but to choose the right while they rage. And the tragedy of life is to fail in that test and so fail to qualify to return in glory to our heavenly home.

We are the spirit children of a Heavenly Father. He loved us and He taught us before we were born into this world. He told us that He wished to give us all that He had. To qualify for that gift we had to receive mortal bodies and be tested. Because of those mortal bodies, we would face pain, sickness, and death.

We would be subject to temptations through the desires and weaknesses that came with our mortal bodies. Subtle and powerful forces of evil would tempt us to surrender to those temptations. Life would have storms in which we would have to make choices using faith in things we could not see with our natural eyes.

### **Passing the test requires unshakable faith**

We were promised that we would have Jehovah, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Redeemer. He would assure that we would all be resurrected. And He would

make it possible for us to pass the test of life if we exercised faith in Him by being obedient. We shouted for joy at the good news.

A passage from the Book of Mormon, another witness of Jesus Christ, describes how hard the test is and what it will take to pass it:

"Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.

"Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

It will take unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to choose the way to eternal life. It is by using that faith we can know the will of God. It is by acting on that faith we build the strength to do the will of God. And it is by exercising that faith in Jesus Christ that we can resist temptation and gain forgiveness through the Atonement.

We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us, as he will, with doubts and appeals to our carnal desires and with lying voices saying that good is bad and that there is no sin. Those spiritual storms are already raging. We can expect that they will worsen until the Savior returns.

### **Start early and be steady**

However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to

be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. Procrastination and inconsistency are its mortal enemies.

Let me suggest to you four settings in which to practice quick and steady obedience. One is the command to feast upon the word of God. A second is to pray always. A third is the commandment to be a full-tithe payer. And the fourth is to escape from sin and its terrible effects. Each takes faith to start and then to persevere. And all can strengthen your capacity to know and obey the Lord's commands.

### **Feast upon the word of God**

You already have had the Lord's help to get started. In August you received this promise from President Gordon B. Hinckley if you would read the Book of Mormon through by the end of the year:

"Without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."<sup>3</sup>

That is the very promise of increased faith we need to be spiritually prepared. But if we delayed the start of our obedience to that inspired invitation, the number of pages we had to read each day grew larger. If we then missed reading for even a few days, the chance of failure grew. That's why I chose to read ahead of my daily plan to be sure I will qualify for the promised blessings of the spirit of resolution and testimony of Jesus Christ. When December ends, I will have learned about starting at the moment a command from God comes and being steady in obedience.

More than that, as I read in the Book of Mormon, I will pray that the Holy

Ghost will help me know what God would have me do. There is a promise of that plea being answered in the book itself: "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."<sup>4</sup>

I will act quickly on what the Holy Ghost tells me I should do as I read and ponder the Book of Mormon. When I complete the project in December, I will have had many experiences of stretching my faith to be obedient. And so my faith will be strengthened. And I will know from my own experience what comes from going to the scriptures early and consistently to know what God wants me to do and then doing it. If we do that, we will be better prepared for the greater storms when they come.

We will then have a choice of what to do after January 1. We can choose to sigh with relief and say to ourselves, "I have built a great reservoir of faith by starting early and being steady in obedience. I will store it away against the times when I will be tested in storms." There is a better way to prepare, because great faith has a short shelf life. We could decide to persist in studying the words of Christ in the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets. This is what I will do. I will go back to the Book of Mormon and drink deeply and often. And then I will be grateful for what the prophet's challenge and promise did to teach me how to gain greater faith and maintain it.

### **Pray always**

Personal prayer can also build our faith to do what God commands. We are commanded to pray *always* that we will not be overcome. Some of the protection we need will be direct intervention of God. But more of it will come from building our faith to obey. We can pray every day to know what God would have us do. We can commit to start to do it quickly when the



answer comes. My experience is that He always answers such petitions. Then we can choose to obey. As we do, we will build faith enough that we will not be overcome. And we will gain the faith to go back again and again for further instruction. When the storms come, we will be ready to go and do what the Lord commands.

The Savior showed us a great example of such a prayer of submission. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane as He worked out the Atonement that His Father's will would be done. He knew that His Father's will would be for Him to do what was so painful and so terrible that we cannot comprehend it. He prayed not simply to accept the Father's will but to do it. He showed us the way to pray in perfect and determined submission.

### **Commit to pay a full tithe**

The principle of exercising faith early and steadily applies as well to the commandment to pay tithing. We should not wait until the annual tithing settlement to decide to be a full-tithe payer. We can decide now. It takes time to learn to control our spending with faith that what we have comes from God. It takes faith to pay our tithing promptly and without procrastination.

If we decide now to be a full-tithe payer and if we are steady in paying it, blessings will flow throughout the year, as well as at the time of tithing settlement. By our decision now to be a full-tithe payer and our steady efforts to obey, we will be strengthened in our faith and, in time, our hearts will be softened. It is that change in our hearts through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, beyond the offering of our money or goods, that makes it possible for the Lord to promise full-tithe payers protection in the last days.<sup>5</sup> We can have confidence that we will qualify for that blessing of protection if we commit now to pay a full tithe and are steady in doing it.

### **Repent now**

The same power of an early choice to exercise faith and to be persistent in obedience applies to gaining the faith to resist temptation and to gain forgiveness. The best time to resist temptation is early. The best time to repent is now. The enemy of our souls will place thoughts in our minds to tempt us. We can decide early to exercise faith, to cast out evil thoughts before we act on them. And we can choose quickly to repent when we do sin, before Satan can weaken our faith and bind us. Seeking forgiveness is always better now than later.

As my father lay in his bed near death, I asked him if he didn't think it was a time to repent and pray for forgiveness for any sins that were not yet resolved with God. He probably heard a little hint in my voice that he might fear death and the Judgment. He just chuckled quietly, smiled up at me, and said, "Oh, no, Hal, I've been repenting as I went along."

### **Decide to obey quickly and always**

Decisions now to exercise faith and be steady in obedience will in time produce great faith and assurance. That is the spiritual preparedness we all will need. And it will qualify us in the moments of crisis to receive the Lord's promise that "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear."<sup>6</sup>

That will be true when we face the storms of life and the prospect of death. A loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son have given us all the help They can to pass the test of life set before us. But we must decide to obey and then do it. We build the faith to pass the tests of obedience over time and through our daily choices. We can decide now to do quickly whatever God asks of us. And we can decide to be steady in the small tests of obedience which build the faith to carry us through the great tests, which will surely come.

I know that you and I are children of a loving Heavenly Father. I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and that He is our Savior and that He paid the price of all of our sins. He was resurrected, and He and Heavenly Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated through the gift and power of God. I know that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I know that through the Holy Ghost we can learn what God would have us do. I testify that He can give us the power to do what He asks of us, whatever it is and whatever trials may come.

I pray that we will choose to obey the Lord quickly, always, in quiet times and in storms. As we do, our faith will be strengthened, we will find peace in this life, and we will gain the assurance that we and our families can qualify for eternal life in the world to come. I so promise you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Abraham 3:24–25.
2. 2 Nephi 10:23–25.
3. “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.
4. 2 Nephi 32:3.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Families matter most

Several of the Brethren and I recently visited a few of the refugee centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas where devastated and displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina were staying as they began to try to put their lives back together. Their stories and situations are tragic and poignant in many ways, but in all that I heard, what touched me the most was the crying out for family: “Where is my mother?” “I can’t find my son.” “I’ve lost a sister.” These were hungry, frightened people who had lost everything and needed food, medical attention, and help of all kinds, but what they wanted and needed most was their families.

Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! It will be even more so when we leave this life and enter into the spirit world. Surely the first people we will seek to find there will

be father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.

I believe the mission statement for mortality might be “to build an eternal family.” Here on this earth we strive to become part of extended families with the ability to create and form our own part of those families. That is one of the reasons our Heavenly Father sent us here. Not everyone will find a companion and have a family in mortality, but everyone, regardless of individual circumstances, is a precious member of God’s family.

### Hold fast to the family proclamation

Brothers and sisters, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation to the world on the family, which was issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995 (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). It was then and is now a clarion call to protect and strengthen families and a stern warning in a world where declining values and misplaced priorities threaten to destroy society by undermining its basic unit.



The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade and calls for the priority and the emphasis families need if they are to survive in an environment that seems ever more toxic to traditional marriage and to parent-child relationships.

The proclamation's clear and simple language stands in stark contrast to the confused and convoluted notions of a society that cannot even agree on a definition of family, let alone supply the help and support parents and families need. You are familiar with such words from the proclamation as these:

- "Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God."
- "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."
- "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."
- "Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity."
- "The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."

And the last words of the proclamation express the simple truth that the family is "the fundamental unit of society."

Today I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended family members everywhere to hold fast to this great proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni's "title of liberty," and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. As we are all part of a family, the proclamation applies to everyone.

### **Incorrect ideas about the family**

Public opinion surveys indicate that people everywhere in the world generally consider the family as the highest priority; yet in recent years the broader culture seems to ignore or misdefine the family. Consider some of the changes of the past decade:

- Many larger national and international institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.
- In the name of "tolerance," the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition to the point that "family" can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.
- Rampant materialism and selfishness delude many into thinking that families, and especially children, are a burden and a financial millstone that will hold them back rather than a sacred privilege that will teach them to become more like God.

### **The world needs the Church's teachings**

And yet most parents throughout the world continue to know both the importance and the joy that are attached to natural families. Friends of mine who just returned from speaking to families and parents on several continents reported to me that the hopes and concerns of parents are remarkably similar throughout the earth.

In India a concerned Hindu mother said, "All I want is to be a bigger influence on my children than the media and the peer group." And a Buddhist mother in Malaysia said, "I'd like my boys to be able to operate in the world, but I don't want them to be of the world." Parents from all different cultures and faiths are saying and

feeling the same things we are as parents in the Church.

The world needs to know what the proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom.

In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death.

If we live and act upon this knowledge, we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church because it offers the family structure, values, doctrine, and eternal perspective that they seek and cannot find elsewhere.

### **Love in families is critical to happiness**

Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of the Church as a crucial “scaffolding” that helps build the individual and the family (see Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107). The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but in the kingdom of heaven, families will be both the source of our eternal progress and joy and the order of our Heavenly Father. As we are often reminded, we will be released one day from our Church

callings, but if we are worthy we will never be released from our family relationships.

Joseph F. Smith said: “There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. Men and women often seek to substitute some other life for that of the home; they would make themselves believe that the home means restraint; that the highest liberty is the fullest opportunity to move about at will. There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 300).

### **Ways to strengthen our homes**

Now, one may ask, how do we protect and preserve and strengthen our homes and families in a world pulling so hard in opposite directions? Let me make three simple suggestions:

1. Be consistent in holding daily family prayer and weekly family home evenings. Both of these invite the Lord’s Spirit, which provides the help and power we need as parents and family leaders. The Church curriculum and magazines have many good ideas for family home evening. Also consider holding a family testimony meeting where parents and children can express their beliefs and feelings to each other in a private and personal setting.

2. Teach the gospel and basic values in your home. Establish a love for reading the scriptures together. Too many of our parents are abdicating this responsibility to the Church. While seminary, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums are important as a supplement to parental gospel instruction, the main responsibility rests in the home. You might want to choose one gospel subject or a family value and then watch for opportunities to teach it. Be wise and do not involve children or yourselves

in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family.

3. Create meaningful family bonds that give your children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anyplace else. This can be done through family traditions for birthdays, for holidays, for dinnertime, and for Sundays. It can also be done through family policies and rules with natural and well-understood consequences. Have a simple family economy where children have specific chores or household duties and receive praise or other rewards commensurate to how well they do. Teach them the importance of avoiding debt and of earning, saving, and wisely spending money. Help them learn responsibility for their own temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

In today's world, where Satan's aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins can make a powerful difference in the lives of children. Remember that the expression of love and encouragement from an extended family member will often provide the right influence and help a child at a critical time.

### **Call for society to support the family**

The Church itself will continue to be the first and foremost institution—the “scaffolding,” as it were—to help build strong families. I can assure you that those who lead the Church have great concern about the well-being of your families, and thus you will see increasing efforts to prioritize and to focus on family needs. But

as your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

Further, we call upon all public institutions to examine themselves and to do less that might harm families and more that will help them.

We call upon the media to offer more that promotes traditional family values and is uplifting and supportive of families and less that popularizes immorality and materialism.

We call upon government and political leaders to put the needs of children and parents first and to think in terms of family impact in all legislation and policy making.

We call upon Internet providers and Web-site creators to become more responsible regarding their potential for influence and to adopt the conscious objective of protecting children from violence, pornography, filth, and sleaze.

We call upon educational entities to teach universal values and family and parenting skills, supporting parents in their responsibility to raise children to become the leaders of families in generations yet to come.

We call upon our own Church members to reach out in love to neighbors and friends of other faiths and include them in the use of the many resources the Church has to help families. Our communities and neighborhoods will be safer and stronger as people of all faiths work together to strengthen families.

It is important to remember that all larger units of society depend on the smallest and most fundamental unit—the family. No matter who or what we are, we help ourselves when we help families.

Brothers and sisters, as we hold up like a banner the proclamation to the world on the family and as we live and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will fulfill the measure of our creation here on earth.

We will find peace and happiness here and in the world to come. We should not need a hurricane or other crisis to remind us of what matters most. The gospel and the Lord's plan of happiness and salvation should remind us. What matters most is what lasts longest, and our families are for

eternity. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "On This Day of Joy and Gladness."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir of fathers and sons from stakes in the Orem, Utah, area. Donald Ripplinger directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this priesthood session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that joining with us this evening via satellite are some 4,100 brethren from various stakes across the southeast-

ern United States who are devoting this weekend to providing relief to victims of the recent hurricanes in the Gulf states.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a father-and-son priesthood choir from stakes in the Orem, Utah, area, under the direction of Donald Ripplinger, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Truth Restored." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Truth Restored."

Elder Stephen B. Oveson offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." At the conclusion of the singing, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

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## Elder David A. Bednar

### We should be missionaries at all times

All of us who have received the holy priesthood bear the sacred obligation to bless the nations and families of the earth by proclaiming the gospel and inviting all to receive by proper authority the ordinances of salvation. Many of us have served as full-time missionaries, some of us presently are serving as full-time missionaries, and all of us now are serving and will continue to serve as lifelong missionaries. We are missionaries every day in our families, in our schools, in our places of employment, and in our communities. Regardless of our age, experience, or station in life, we are all missionaries.

Proclaiming the gospel is not an activity in which we periodically and temporarily engage. And our labors as missionaries certainly are not confined to the short period of time devoted to full-time missionary service in our youth or in our mature years. Rather, the obligation to proclaim the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is inherent in the oath and covenant of the priesthood into which we enter. Missionary work essentially is a priesthood responsibility, and all of us who hold the priesthood are the Lord's authorized servants on the earth and are missionaries at all times and in all places—and we always will be. Our very identity as holders of the priesthood and the seed of Abraham is in large measure defined by the responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

My message tonight is applicable to all of us in our priesthood duty to proclaim the gospel. My specific purpose in this priesthood meeting, however, is to talk candidly with the young men of the Church who are preparing for the call to serve as missionaries. The principles I will discuss with you are both simple and spiritually significant, and they should cause us to ponder, to evaluate, and to improve.

I pray for the companionship of the Holy Ghost for me and for you as we consider together this important subject.

### A frequently asked question

In meetings with young members of the Church around the world, I often invite those in attendance to ask questions. One of the questions I am asked most frequently by young men is this: "What can I do to prepare most effectively to serve as a full-time missionary?" Such a sincere question deserves a serious response.

My dear young brethren, the single most important thing you can do to prepare for a call to serve is to *become* a missionary long before you *go* on a mission. Please notice that in my answer I emphasized *becoming* rather than *going*. Let me explain what I mean.

In our customary Church vocabulary, we often speak of *going* to church, *going* to the temple, and *going* on a mission. Let me be so bold as to suggest that our rather routine emphasis on *going* misses the mark.

The issue is not going to church; rather, the issue is worshipping and renewing covenants as we attend church. The issue is not going to or through the temple; rather, the issue is having in our hearts the spirit, the covenants, and the ordinances of the Lord's house. The issue is not going on a mission; rather, the issue is becoming a missionary and serving throughout our entire life with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is possible for a young man to *go* on a mission and not *become* a missionary, and this is not what the Lord requires or what the Church needs.

My earnest hope for each of you young men is that you will not simply go on a mission—but that you will become missionaries long before you submit your mission

papers, long before you receive a call to serve, long before you are set apart by your stake president, and long before you enter the MTC.

### **The principle of becoming**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught us most effectively about the challenge to become something instead of just doing expected things or performing certain actions:

“The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord’s teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain ‘the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something. . . .

“ . . . It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32).

Brethren, the challenge to become applies precisely and perfectly to missionary preparation. Obviously the process of becoming a missionary does not require a young man to wear a white shirt and tie to school every day or to follow the missionary guidelines for going to bed and getting up, although most parents certainly would support that idea. But you can increase in your desire to serve God (see D&C 4:3), and you can begin to think as missionaries think, to read what missionaries read, to pray as missionaries pray, and to feel what missionaries feel. You can avoid the worldly influences that cause the Holy Ghost to

withdraw, and you can grow in confidence in recognizing and responding to spiritual promptings. Line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, you can gradually become the missionary you hope to be and the missionary the Savior expects.

### **Becoming a missionary before the MTC**

You will not suddenly or magically be transformed into a prepared and obedient missionary on the day you walk through the front door of the Missionary Training Center. What you have become in the days and months and years prior to your missionary service is what you will be in the MTC. In fact, the nature of the transition through which you will pass in the MTC will be a strong indicator of your progress in becoming a missionary.

As you enter the MTC, you obviously will miss your family, and many aspects of your daily schedule will be new and challenging. But for a young man well on his way to becoming a missionary, the basic adjustment to the rigors of missionary work and lifestyle will not be overwhelming, burdensome, or constraining. Thus, a key element of raising the bar includes working to become a missionary before going on a mission.

Fathers, do you understand your role in helping your sons become missionaries before they go on missions? You and your wife are key in the process of their becoming missionaries. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, do you recognize your responsibility to assist parents and to help every young man become a missionary before he goes on a mission? The bar also has been raised for parents and for all members of the Church. Prayerful pondering of the principle of becoming will invite inspiration tailored to the specific needs of your son or to the young men whom you serve.

The preparation I am describing is not oriented only toward your missionary service as a 19- or 20- or 21-year-old young



man. Brethren, you are preparing for a lifetime of missionary work. As holders of the priesthood, we are missionaries always. If you truly progress in the process of becoming a missionary, both before going on a mission and in the mission field, then when the day arrives for your honorable release as a full-time missionary, you will depart from your field of labor and return to your family—but you will never cease your missionary service. A priesthood holder is a missionary at all times and in all places. A missionary is who and what we are as bearers of the priesthood and as the seed of Abraham.

### **The seed of Abraham**

The heirs of all the promises and covenants made by God to Abraham are referred to as *the seed of Abraham* (see Bible Dictionary, “Seed of Abraham,” 771). These blessings are obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Brethren, the process of becoming a missionary is directly related to understanding who we are as the seed of Abraham.

Abraham was a great prophet who desired righteousness and was obedient to all of the commandments he received from God, including the command to offer as a sacrifice his precious son Isaac. Because of his steadfastness and obedience, Abraham is often referred to as the father of the faithful, and Heavenly Father established a covenant with and promised great blessings to Abraham and his posterity:

“Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:16–18).

Thus, Abraham was promised a great posterity and that the nations of the earth would be blessed through that posterity.

How are the nations of the earth blessed through the seed of Abraham? The answer to this important question is found in the book of Abraham:

“And I will make of thee [Abraham] a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

“And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:9–10).

We learn in these verses that Abraham’s faithful heirs would have the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of the priesthood. Thus, the phrase “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” refers to the responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to invite all to receive by proper priesthood authority the ordinances of salvation. Truly, great responsibility rests upon the seed of Abraham in these latter days.

How do these promises and blessings relate to us today? Either by literal lineage or adoption, every man and boy within the sound of my voice tonight is a rightful heir to the promises made by God to Abraham. We are the seed of Abraham. One of the primary reasons we receive a patriarchal blessing is to help us more fully understand who we are as the posterity of Abraham and to recognize the responsibility that rests upon us.

### **Be missionaries today and always**

My beloved brethren, you and I, today and always, are to bless all peoples in all the nations of the earth. You and I, to-

day and always, are to bear witness of Jesus Christ and declare the message of the Restoration. You and I, today and always, are to invite all to receive the ordinances of salvation. Proclaiming the gospel is not a part-time priesthood obligation. It is not simply an activity in which we engage for a limited time or an assignment we must complete as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Rather, missionary work is a manifestation of our spiritual identity and heritage. We were foreordained in the premortal existence and born into mortality to fulfill the covenant and promise God made to Abraham. We are here upon the earth at this time to magnify the priesthood and to preach the gospel. That is who we are, and that is why we are here—today and always.

You may enjoy music, athletics, or be mechanically inclined, and someday you may work in a trade or a profession or in the arts. As important as such activities and occupations can be, they do not define who we are. First and foremost, we are spiritual beings. We are sons of God and the seed of Abraham:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (D&C 84:33–34).

My dear brethren, we have been given much, and much is required of us. May you young men more fully understand who you are as the seed of Abraham and become missionaries long before you go on a mission. After coming back to your homes and families, may you returned missionaries always be missionaries. And may all of us rise up as men of God and bless the nations of the earth with greater testimony and spiritual power than we ever have before.

I declare my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that He lives! And I witness that we, as holders of the priesthood, are His representatives in the glorious work of proclaiming His gospel, today and always. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Charles Didier

### Man’s search for divine truth

Among this vast audience tonight are three special guests—three dear old school friends. They made a long trip from Belgium, my native country, to be here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our high school graduation and to attend this conference. To them, to you priesthood holders, and especially to you young men preparing to become missionaries, I dedicate this message. It is about man’s search for divine truth. Once found, it is to be applied in this world of increased religious confusion and moral decadence. It must become the personal spiritual foundation that leads us to live according to the principles of righ-

teousness. As the Lord said, “In righteousness shalt thou be established” (3 Nephi 22:14).

### Hear and heed the voice of the Lord

Where is divine truth to be found? It is to “hear the voice of the Lord, . . . [hear] the voice of His servants, [and] give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles” (D&C 1:14). Hear and heed. To hear is relatively simple. To heed and apply what is heard becomes life’s perpetual challenge.

First, hear the voice of the Lord. Communication from the Lord about divine truth or spiritual knowledge is found in the



scriptures. It is called revelation—literally, “to make known or uncover” (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation,” 762). It is given to “know how to worship, and know what you worship” (D&C 93:19). Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “Only with revelation can we do the Lord’s work according to His will in His way and according to His timing” (“Revelation,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 5). “Without revelation, all would be guesswork, darkness, and confusion” (Bible Dictionary, 762).

Second, hear the voice of His servants. Revelation, or divine truth, is given by the will of the Lord to His servants in different ways and times and is also found in the scriptures. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Third, give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles. To give heed is to pay special attention. It is to listen to those who have been called by God to be the especial living witnesses of Jesus Christ for our time. It implies that they are recognized in this role, that a response is given to their invitation to receive a personal spiritual confirmation that their teachings are true, and that a commitment to follow them will be made.

In summary, the Lord has a pattern of sharing divine truth with prophets to guide and bless us through the challenges and evils of life: hear and heed. Our personal spiritual foundation needs to be built upon this pattern if we want to enjoy the blessings of the Lord. So it is not enough to search the scriptures to know the mind of the Lord. It must be followed by an act of faith, accepting to do the will of the Lord by obeying His commandments, before we can enjoy the blessings of the Lord. A personal spiritual confirmation of this process by asking and believing that we will receive becomes, then, the prayer of our lifetime.

## **We must be prepared to hear**

In reality, the communication or hearing about divine truth can be summarized in three words: revelation, commandments, blessings. However, it is going to be a lifetime challenge to first hear and then heed the voice of the Lord and His servants. Why? “For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19). Spiritual preparation is a prerequisite to receive a personal spiritual impression. The rest of the verse reads that we must become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” and also become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to” the will of the Lord, meaning His commandments. Then says the Lord, “When we obtain any blessing . . . , it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

## **Building a personal spiritual foundation**

Let us now understand this pattern with a recent example of hearing and then giving heed to the words of the prophets and apostles of our time. The First Presidency recently extended an invitation to all members of the Church to read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ before the end of the year. The challenge ended with a promise:

“[You] will be blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (First Presidency letter, July 25, 2005).

Why would we need to grow a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God as found in the Book of Mormon? Today there is much confusion in the Christian world about the doctrine of Christ—not only about His divine nature but even

about His Atonement and Resurrection, His gospel, and especially the commandments related to it. The result is a belief in a self-made-man Christ, a popular Christ, and a silent, crucified Christ. Wrong religious beliefs lead to wrong religious behaviors.

A personal spiritual foundation can and must rely on a personal spiritual confirmation by the Holy Ghost of the living reality of Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the scriptures containing the revelations of the Lord. More specifically, the living reality of Christ is associated with the Restoration of His gospel and its message “that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth” (Book of Mormon introduction).

This spiritual confirmation by the power of the Holy Ghost is given on the Lord’s conditions to anyone who is willing to ask in faith, believing that an answer can come by that power. It starts by listening to the voice of the Lord, His servants, His prophets and apostles, and it continues by giving heed to their words. Spiritual knowledge of the Restoration is a matter of faith.

### **Personal conversion experience**

May I share my personal spiritual experience as a convert, as an example of this spiritual process. When the missionaries came to our home, I had the desire to listen to the message of the Restoration of the gospel. My motivation was mainly curiosity. Attending church, I heard more new spiritual knowledge. It was interesting and I liked it, but I was missing the essential: giving heed. I had to build a personal spiritual foundation upon the living reality of Christ and the confirmation that Joseph

Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. That confirmation came only when I gave heed and tested my beginning faith in the Book of Mormon, the physical evidence of modern revelation.

However, acquiring that knowledge was not enough; it had to be followed by a commitment to transform my faith into certainty that the Book of Mormon was true and so was Joseph Smith as a prophet. My faith in Christ had never been in question. I trusted the Lord and His promises. Peace in my mind, inner peace, was the answer—no more questions. The spiritual foundation was set and followed by a commitment in my heart to accept the covenant of baptism. Then came the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide me and help me make righteous decisions to endure to the end. I knew from then on what to do with my future in this mortal life.

### **Test the power of God’s word**

Test divine revelation. Hear the voice of the Lord. It is real; it is personal; it is true. Reason does not and cannot replace revelation. Quoting President James E. Faust, “Do not let [your] private doubts separate you from the divine source of knowledge” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 22).

Test and feel the powerful effect of the word of God upon your mind as given by the Lord’s servants (see Alma 31:5).

Test, ask and receive in faith, then give heed to the words of prophets and apostles, and you will “receive a crown of eternal life” (D&C 20:14).

Now, just remember, in conclusion, that following the Lord’s pattern to hear and give heed to divine truth will help you build a personal spiritual foundation and determine what you will become in this life and in the life hereafter.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Paul V. Johnson

### **Counsel to Aaronic Priesthood holders**

It is a sacred responsibility to address you in this general priesthood meeting. I always look forward to attending these priesthood sessions with my sons. I have great memories of sitting by them in our stake center as we listened to the teachings of the General Authorities. These meetings made a difference in my life when I was a young man, and they continue to make a difference in my life now. I know they have been an influence on my sons and on millions of Aaronic Priesthood holders around the world.

I speak to you Aaronic Priesthood holders tonight. We live in an exciting and wonderful time. The fulness of the gospel has been restored and is spreading across the earth. The keys of the priesthood are on the earth, and saving ordinances are available to those worthy of them. There are millions of good people on the earth striving to do what is right in their lives and in their families and in their communities.

This wonderful time in which we live is also filled with peril. You live in challenging times where many temptations and dangers await you. You have already been exposed to some of those temptations and dangers. You may have even seen individuals whose lives have been damaged by succumbing to some of the evils so prevalent in the world.

How can you, as an Aaronic Priesthood holder, be safe in these challenging times so you can fully do your part in this great work and find true happiness in this life and the life to come?

### **Guidance from general conference**

It is not surprising that in the face of tremendous evil and temptation the Lord does not leave us to find our way on our

own. In fact, there is more than enough guidance available to each of us if we will listen. You have received the gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and inspire you. You have the scriptures, parents, Church leaders and teachers. You also have the words of the prophets, seers, and revelators who live in our day. There is so much guidance and direction available that you won't make major mistakes in your life unless you consciously ignore the guidance you receive.

Tonight I would like to focus on one of these sources of guidance—the living prophets, seers, and revelators whom we sustained today. In fact, I would like to focus on one of the main ways we get direction from them—general conference.

Conferences have been part of the Church since the beginning of this dispensation. The first conference was held just two months after the Church was organized. We meet twice a year to be instructed by the General Authorities and general officers of the Church. The proceedings of these conferences are available through various means, both print and electronic.

### **Mother's love for general conference**

My mother loved general conference. She always tuned in the radio and TV and turned the volume loud enough that it was difficult to find a place in the house where conference couldn't be heard. She wanted her children to listen to the talks and would ask us from time to time what we remembered. Once in a while I went outside with one of my brothers to play ball during a Saturday conference session. We would take a radio with us because we knew our mother might quiz us later. We would play ball and occasionally take a break to listen carefully so we could report to Mom. I doubt my mother was fooled

when we both happened to remember the same thing from an entire session.

That is no way to listen to conference. I have since repented. I have grown to love general conference, I'm sure partly because of my mother's love for the words of the living prophets. I remember listening to the sessions of a particular conference all alone in an apartment while I was in college. The Holy Ghost witnessed to my soul that Harold B. Lee, the President of the Church at that time, was truly a prophet of God. This happened before I went into the mission field, and I was excited to testify of a living prophet because I had come to know for myself. I have had that same witness about each of the prophets since that time.

When I was in the mission field, the Church didn't have the satellite system, and the country where I served did not have broadcasts of general conference. My mother sent me audiotapes of the sessions, and I listened to them over and over again. I grew to love the voices and the words of the prophets and apostles.

### **A powerful conference in 1883**

Recently I was reading the journal of my great-grandfather Nathaniel Hodges, who was called on a mission to England in 1883. He told of coming to Salt Lake City to be set apart for his mission and attending conference while he was there. Listen to his description of that conference:

"Went to meetings in large Tabernacle all day. There were splendid instructions given. The remarks of Joseph F. Smith and George Q. Cannon and President John Taylor were particularly powerful. I heard some of the oldest inhabitants say they never attended a more powerful and spiritual conference."<sup>1</sup>

I think the members of the Church have similar feelings about each general conference. It seems that each is more powerful and spiritual than the last.

### **Blessings from following leaders' counsel**

In order for the messages of general conference to change our lives, we need to be willing to follow the counsel we hear. The Lord explained in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith "that when ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other, that ye may know . . . how to act upon the points of my law and commandments."<sup>2</sup> But knowing "how to act" isn't enough. The Lord in the next verse said, "Ye shall bind yourselves to act in all holiness before me."<sup>3</sup> This willingness to take action on what we have learned opens the doors for marvelous blessings.

A year ago in the priesthood session of conference President Hinckley spoke about the dangers of pornography. I don't think I've heard a more direct prophetic warning to members of the priesthood. You young brothers who listened and heeded his words have already been blessed and will be blessed more than you can now understand. Your future family will reap great blessings because of your obedience. Imagine how the world would be impacted if every priesthood holder blocked pornography from his life in response to the prophet's counsel.

Every time we are obedient to the words of the prophets and apostles we reap great blessings. We receive more blessings than we can understand at the time, and we continue to receive blessings long after our initial decision to be obedient.

On the day the Church was organized, Joseph Smith received a revelation that included an important principle for all Church members. Speaking to the Church about Joseph Smith the Lord said, "Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you . . . for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth."<sup>4</sup>

Now listen to the blessings promised to those who heed: "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail

against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good.”<sup>5</sup>

Those are powerful promises that can keep us safe in these treacherous times. We need them, and the Lord will give them to each of us if we are willing to follow the prophets, seers, and revelators.

### **Make general conference a priority**

Decide now to make general conference a priority in your life. Decide to listen carefully and follow the teachings that are given. Listen to or read the talks more than once to better understand and follow the counsel. As you do these things, the gates of hell will not prevail against you, the powers of darkness will be dispersed from before you, and the heavens will shake for your good.

I know that our Heavenly Father loves us and has a perfect plan for His children. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that

He lives. I testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. We have true prophets, seers, and revelators on the earth today who have “the words of eternal life.”<sup>6</sup> To this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Journal of Nathaniel Morris Hodges, vol. 1, Apr. 8, 1883, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, typescript, 1–2.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
6. John 6:68.

### **President Monson**

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “Ye Elders of Israel,” and following the singing I have been asked to address you.

## **President James E. Faust**

### **The wisdom and unity of the Brethren**

My dear brethren of the priesthood, please accept our appreciation for all you do to carry forward the Lord’s work worldwide. I desire to speak about the sacred offices of those priesthood leaders who have been “called and chosen”<sup>1</sup> to guide the Church in this day. This is a special year for at least two reasons: first, we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith this December, and second, President Gordon B. Hinckley celebrated his 95th birthday this past June. I testify that the Prophet Joseph Smith was called and chosen as the first prophet of this dispensation and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the present prophet, seer, and revelator of this Church.

When Mike Wallace interviewed President Hinckley some years ago for the television program *60 Minutes*, he said, “[People will say] this is a church run by old men.” To this, President Hinckley replied, “Isn’t it wonderful to have a man of maturity at the head—a man of judgment who isn’t blown about by every wind of doctrine?”<sup>2</sup> So if any of you think the present leadership is too old to lead the Church, President Hinckley may need to give you some further counsel about the wisdom that comes with age!

Of the 102 Apostles called in this dispensation, only 13 have served longer than President Hinckley. He has served longer as an Apostle than Brigham Young, President Hunter, President Lee, President Kimball, and many others. It is wonder-

ful to have his inspired leadership. Please forgive me for saying that I myself feel at times that I am standing on the edge of eternity. At age 85, I am the third oldest of all the living General Authorities. I have not sought this honor. I have just lived for it.

I believe that never before in the history of the Church has there been more unity than exists among my Brethren of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities of the Church, who have been called and chosen and who are now guiding the Church. I believe there is ample evidence of this. The present leadership of God's earthly kingdom has enjoyed the Savior's guiding inspiration longer than any other group. We are the oldest group ever to lead the Church.

My association with some of these men for almost half a century qualifies me, I think, to state with confidence that my Brethren, without exception, are good, honorable, and trustworthy men. I know their hearts. They are the servants of the Lord. Their only desire is to labor in their great callings and build up the kingdom of God on earth. Our Brethren who are serving in this day and time are proven, tried, and true. Some are not as physically strong as they used to be, but their hearts are so pure, their experience so great, their minds so sharp, and their spiritual wisdom so deep that it is a comfort just to be in their presence.

### **Always be in harmony with the Brethren**

I was humbled and overwhelmed to be called as an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles 33 years ago. A few days later President Hugh B. Brown counseled me that the most important thing I should do is to always be in harmony with my Brethren. President Brown did not elaborate. He just said, "Stick with the Brethren." I interpreted that to mean that I should follow the counsel and direction of the Pres-

ident of the Church, the First Presidency, and Quorum of the Twelve. That resonated as something I wanted to do with all my heart.

Others may not agree with that counsel, but it warrants some consideration. I have concluded that spiritual guidance in large measure depends upon being in harmony with the President of the Church, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve—all of whom are sustained, as they were today, as prophets, seers, and revelators. I do not know how we can expect to be in full harmony with the Spirit of the Lord if we are not in harmony with the President of the Church and the other prophets, seers, and revelators.

When I was a deacon, my father took me and my older brother to general priesthood meeting in the Tabernacle. I remember how thrilled I was to be in the presence, for the first time, of the prophet of God, President Heber J. Grant, and the other prophets and apostles. I listened intently to their messages and took the things they said into my heart. Over the years their subjects have been repeated many times. I expect that some of them will be repeated yet again in this conference. They are essential for our salvation, and we need the repetition.

### **Disharmony leads to spiritual darkness**

Since the beginning of the world, history has recorded many examples of those who have not been in harmony with the prophets. In the early days of our dispensation, several of the Twelve, to their regret, did not stay loyal to the Prophet Joseph Smith. One of these was Lyman E. Johnson, a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve who was excommunicated for unrighteous conduct. He later lamented his spiritual downfall. He said: "I would suffer my right hand to be cut off, if I could believe it again. Then I was full of joy and gladness. My dreams were pleasant. When I awoke in the morning my spirit was



cheerful. I was happy by day and by night, full of peace and joy and thanksgiving. But now it is darkness, pain, sorrow, misery in the extreme. I have never since seen a happy moment.”<sup>3</sup> He died in a sleighing accident in 1856 at the age of 45.

Luke S. Johnson was also called to the original Quorum of the Twelve in 1835. His spiritual resolve weakened over some financial speculation in 1837. Looking back later he said: “My mind became darkened, and I was left to pursue my own course. I lost the Spirit of God, and neglected my duty; the consequence was, that at a Conference held in Kirtland, September 3, 1837, . . . I was cut off from the Church.”

By December 1837 he joined the apostates in publicly denouncing the Church, and he was excommunicated for apostasy in 1838. For eight years he had a medical practice in Kirtland. Then in 1846 he and his family returned to the fellowship of the Saints. Said he: “I have stopped by the wayside and stood aloof from the work of the Lord. But my heart is with this people. I want to be associated with the saints; go with them into the wilderness and continue with them to the end.” He was rebaptized in March 1846 and came west with the original company of pioneers in 1847. He died in Salt Lake City in 1861 in full fellowship at the age of 54.<sup>4</sup>

### **Support general and local Church leaders**

My counsel to the members of the Church is to support the President of the Church, the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities with our whole hearts and souls. If we do, we will be in a safe harbor.

President Brigham Young said that the Prophet Joseph Smith “had to pray all the time, exercise faith, live his religion, and magnify his calling, to obtain the manifestations of the Lord, and to keep him steadfast in the faith.”<sup>5</sup> All of us may expect some challenges to our faith. These

challenges may come in different ways. You may not always like the counsel that the Church leaders give to you. They are not trying to be popular. They are trying to help us avoid the calamities and disappointments that come through disobedience to God’s laws.

We also need to support and sustain our local leaders, because they also have been “called and chosen.” Every member of this Church may receive counsel from a bishop or a branch president, a stake or a mission president, and the President of the Church and his associates. None of these brethren asked for his calling. None is perfect. Yet they are the servants of the Lord, called by Him through those entitled to inspiration. Those called, sustained, and set apart are entitled to our sustaining support.

I have admired and respected every bishop I have ever had. I have tried not to question their guidance and have felt that in sustaining and following their counsel I was protected against the “sleight of men, and cunning craftiness.”<sup>6</sup> This was because each of these called and chosen leaders was entitled to the divine revelation that comes with the calling. Disrespect for ecclesiastical leaders has caused many to suffer spiritual weakening and downfall. We should look past any perceived imperfections, warts, or spots of the men called to preside over us and uphold the office which they hold.

### **A bishop on a dunking machine**

Many years ago we used to have money-raising events in our wards to pay for the utilities and other local expenses and activities now paid by the general Church funds and the local unit budget allowance. We used to have bazaars, fairs, dinners, and other fund-raising activities. At that time my ward had a wonderful, devoted, committed bishop.

A member of a neighboring ward found that a dunking machine was a suc-

cessful money-raising activity. Participants would pay to throw baseballs at a marked mechanical arm. Hitting the bull's-eye would trigger a release, plunging the person sitting on the seat of the machine into a big basin of cold water. Our ward decided to use this machine, and someone suggested that more people would pay for balls to throw if the bishop would be willing to sit on the dunking seat. Our bishop was a good sport, and because he was responsible for raising the money, he willingly consented to sit on the dunking seat. Soon some began to buy balls and to throw them at the target. Several hit the mark, and the bishop was drenched. After half an hour of this, he began to shake with the cold.

While some of the people thought this was great fun, my father was very offended that the office of the bishop had been so belittled and held up to ridicule or even contempt. Even though the money raised was intended for a good cause, I can still remember feeling ashamed that some of our people did not show more respect for both the office and the man who had by night and day served us so well as our good shepherd. As holders of the priesthood of God, we should set the example of sustaining the leadership of the Church to our families, our friends, and our associates.

### **A safety net of counsel and guidance**

The holy scriptures as well as the local and General Authorities of the Church provide a safety net of counsel and guidance for the people of the Church. For example, all my life the Brethren have from this and other pulpits urged our people to live within their incomes, stay out of debt, and save a little for a rainy day, for rainy days always come. I have lived through times of great economic difficulty, such as the Great Depression and World War II. What I have experienced makes me afraid not to do what I can to protect myself and my family against the consequences of such catastrophes. I am grateful to the Brethren for this wise counsel.

The President of the Church will not lead the people of the Church astray. It will never happen. President Hinckley's counselors sustain him fully, as do the Quorum of the Twelve, the Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. As a result, as I have said before, a special love and harmony exist in the presiding councils of the Church for our President and for each other.

### **Leaders have been called and chosen**

The priesthood of God is a shield. It is a shield against the evils of the world. That shield needs to be kept clean; otherwise, our vision of our purpose and the dangers around us will be limited. The cleansing agent is personal righteousness, but not all will pay the price to keep their shields clean. The Lord said, "For many are called, but few are chosen."<sup>7</sup> We are called when hands are laid upon our heads and we are given the priesthood, but we are not chosen until we have demonstrated to God our righteousness, our faithfulness, and our commitment.

Brethren, this work is true. Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son, and he heard and followed Their instruction. That was the beginning of this great work, the responsibility for which now rests upon us. I bear solemn witness of its divinity, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 55:1.
2. *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Volume 1: 1995–1999* (2005), 509.
3. In Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Aug. 15, 1877, 484.
4. See Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine & Covenants* (1997), 156–57.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 469.
6. Ephesians 4:14.
7. Matthew 22:14.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Ye Elders of Israel."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren of the priesthood, assembled here in the Conference Center and worldwide, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address a few remarks to you. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to attend me as I do so.

I am aware that our audience this evening ranges from the most recently ordained deacon to the eldest high priest. To each, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist and the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James, and John are sacred and treasured events.

### Deacons serve a brother with palsy

To you deacons, may I say that I recall the time when I was ordained a deacon. Our bishopric stressed the sacred responsibility which was ours to pass the sacrament. Emphasized were proper dress, a dignified bearing, and the importance of being clean inside and out. As we were taught the procedure in passing the sacrament, we were told how we should assist Louis McDonald, a particular brother in our ward who was afflicted with a palsied condition, that he might have the opportunity to partake of the sacred emblems.

How I remember being assigned to pass the sacrament to the row where Brother McDonald sat. I was fearful and hesitant as I approached this wonderful brother, and then I saw his smile and the eager expression of gratitude that showed his desire to partake. Holding the tray in my left hand, I took a small piece of bread and pressed it to his lips. The water was later served in the same way. I felt I was on holy ground. And indeed I was. The privilege to pass the sacrament to Brother McDonald made better deacons of us all.

### Deacons serve the sacrament to 5,000

Just two months ago, on Sunday, July 31, I was at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, attending an LDS sacrament meeting held during the National Scout Jamboree. My purpose in being there was to speak to the 5,000 Latter-day Saint young men and their leaders who had spent the previous week participating in the activities of the jamboree. They sat reverently in a natural amphitheater as an impressive 400-voice Aaronic Priesthood chorus sang:

A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy,  
I am a Mormon boy.  
I might be envied by a king,  
For I am a Mormon boy.<sup>1</sup>

The sacrament was blessed, with 65 priests officiating at the many large sacrament tables which had been placed throughout the assembled group. Approximately 180 deacons then passed the sacrament. Within the time it would take to handle the passing of the sacrament in a crowded ward chapel, this large gathering was served. What an awe-inspiring sight I witnessed that morning as these Aaronic Priesthood young men participated in this holy ordinance.

### Young men visit Welfare Square

It is important for each deacon to be guided to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward the lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

The inspiration came for the bishopric to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: “Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter for those who are in need.” The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served more willingly in filling their assignments.

### **Teachers and priests are home teachers**

Now, pertaining to the teachers and priests, every one of you should be given the assignment to home teach with a companion who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A young man will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to “watch over” others.<sup>2</sup>

President David O. McKay counseled: “Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father’s children. . . . [It] is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart.”<sup>3</sup>

Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the occurrence of living miracles.

### **Johann Denndorfer’s home teachers**

As I think of home teaching, I am reminded of a man by the name of Johann Denndorfer from Debrecen, Hungary. He had been converted to the Church years before in Germany, and now, following World War II, he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land of Hungary. How he longed for contact with the Church. Then his home teachers visited. Brother

Walter Krause and his companion went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary to fulfill their home teaching assignment. Before they left from their homes in Germany, Brother Krause had said to his companion, “Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?”

His companion asked, “When will we leave?”

Brother Krause’s response: “Tomorrow.”

Then came the question, “When will we come back?”

Brother Krause did not hesitate; he said, “Oh, in about a week.”

And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer and others. Brother Denndorfer had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved for years. This tithing he gave to his home teachers, and then he said, “Now I can shake your hands.”

### **A priest overcomes stuttering to baptize**

Now a word for the priests in the Aaronic Priesthood. You young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue your home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Fifty-five years ago I knew a young man, Robert Williams, who held the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. When he spoke, Robert stuttered and stammered, void of control. He was self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and everybody else; this impediment was devastating to him. Rarely did he accept an assignment; never would he look another person in the eye; always would he gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the responsibility to baptize another.

I sat next to Robert in the baptistry of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I knew he needed all the help he could get. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I asked him how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost uncontrollably that he felt terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. The clerk then said, "Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest."

Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He spoke the words, "Nancy Ann McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

And he baptized her. Not once did he stutter! Not once did he falter! A modern miracle had been witnessed. Robert then performed the baptismal ordinance for two or three other children in the same fashion.

In the dressing room, I hurried to congratulate Robert. I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

I testify to you that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

Just over two years ago it was my privilege to speak at the funeral services for Robert Williams and to pay tribute to this faithful priesthood holder who tried his best throughout his life to honor his priesthood.

### **Young men, never give up**

Some of you young men here tonight may be shy by nature or might consider yourselves inadequate to respond to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours

and mine alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help.

Like some of you, I know what it is to face disappointment and youthful humiliation. As a boy, I played team softball in elementary and junior high school. Two captains were chosen, and then they, in turn, selected the players they desired on their respective teams. Of course, the best players were chosen first, then second, and third. To be selected fourth or fifth was not too bad, but to be chosen last and relegated to a remote position in the outfield was downright awful. I know; I was there.

How I hoped the ball would never be hit in my direction, for surely I would drop it, runners would score, and teammates would laugh.

As though it were just yesterday, I remember the very moment when all that changed in my life. The game started out as I have described: I was chosen last. I made my sorrowful way to the deep pocket of right field and watched as the other team filled the bases with runners. Two batters then went down on strikes. Suddenly, the next batter hit a mighty drive. I even heard him say, "This will be a home run." That was humiliating, since the ball was coming in my direction. Was it beyond my reach? I raced for the spot where I thought the ball would drop, uttered a prayer while running, and stretched forth my cupped hands. I surprised myself. I caught the ball! My team won the game.

This one experience bolstered my confidence, inspired my desire to practice, and led me from that last-to-be-chosen place to become a real contributor to the team.

We can experience that burst of confidence. We can feel that pride of performance. A three-word formula will help us: *Never give up.*

### **Magnify priesthood calling by serving**

From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't

try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."<sup>4</sup>

And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Brethren, it is in *doing*, not just *dreaming*, that lives are blessed, others are guided, and souls are saved. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves,"<sup>5</sup> counseled James.

May all within the sound of my voice make a renewed effort to qualify for the Lord's guidance in our lives. There are many who plead and pray for help. There are those who are discouraged and in need of a helping hand.

### The conversion of the Anastors

Many years ago when I served as a bishop, I presided over a large ward with over 1,000 members, including 87 widows. On one occasion I was visiting, along with one of my counselors, a widow and her mature handicapped daughter. As we left

their apartment, a lady from the apartment across the hall was standing outside her door and stopped us. She spoke with a foreign accent and asked if I were a bishop; I replied that I was. She told me that she noticed I often visited with others. Then she said, "No one visits me or my bedfast husband. Do you have time to come in and visit with us, even though we are not members of your church?"

As we entered her apartment, we noticed that she and her husband were listening to the Tabernacle Choir on the radio. We talked with the couple for a while, then provided a blessing to the husband.

Following that initial visit I stopped by as often as I could. The couple eventually met with the missionaries, and the wife, Angela Anastor, was baptized. Sometime later her husband passed away, and I had the privilege of conducting and speaking at his funeral services. Sister Anastor, with her knowledge of the Greek language, later was to translate the widely used pamphlet *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* into the Greek language.

### Do your duty; that is best

I love the motto "Do [your] duty; that is best; Leave unto [the] Lord the rest!"<sup>6</sup>

Active service in the Aaronic Priesthood will prepare you young men to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to serve missions, and to marry in the holy temple.

You will ever remember your Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and your fellow quorum members, thereby experiencing the truth "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."<sup>7</sup>

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, your future beckons; prepare for it. May Heavenly Father ever guide you as you do so. May He guide all of us as we strive to honor the priesthood which we hold and to magnify our callings, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Evan Stephens, "A Mormon Boy," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 296.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
3. *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, rev. ed. (1967), ii–iii.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
5. James 1:22.
6. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Legend Beautiful," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (1893), 258.
7. Paraphrasing James Barrie, in *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time*, comp. Laurence J. Peter (1977), 335.

**President Monson**

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the father-and-son priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "True to the Faith." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley****Seek to live exemplary lives**

My dear brethren of the priesthood, wherever you may be across this broad world, what a tremendous body you have become, men and boys of every race and kindred, all a part of the family of God.

How precious is His gift to us. He has given to us a portion of that which is His divine authority, the eternal priesthood, the power by which He brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. It follows that when much has been given to us, much is required of us (see Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3).

I know that we are not perfect men. We know the perfect way, but we do not always act according to our knowledge. But I think that for the most part we are trying. We are trying to be the kind of men our Father would have us be. That is a very high objective, and I commend all of you who are trying to reach it. May the Lord bless you as you seek to live exemplary lives in every respect.

**Helping people in the Gulf States**

Now, as all of us are aware, the Gulf States area of the United States has re-

cently suffered terribly from raging winds and waters. Many have lost all they had. The damage has been astronomical. Literally millions have suffered. Fear and worry have gripped the hearts of many. Lives have been lost.

With all of this, there has been a great outpouring of help. Hearts have been softened. Homes have been opened. Critics love to talk about the failures of Christianity. Any such should take a look at what the churches have done in these circumstances. Those of many denominations have accomplished wonders. And far from the least among these has been our own Church. Great numbers of our men have traveled considerable distances, bringing with them tools and tents and radiant hope. Men of the priesthood have given thousands upon thousands of hours in the work of rehabilitation. There have been three and four thousand at a time. There are some there tonight. We cannot say enough of thanks to them. Please know of our gratitude, of our love, and of our prayers in your behalf.

Two of our Area Seventies, Brother John Anderson, who resides in Florida, and Brother Stanley Ellis, who lives in

Texas, have directed much of this effort. But they would be the first to say that the credit belongs to the great numbers of men and boys who have given assistance. Many have worn shirts that say “Mormon Helping Hands.” They have won the love and respect of those they have assisted. Their assistance has gone not only to members of the Church in trouble, but to great numbers of those concerning whom no religious affiliation has been made.

They have followed the pattern of the Nephites as recorded in the book of Alma:

“They did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need” (Alma 1:30).

Women and girls in many parts of the Church have rendered a Herculean effort in providing hygiene and cleaning kits by the tens of thousands. The Church has provided equipment, food, water, and comfort.

We have contributed substantial amounts of money to the Red Cross and other agencies. We have given millions from fast offerings and humanitarian funds. To every one of you I say thanks in behalf of your beneficiaries and thanks in behalf of the Church.

### **Prophets have foretold catastrophes**

Now, I do not say, and I repeat emphatically that I do not say or infer, that what has happened is the punishment of the Lord. Many good people, including some of our faithful Latter-day Saints, are among those who have suffered. Having said this, I do not hesitate to say that this old world is no stranger to calamities and catastrophes. Those of us who read and believe the scriptures are aware of the

warnings of prophets concerning catastrophes that have come to pass and are yet to come to pass.

There was the great flood, when waters covered the earth and when, as Peter says, only “eight souls were saved” (1 Peter 3:20).

If anyone has any doubt concerning the terrible things that can and will afflict mankind, let him read the 24th chapter of Matthew. Among other things the Lord says:

“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. . . .

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows. . . .

“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! . . .

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:6–8, 19, 21–22).

### **Destruction in the Western Hemisphere**

In the Book of Mormon we read of unimaginable destruction in the Western Hemisphere at the time of the Savior’s death in Jerusalem. Again I quote:

“And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.

“And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.

“And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.



“And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

“And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned.

“And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain. . . .

“ . . . The whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth;

“And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.

“And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate” (3 Nephi 8:5–10, 12–14).

What a terrible catastrophe that must have been.

### **Suffering and death through the centuries**

The plague, or Black Death, of the 14th century took millions of lives. Other pandemic diseases, such as smallpox, have brought untold suffering and death through the centuries.

In the year A.D. 79 the great city of Pompeii was destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted.

Chicago was ravaged by a terrible fire. Tidal waves have swamped areas of Hawaii. The San Francisco earthquake in 1906 ruined the city and took some 3,000 lives. The hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas, in 1900 killed 8,000. And more recently, as you know, has been the terrible tsunami of Southeast Asia, where thousands of lives were lost and where relief efforts are still needed.

### **Current calamities were foretold**

How portentous are the words of revelation found in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants concerning the calamities that should befall after the testimonies of the elders. The Lord says:

“For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

“And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

“And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people” (D&C 88:89–91).

How interesting are descriptions of the tsunami and the recent hurricanes in terms of the language of this revelation, which says, “The voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.”

Man’s inhumanity to man expressed in past and present conflict has and continues to bring unspeakable suffering. In the Darfur region of Sudan, tens of thousands have been killed and well over a million have been left homeless.

### **“If ye are prepared ye shall not fear”**

What we have experienced in the past was all foretold, and the end is not yet. Just as there have been calamities in the past, we expect more in the future. What do we do?

Someone has said it was not raining when Noah built the ark. But he built it, and the rains came.

The Lord has said, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

The primary preparation is set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein it says, “Wherefore, stand ye in holy places,

and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come" (D&C 87:8).

We sing the song:

When the earth begins to tremble,  
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;  
When thy judgments spread destruction,

Keep us safe on Zion's hill.

["Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,"  
*Hymns*, no. 83]

### *Keep the Lord's commandments*

We can so live that we can call upon the Lord for His protection and guidance. This is a first priority. We cannot expect His help if we are unwilling to keep His commandments. We in this Church have evidence enough of the penalties of disobedience in the examples of both the Jaredite and the Nephite nations. Each went from glory to utter destruction because of wickedness.

We know, of course, that the rain falls on the just as well as the unjust (see Matthew 5:45). But even though the just die, they are not lost but are saved through the Atonement of the Redeemer. Paul wrote to the Romans, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Romans 14:8).

### *Heed warnings*

We can heed warnings. We have been told that many had been given concerning the vulnerability of New Orleans. We are told by seismologists that the Salt Lake Valley is a potential earthquake zone. This is the primary reason that we are extensively renovating the Tabernacle on Temple Square. This historic and remarkable building must be made to withstand the shaking of the earth.

### *Stock the family storeroom*

We have built grain storage and storehouses and stocked them with the necessities of life in the event of a disaster. But the best storehouse is the family store-room. In words of revelation the Lord has said, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing" (D&C 109:8).

Our people for three-quarters of a century have been counseled and encouraged to make such preparation as will assure survival should a calamity come.

We can set aside some water, basic food, medicine, and clothing to keep us warm. We ought to have a little money laid aside in case of a rainy day.

### **The Lord will watch over us**

Now what I have said should not occasion a run on the grocery store or anything of that kind. I am saying nothing that has not been said for a very long time.

Let us never lose sight of the dream of Pharaoh concerning the fat cattle and the lean, the full ears of corn and the blasted ears, the meaning of which was interpreted by Joseph to indicate years of plenty and years of scarcity (see Genesis 41:1–36).

I have faith, my dear brethren, that the Lord will bless us and watch over us and assist us if we walk in obedience to His light, His gospel, and His commandments. He is our Father and our God, and we are His children, and we must be in every way deserving of His love and concern. That we may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "True to the Faith."

Elder Adhemar Damiani offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 175th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2005. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. The choir sang “The Morning Breaks” to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 175th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “The Morning Breaks” and will now fa-

vor us with “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.”

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The choir sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

The choir sang “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.”

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### President Hinckley

Thank you, choir, for that magnificent number.

We’ll first hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, after which President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy. We shall all then join together in singing “Sweet Is the Work.”

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president, will address us. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us, and the choir will then sing “The Seer, Joseph, the Seer.”

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Joseph Smith: teacher by example

My brothers and sisters, in this bicentennial year of his birth, I should like to speak of our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith.

On December 23, 1805, Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, to Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. On the day of his birth, as the proud parents looked down upon this tiny baby, they could not have known what a profound

impact he would have upon the world. A choice spirit had come to dwell in its earthly tabernacle; he has affected our lives and has taught us—through his own example—essential lessons. Today I should like to share a few of those lessons with you.

### Joseph's childhood leg surgery

When Joseph was about six or seven years old, he and his brothers and sisters were stricken with typhus fever. Although the others recovered readily, Joseph was left with a painful sore on his leg. The doctors, using the best medicine they had, treated him, and yet the sore persisted. In order to save Joseph's life, they said, he would have to lose his leg. Thankfully, however, soon after that diagnosis, the doctors returned to the Smith home and reported that there was a new procedure which might save Joseph's leg. They wanted to operate immediately and had brought some cord with which to tie little Joseph to the bed so he wouldn't thrash about, since they had nothing with which to dull the pain. Young Joseph, however, told them, "You won't need to tie me."

The doctors suggested he take some brandy or wine so that the pain might not be so severe. "No," young Joseph replied. "If my father will sit on the bed and hold me in his arms, I will do whatever is necessary." Joseph Smith Sr. held in his arms his small child, and the doctors removed the diseased piece of bone. Although young Joseph was lame for some time afterward, he was healed.<sup>1</sup> At such a young age and countless other times throughout his life, Joseph Smith taught us *courage*—by example.

### The First Vision

Before Joseph's 15th year, his family moved to Manchester, New York. He later described the great religious revival which seemed everywhere present at this time

and of prime concern to nearly everyone. Joseph himself longed to know which church he should join. He writes in his history:

"I often said to myself: . . . Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?"

"While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by . . . these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, . . . : *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"<sup>2</sup>

Joseph reported that he knew he must either put the Lord to the test and ask Him or perhaps choose to remain in darkness forever. Early one morning he stepped into a grove, now called sacred, and knelt and prayed, having faith that God would give him the enlightenment which he so earnestly sought. Two personages appeared to Joseph—the Father and the Son—and he was told, in answer to his question, that he was to join none of the churches, for none of them was true. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us the principle of *faith*—by example. His simple prayer of faith on that spring morning in 1820 brought about this marvelous work which continues today throughout the world.

### Joseph's unwavering faith

A few days after his prayer in the Sacred Grove, Joseph Smith gave an account of his vision to a preacher with whom he was acquainted. To his surprise, his communication was treated with "contempt" and "was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase." Joseph, however, did not waver. He later wrote, "I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true. . . . For

I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the physical and mental punishment at the hands of his opponents which the Prophet Joseph Smith endured throughout the remainder of his life, he did not falter. He taught *honesty*—by example.

### Joseph’s patience and diligence

After that great First Vision, the Prophet Joseph received no additional communication for three years. However, he did not wonder; he did not question; he did not doubt the Lord. He waited patiently. He taught us the heavenly virtue of *patience*—by example.

Following the visits of the angel Moroni to young Joseph and his acquisition of the plates, Joseph commenced the difficult assignment of translation. One can but imagine the dedication, the devotion, and the labor required to translate in fewer than 90 days this record of over 500 pages covering a period of 2,600 years. I love the words Oliver Cowdery used to describe the time he spent assisting Joseph with the translation of the Book of Mormon: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom!”<sup>4</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us *diligence*—by example.

As we know, the Prophet Joseph sent forth missionaries to preach the restored gospel. He himself served a mission in Upper New York and in Canada with Sidney Rigdon. He not only inspired others to volunteer for missions, but he also taught the importance of *missionary work*—by example.

### Joseph Smith’s martyrdom

I think one of the sweetest lessons taught by the Prophet Joseph, and yet one of the saddest, occurred close to the time of his death. He had seen in vision the

Saints leaving Nauvoo and going to the Rocky Mountains. He was anxious that his people be led away from their tormentors and into this promised land which the Lord had shown him. He no doubt longed to be with them. However, he had been issued an arrest warrant on trumped up charges. Despite many appeals to Governor Ford, the charges were not dismissed. Joseph left his home, his wife, his family, and his people and gave himself up to the civil authorities, knowing he would probably never return.

These are the words he spoke as he journeyed to Carthage: “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men.”<sup>5</sup>

In Carthage Jail he was incarcerated with his brother Hyrum and others. On June 27, 1844, Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor, and Willard Richards were together there when an angry mob stormed the jail, ran up the stairway, and began firing through the door of the room they occupied. Hyrum was killed, and John Taylor was wounded. Joseph Smith’s last great act here upon the earth was one of selflessness. He crossed the room, most likely “thinking that it would save the lives of his brethren in the room if he could get out, . . . and sprang into the window when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without.”<sup>6</sup> He gave his life; Willard Richards and John Taylor were spared. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>7</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us *love*—by example.

In retrospect, over 160 years later, although the events of June 27, 1844, were tragic, we are provided comfort as we realize that Joseph Smith’s martyrdom was not the last chapter in this account. Although those who sought to take his life felt that the Church would collapse without him, his powerful testimony of truth, the teachings he translated, and his decla-

ration of the Savior's message go on today in the hearts of over 12 million members throughout the world, who proclaim him a prophet of God.

### **A missionary testifies of Joseph Smith**

The testimony of the Prophet Joseph continues to change lives. Some years ago I served as the president of the Canadian Mission. In Ontario, Canada, two of our missionaries were proselyting door-to-door on a cold, snowy afternoon. They had not had any measure of success. One elder was experienced; one was new.

The two called at the home of Mr. Elmer Pollard, and he, feeling sympathy for the almost frozen missionaries, invited them in. They presented their message and asked if he would join in prayer. He agreed, on the provision that he could offer the prayer.

The prayer he offered astonished the missionaries. He said, "Heavenly Father, bless these two unfortunate, misguided missionaries that they may return to their homes and not waste their time telling the people of Canada about a message which is so fantastic and about which they know so little."

As they arose from their knees, Mr. Pollard asked the missionaries never to return to his home. As they left, he said mockingly to them, "You can't tell me you really believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God anyway!" and he slammed the door.

The missionaries had walked but a short distance when the junior companion said timidly, "Elder, we didn't answer Mr. Pollard."

The senior companion responded: "We've been rejected. Let's move on."

The young missionary persisted, however, and the two returned to Mr. Pollard's door. Mr. Pollard answered the knock and angrily said, "I thought I told you young men never to return!"

The junior companion then said, with all the courage he could muster, "Mr. Pollard, when we left your door, you said that we didn't really believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I want to testify to you, Mr. Pollard, that I *know* Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that by inspiration he translated the sacred record known as the Book of Mormon, that he did see God the Father and Jesus the Son." The missionaries then departed the doorstep.

I heard this same Mr. Pollard in a testimony meeting state the experiences of that memorable day. He said, "That evening, sleep would not come. I tossed and turned. Over and over in my mind I heard the words, 'Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know it. . . . I know it. . . . I know it.' I could scarcely wait for morning to come. I telephoned the missionaries, using their number which was printed on the small card containing the Articles of Faith. They returned, and this time my wife, my family, and I joined in the discussion as earnest seekers of truth. As a result, we have all embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. We shall ever be grateful to the testimony of truth brought to us by those two courageous, humble missionaries."

### **The prophet and seer of the Lord**

In the 135th section of the Doctrine and Covenants we read the words of John Taylor concerning the Prophet Joseph: "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."<sup>8</sup>

I love the words of President Brigham Young, who said, "I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained, and to whom he gave keys and power to build up the Kingdom of God on earth."<sup>9</sup>

To this fitting tribute to our beloved Joseph, I add my own testimony that I

know he was God's prophet, chosen to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I pray that as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth, we may learn from his life. May we incorporate into our own lives the divine principles which he so beautifully taught—by example—that we, ourselves, might live more completely the gospel of Jesus Christ. May our lives reflect the knowledge we have that God lives, that Jesus Christ is His Son, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that we are led today by another prophet of God—even President Gordon B. Hinckley.

This conference marks 42 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In my first meeting with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in the temple, the hymn which we sang, honoring Joseph Smith the Prophet, was and is a favorite of mine. I close with a verse from that hymn:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.  
Blessed to open the last dispensation,  
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.<sup>10</sup>

I testify of this solemn truth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 69–76.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:10–11.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:21–22, 25.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
6. *History of the Church*, 6:618.
7. John 15:13.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 456.
10. "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Optimism despite declining standards

I have lived a long time and watched the standards upon which civilization must depend for survival swept aside one piece at a time.

We live in a day when the age-old standards of morality, marriage, home, and family suffer defeat after defeat in courts and councils, in parliaments and classrooms. Our happiness depends upon living those very standards.

The Apostle Paul prophesied that in our day, these last days, men would be "disobedient to parents, . . . without natural affection, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2–4).

And he warned: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). He was right. Nevertheless, when I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with a feeling of positive optimism.

### Continuing revelation prepares us

Paul told young Timothy to continue in the things he had learned from the Apostles and said he would be safe because "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

A knowledge of the scriptures is important. From them we learn about spiritual guidance.

I have heard people say, “I would have willingly endured persecution and trials if I might have lived in the early years of the Church when there was such a flow of revelation published as scripture. Why is that not happening now?”

The revelations that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, printed as scripture, laid the permanent foundation of the Church through which the gospel of Jesus Christ could go forth to “every nation” (2 Nephi 26:13).<sup>1</sup>

The scriptures define the office of the prophet and president and his counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric, and the stakes and wards and branches. They define the offices of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods. They establish the channels through which inspiration and revelation can flow to the leaders and teachers and parents and to individuals.

The opposition and trials are different now. If anything, they are more intense, more dangerous than in those early days, aimed not so much at the Church as at us as individuals. The early revelations, published as scriptures for the permanent guidance of the Church, define the ordinances and covenants and are still in force.

One of those scriptures promises, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

Let me tell you what has been done to prepare us. Perhaps you will then understand why I do not fear the future, why I have such positive feelings of confidence.

I cannot possibly describe in detail or even list all that has been put in place by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in recent years. In them you will see continuing revelation, open to the Church and to each individual member. I will describe a few of them.

### **LDS edition of the scriptures**

More than 40 years ago it was determined to make the doctrine quickly and

easily available to every member of the Church by preparing a Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. We set out to cross-reference the King James Bible with the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The text of the King James Bible was left completely unaltered.

### *Tyndale and Wycliffe prepared the way*

Work was done centuries ago to prepare for our day. Ninety percent of the King James Bible is as translated by William Tyndale and John Wycliffe. We owe much to those early translators, those martyrs.

William Tyndale said, “I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than [the clergy].”<sup>2</sup>

Alma had come through great trials and faced even greater ones. And the record says, “And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

That is exactly what we had in mind when we began the scripture project: that every member of the Church could know the scriptures and understand the principles and doctrines to be found in them. We set out to do in our day what Tyndale and Wycliffe had done in theirs.

Both Tyndale and Wycliffe were terribly persecuted. Tyndale suffered in a freezing prison in Brussels. His clothing was worn to rags, and he was terribly cold. He wrote to the bishops asking for his coat and cap. He begged for a candle, saying, “It is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark.”<sup>3</sup> They were so enraged at this request that he was taken from prison and, before a large crowd, burned at the stake.

Wycliffe escaped death by burning, but the Council of Constance had his body



exhumed and burned at the stake and his ashes scattered.<sup>4</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith had borrowed the volumes of the *Book of Martyrs* by the 16th-century English cleric John Foxe from the mother of Edward Stevenson of the Seventy. After he read them, he said, "I have, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, seen those martyrs, and they were honest, devoted followers of Christ, according to the light they possessed, and they will be saved."<sup>5</sup>

### *The enormous work of preparation*

To cross-reference more than 70,000 verses of scripture and provide footnotes and helps was known to be enormously difficult, perhaps even impossible. But it was begun. It took 12 years and the help of over 600 people to complete. Some were experts in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew or had a knowledge of ancient scriptures. But most were ordinary, faithful members of the Church.

The spirit of inspiration brooded over the work.

The project would have been impossible without the computer.

A remarkable system was designed to organize tens of thousands of footnotes to open the scriptures to every ploughboy and every ploughgirl.

With a subject-matter index, a member can, in just a few minutes, look up such words as *atonement*, *repentance*, and *Holy Ghost* and find revealing references from all four scriptures.

Several years into the project, we asked how they were progressing with the tedious, laborious listing of topics in alphabetical order. They wrote, "We have been through *Heaven* and *Hell*, past *Love* and *Lust*, and now we're working toward *Repentance*."

Original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon came into our hands. These made possible the correction of printers'

errors which creep into scriptural translations.

Most notable in the Topical Guide are the 18 pages, single-spaced, small print, under the heading "Jesus Christ," the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the name Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world. Follow these references, and you will open the door to whose Church this is, to what it teaches and by what authority—all anchored to the sacred name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, our Lord.

Two new revelations were added to the Doctrine and Covenants—section 137, a vision given to Joseph Smith the Prophet on the occasion of the administration of the endowment, and section 138, President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead. Then, just as this work was being closed for printing, the marvelous revelation on the priesthood was received and announced in an official declaration (see D&C Official Declaration 2), proving that the scriptures are not closed.

Then came the enormous challenge of translation into the languages of the Church. Now the triple combination, with the Guide to the Scriptures, has been published in 24 languages, with others to follow. The Book of Mormon is now printed in 106 languages. Forty-nine translations are under way.

Other things were done. The Book of Mormon was given a subtitle—the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

With the foundation doctrines in place as solid as the granite in the Salt Lake Temple and open to everyone, more could witness the constant flow of revelation to the Church. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

## Church curriculum restructured

While the scripture publication moved on, another great work was begun. This too would take years. The entire curriculum of the Church was restructured. All courses of study in priesthood and auxiliary organizations—for children, youth, and adults—were revised to center on the scriptures, to center on Jesus Christ, to center on the priesthood, and to center on the family.

Hundreds of volunteers worked year in and year out. Some of them were experts in writing, curriculum, instruction, and other related fields, but most were ordinary members of the Church. It was all anchored in the scriptures, with emphasis on the authority of the priesthood and with focus on the sacred nature of the family.

## Many evidences of continuing revelation

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”<sup>6</sup> They then published “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.”<sup>7</sup>

Seminaries and institutes of religion spread across the world. The teachers and students learn and teach by the Spirit (see D&C 50:17–22), and both are taught to understand the scriptures, the words of the prophets, the plan of salvation, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Apostasy and Restoration, the unique position of the restored Church, and to identify the principles and doctrines found in them. Students are encouraged to develop a habit of daily scripture study.

Monday night was reserved for family home evening. All activities of the Church are to yield so that families can be together.

In natural sequence, missionary work was reanchored to the revelations under the title *Preach My Gospel*. Each year more

than 25,000 missionaries are released to return to their homes in 148 countries after spending two years learning the doctrine and how to teach by the Spirit and sharing their testimonies.

Principles of priesthood government have been clarified. The place of the quorums of the priesthood—Aaronic and Melchizedek—has been magnified. Always, everywhere, there are leaders who hold the keys—bishops and presidents—to give guidance, to clarify misunderstandings, to detect and correct false doctrines.

The course of study for adults in priesthood and Relief Society is based on the teachings of the Presidents of the Church.

Church magazines have been redesigned and are published now in 50 languages.

An awesome era of temple building goes on, with 122 temples opened for ordinance work and two more announced yesterday.

Genealogy was renamed “family history.” Faithful members are aided by the newest technology to prepare and bring names to the temple.

These things all witness of continuing revelation. There are other things, too numerous to describe in detail.

## The Church’s power is in hearts and souls

There is in the Church a central core of power deeper than programs or meetings or associations. It does not change. It cannot erode. It is constant and certain. It never recedes or fades.

While the Church is housed in chapels, it lives in the heart and soul of every Latter-day Saint.

Everywhere in the world, humble members draw inspiration from the scriptures to guide them through life, not fully understanding that they have found that “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:46) about which the Lord spoke to His disciples.



### We can each stand on Zion's hill

When Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, collected hymns for the first hymnbook, she included "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," which is, in fact, a prayer:

When the earth begins to tremble,  
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;  
When thy judgments spread destruction,  
Keep us safe on Zion's hill.<sup>8</sup>

Every soul who willingly affiliates with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and seeks to abide by its principles and ordinances is standing "on Zion's hill."

Each can receive assurance which comes through inspiration and testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is just as He declared it to be, "the only true and living church upon the

face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See also Revelation 5:9; 14:6; 1 Nephi 19:17; Mosiah 3:13, 20; 15:28; 16:1; Alma 9:20; 37:4; Doctrine and Covenants 10:51; 77:8, 11; 133:37.
2. In David Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, trans. William Tyndale (1989), viii.
3. In Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, ix.
4. See John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 18–20.
5. In Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (1893), 6.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
8. *Hymns*, no. 83.

## Elder Merrill J. Bateman

### The universal nature of the gospel

Recently a participant on a radio program questioned the international appeal of the Church, given its origins in New York, its headquarters in Utah, and the Book of Mormon story of an ancient American people. As I thought of friends in Asia, Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world, it was apparent that the discussant did not understand the universal nature of the restored gospel or the all-encompassing applicability of its ordinances, covenants, and blessings. The worldwide significance of the Prophet Joseph Smith's First Vision and the Book of Mormon are not measured by location but by their message regarding man's relationship to God, the Father's love for His children, and the divine potential within each human being.

The prophetic call through all ages has been, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32; see also Matthew 5:48; John 10:10; 14:6), that salvation is through the Only Begotten Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; D&C 29:42). The call is universal and applies to all of God's children, whether African, Asian, European, or any other nationality. As the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, all of us "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29).

### The Savior was rejected by many

The Father's plan of life, with its central focus on Christ's Atonement, was prepared before the foundation of the world (see Abraham 3:22–28; Alma 13:3). It was given to Adam and Eve, and they were commanded to teach it to their children

(see Moses 5:6–12). Over time the posterity of Adam rejected the gospel, but it was renewed through Noah and then again through Abraham (see Exodus 6:2–4; Galatians 3:6–9). The gospel was offered to the Israelites in Moses's day. But a sterner taskmaster was required to bring them to Christ, given centuries in apostasy (see Exodus 19:5–6; D&C 84:19–24). The fulness of the gospel was finally restored to Israel by the Savior Himself in the meridian of time.

One of the most illuminating passages of scripture regarding this sequence of apostasy and restoration is found in Jesus's parable of the wicked husbandmen (see Mark 12:1–10). In the parable, Jesus reminds the people of the many prophets who have been sent through the ages to raise up righteous nations. He then states how the messengers were rejected again and again. Some were beaten and sent away empty. Others were killed. And then, prophesying about His own ministry, Jesus tells His listeners that the Father decided to send His “one son, his well beloved” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 12:7), saying, “They will reverence my son” (Matthew 21:37).

Jesus, however, knowing His own fate, then declared:

“But those husbandmen said . . . , This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

“And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard” (Mark 12:7–8).

### **Knowledge of God has been restored**

Following the Savior's death and those of His Apostles, doctrines and ordinances were changed, and apostasy set in again. This time spiritual darkness lasted for hundreds of years before rays of light would once more penetrate the earth. The Apostle Peter knew of this Apostasy and prophesied following the Savior's Ascension that the Lord would not return for His Second

Coming until there was a “restitution of all things” (see Acts 3:19–21). The Apostle Paul also prophesied of a time when the members would “not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3–4) and that a “falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:2–3) would precede the Second Coming of Christ. He too referred to the “restitution of all things,” saying that the Savior “in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . might gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10).

The Lord directed the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The “restitution of all things” began in the Sacred Grove with the Father and the Son appearing to Joseph Smith. In vision, Joseph learned of God's personal nature—that the Father and the Son are separate, exalted beings with bodies of flesh and bone.

### **Book of Mormon teaches the Atonement**

At the beginning of most dispensations, a book is given to the newly called prophet. Moses received tablets (see Exodus 31:18). Lehi was given a book to read concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:11–14). Ezekiel was given “a roll of a book” (Ezekiel 2:9–10) containing the Lord's message for the house of Judah in his day. John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos was shown a book with seven seals (see Revelation 5; D&C 77:6). Is it any wonder, then, that the Lord would provide a book containing the fulness of the gospel as part of the “restitution of all things”? The Book of Mormon has the power to draw all men and women to Christ. Its references to the Savior's Atonement are the clearest on record with regard to its purpose and powers.

The Holy Spirit has whispered to my soul that Joseph saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove and that the Book of Mormon is true. I am grateful for the additional knowledge concerning the Savior's Atonement contained in the Book

of Mormon. One of the titles given to the Savior is that of Only Begotten Son of the Father. For example, the Apostle John in his Gospel states that he beheld the majesty and glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration and that His glory was that of the “only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14; see also verse 18). The Book of Mormon likewise uses this title many times.

### **The Savior’s death was voluntary**

Unlike mortals who inherit the seeds of death from both parents, Jesus was born of a mortal mother but an immortal Father. The seeds of death received from Mary meant that He could die, but the inheritance from His Father gave Him infinite life, which meant death was a voluntary act. Thus, Jesus told the Jewish people, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

On another occasion He stated:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17–18).

### **Christ suffered for each of us**

The infinite nature received from His Father gave Jesus power to perform the Atonement, to suffer for the sins of all. The prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus not only took upon Himself our sins but also our pains, afflictions, and temptations. Alma also explains that Jesus took upon Himself our sicknesses, death, and our infirmities. (See Alma 7:11–13.) This He did, Alma said, so that His “bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know . . . how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12).

The prophet Abinadi further states that “when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi then identifies the Savior’s seed as the prophets and those who follow them. For many years I thought of the Savior’s experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt “our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15), “[bore] our griefs, . . . carried our sorrows . . . [and] was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4–5).

### **The Savior knows how to help each of us**

The Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us.

The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were “numberless as the sand upon the sea shore” (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith. That is why a young Hispanic woman suddenly realized that she was more than a speck in the universe when the Holy Spirit gave her a witness of the Restoration. She felt God’s love, that she was His daughter, and realized that He knew her. It also explains why the plan of salvation seemed familiar to my Japanese friend as the missionaries taught him and as the Holy Spirit confirmed his purposes on earth and his potential.

## The gospel is a pattern for all

I testify that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a pattern for all. It is not the location of events that matters; it is the good news—the timeless doctrine and atoning powers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bear witness that He lives, that He is the Christ. I testify that the gospel restored

through the Prophet Joseph Smith is Peter's "restitution of all things." I bear witness that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Sweet Is the Work."

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## Sister Cheryl C. Lant

### Delighting in the scriptures

Our beloved prophet has recently asked us to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year. As I have accepted this invitation, I have found myself discovering new and exciting things in this book even though I have read it many times before. For instance, I rediscovered 2 Nephi 4:15, which reads, "For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children."

This scripture teaches us how to read the Book of Mormon. It mentions three important ideas.

First, "My soul delighteth." I love this phrase! I have thought about hungering and thirsting after knowledge as I read the scriptures, but delighting in them is something else. I find that what I take away from the scriptures is determined by what I bring. Each time I read them, I am, in a sense, bringing a new person with new eyes to the experience. Where I am in my life, the experiences I am having, and my attitude all affect how much I will gain. I love the scriptures. I treasure the truths I find as I read them. Joy fills my heart as I receive encouragement, direction, comfort, strength, and answers to my needs. Life looks brighter, and the way opens before me. I am reassured of my Heavenly Father's love and concern for me every time I read. Surely this is a delight to me. As one little boy in a Sunbeam class put it, "I feel happy about the scriptures!"

### Pondering the scriptures

Second, "My heart pondereth them." How I love to carry the scriptures with me in my heart! The spirit of what I have read rests there to bring me peace and comfort. The knowledge I have gained gives me guidance and direction. I have the confidence born out of obedience.

Sometimes I have the luxury of immersing myself in the scriptures. Sometimes I read them in snatches. However, it doesn't seem to matter where or when I read the scriptures; I can still carry them in my heart. I have found that by reading them in the morning I am able to carry the influence of the Spirit with me throughout the day. When I read them midday, it is usually because a need has taken me there, where I am able to find answers and directions that influence my decisions and actions. When I read them at night, the sweet, comforting messages from the Lord linger in my subconscious mind as I rest. Many times I awaken at night with ideas or thoughts that originate from the words I read just before drifting off to sleep. My mind may go many places during the day, but my heart securely embraces the words of the Lord found in the scriptures and "pondereth them."

Through this I have learned that "as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). As I ponder the scriptures, something happens to me. I have a stronger desire to live close to my Heavenly Father. I long to serve Him. I want to

live the principles that I learn in the scriptures, and as I do, my heart “writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.”

### Writing scriptures into our lives

I, of course, do not write scriptures as did Nephi, but when I read the scriptures and live the principles I learn, those scriptures become written in my life. They govern my actions and are written there for my children to see and follow. I can build a legacy, a tradition of righteous living, based on the principles I learn in the scriptures.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:39–40 teaches:

“And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

“But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.”

By reading the scriptures, I can be assured that I will know the “light and truth” that will bless me and my family. As I know what to do, I can work to bring my actions—my “traditions”—into line with what I know. Then my example will not lead my children astray but rather will lead them to the scriptures and to the truth that is found there.

I love the Primary song that teaches:

Search, ponder, and pray  
Are the things that I must do.  
The Spirit will guide, and, deep inside,  
I’ll know the scriptures are true.<sup>1</sup>

I find that if I pray not only to have a witness of the truthfulness of the scriptures but also to have the Spirit with me as I read, my sensitivity is heightened, and I see ever so much more clearly. I can see where I am in my life and where my Heavenly Father wants me to be. I can understand principles of truth, and I can see how to make the needed changes in my life. I can feel assured that the Lord will

help and strengthen me to accomplish the task. Thus the scriptures become written in my life.

### Scriptures strengthen families

When we read the scriptures we are hearing the voice of the Savior. He is not absent from our lives. He is actively positioned in the verses of these holy books. Our prophet has asked us to draw closer to the Savior by reading the Book of Mormon.

And what of our children? How blessed is the child whose parents base their lives on the teachings in the scriptures! There is absolutely nothing more important we can do for our families than to strengthen them in the scriptures. Parents, call your families together to read the scriptures and work to make it possible in your busy family schedules. Children, respond quickly and happily when you are called to scripture study.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave us an invitation, but he also gave us promises if we choose to accept. He promised “an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.”<sup>2</sup>

One of my daughters, who is in a wonderful place in her life where her greatest blessings are her greatest challenges (she has three small children), said to me: “Mom, I am doing it. I am reading the Book of Mormon. And I am holding on to those wonderful promises. They are exactly what I need in my life right now.”

Are these blessings what you need in your life? They are ours for the taking. As individuals, let us pledge to follow the prophet. As families, let us claim our blessings. President Hinckley, we love you, we have heard your voice, and we will follow.

May I bear my testimony that I know that Heavenly Father lives and loves us. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

I know that the scriptures are true. They are the word of God. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet today. I know that as we follow him, we receive great blessings from our Father in Heaven. I am so grateful for this witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. "Search, Ponder, and Pray," *Children's Songbook*, 109.
2. "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Mortality is a time of testing and growth

All around us we see a growing desire for spiritual direction the world over as a result of increasing natural and human-caused disasters. This yearning for spiritual guidance is a consequence of our being children of a divine Heavenly Father. It is understandable that when we face difficulty we turn to our Creator for help. Our loving Heavenly Father knew that deteriorating world conditions, severe personal challenges, and disasters would lead His children to seek His spiritual nourishment. The challenge is how to properly find it.

We lived in the presence of God our Holy Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in a premortal existence. There we gained an understanding of the Father's plan of salvation and the promise of help when we would be born as mortals on earth. The primary purpose of life was explained. We were told:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate [that is to be obedient in the premortal existence] shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate [that is, to be obedient during mortal life] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

Those words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth.

That purpose is to prove yourself obedient to the commandments of the Lord and thereby grow in understanding, capacity, and every worthy trait. It is to receive every required ordinance and to make and keep every needed covenant. It is to form and nourish a family. This experience includes having periods of trial and happiness, with the objective of returning triumphantly, having met well the challenges and opportunities of mortal life to receive the glorious blessings promised for such obedience.

### Preparation in the premortal life

So that the period of mortal testing and growth would yield its greatest benefit, you were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality. Our Father's pattern for guiding you through mortal life was explained. He would choose from among the most valiant, obedient spirit children prophets and other authorized servants to hold His priesthood, to be taught His truth, and to be guided to disseminate that truth among His children on earth. God would give each child moral agency, the right to choose His counsel or to ignore it. All would be encouraged but not forced to obey. You understood that while you could choose your path on earth, you could not determine the outcome of your choices. That would be decided by eternal law.

Should one live to qualify for all of the richest promised blessings but for reasons beyond his or her control not be able



to obtain them on earth, there would be a compensating opportunity in postmortal life. Your memory of premortal life would be kept from you to ensure that it would be a valid test, but there would be guidance given to show you how to live. Our Father's plan for salvation in this life with the opportunity of returning to Him would be called the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From before the Creation of this earth, there was rebellion against our Father's plan, instigated by a brilliant but evil spirit we know as Lucifer or Satan. He proposed a modification of the requirements. So convincing was his argument that one-third of the Father's spirit children followed Satan and were cast out. They lost the extraordinary opportunity to grow and the critical advantage of a mortal body.

### **Making correct choices on earth**

Our Holy Father, who knows each of His children perfectly, realized that over time many would be tempted, become worldly, and reject the testimony and teachings of His prophets. Spiritual darkness would replace the light of truth in a condition called an apostasy. The period from the introduction of truth to its general loss through sin would be called a dispensation. Prophet after prophet would be chosen in a series of dispensations to keep truth on earth for the faithful despite its distortion or rejection by many.

You learned that the Light of Christ would provide that guidance. It gives light and life to all things. It prompts all individuals throughout the earth to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong. The Light of Christ is not a person. It is a power and influence that comes from God our Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, and, when followed, can lead a person to qualify for the more definitive guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. You were told that transgression would weaken the influence of the Holy Ghost but that it could be restored through proper repentance.

You rejoiced to know that the obedient who would receive the proper ordinances with the necessary covenants and remain faithful would inherit celestial glory and live in the presence of the Father and His Son throughout the eternities.

How do we know these truths? How can you confirm their validity? You see around you great confusion regarding the nature of God, His teachings, and the purpose of life. How then does God, our Heavenly Father, guide His children on earth? How does He communicate truth and His will so that faithful, believing children can make the right choices and receive the blessings Heavenly Father wants them to have? I will explain.

### **Dispensations of gospel truth**

From the foundation of this earth, God our Father has consistently followed His plan I have just described. Adam labored to share our Father's plan with his children and descendants. Many believed and were blessed. But many chose to use their divine gift of moral agency to refuse His teachings and His gospel. The disobedient rejected the truth, distorted the teachings and ordinances, and distanced themselves from God. In time, the light of truth was replaced by spiritual darkness, and the priesthood and the true Church were lost among the people.

Prophets such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses renewed the truth for their dispensation, but in time their efforts were rejected by most. In the meridian of time, Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son of God, was born on earth. He restored the truth and ministered with love and compassion. He established His Church again on earth with apostles and prophets. Through intense suffering He fulfilled His Holy Father's divine commission to become our Savior and Redeemer. He allowed Himself to be crucified. He was resurrected and overcame physical death. His infinite atoning sacrifice is a supernal gift that allows

the repentant to be forgiven of sins and qualify for eternal life. But even so, the Son of God was rejected by all but a few. His Apostles and Church members were persecuted and many killed. The earth sank into a long and dreadful period of intense spiritual darkness.

### **Truth restored in the final dispensation**

The scriptures record that throughout history, on occasions of exceptional importance, God the Father's voice has been heard. On repeated occasions Jesus Christ has personally appeared to select individuals. Yet there is only one supernal, singular instance of which we have knowledge that God the Father Himself appeared in person. This was done with His precious Holy Son, Jesus Christ, to an audience of one. That one was young Joseph Smith Jr., an extraordinary spirit prepared before the foundation of the earth. He would become the greatest prophet sent to earth. About to come forth was the return of priesthood authority and the complete restoration of the Church established by the Savior, with additional scripture required for our time provided by continuing revelation from the Savior.

Our benevolent Father came from His vast creations to this earth to clarify truth, to disperse the intense clouds of spiritual darkness, to establish His true identity, to restore a fulness of truth, and to provide the only way to obtain secure, spiritual guidance. This momentous Restoration began with the Father's simple phrase "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"<sup>2</sup> There followed a restoration of truth, priesthood, sacred ordinances, and the true Church, with the Father's plan of salvation and happiness. When that plan is lived, it will help you overcome every challenge in life. It will help you qualify, through faith and obedience, to have the divine spiritual guidance you need. That support will give you the strength to live as you know you ought to live, no matter how world conditions de-grade.

What occasion would be so stupendously important as to warrant this unprecedented visit of God the Father? It was to initiate the "dispensation of the fulness of times" foretold by prophets of the Old and New Testaments. The time had come for the Father to gather "all things in Christ,"<sup>3</sup> commit all the keys of the kingdom, and restore the knowledge communicated in past dispensations<sup>4</sup> as He established the final dispensation of the gospel for this earth.

Knowing that it would be difficult for many to believe that such a glorious restoration did occur, the Savior provided a tangible witness to establish the truth of it, namely the Book of Mormon. The way to confirm the reality of the Restoration is described in its pages. Also, He provided additional illuminating scripture needed for our time in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price through Joseph Smith. No wonder so much of Joseph Smith's ministry is focused on the Savior, His Atonement and doctrine.

### **We must each know the truth**

While this precious, vital message has been proclaimed across the world, Satan has been most effective in causing people to ignore it or to look in the wrong places for it. The vast majority of Father's children have not only forgotten their Father in Heaven and the purpose of mortal life, but they rarely even think of Him or ponder for what purpose they are here in mortality. They have been led to be absorbed by mundane things that distract them from the essential ones. Don't you make that mistake.

As a servant of Jesus Christ, I testify that what I have described is true. It is not sufficient to have a vague understanding of truth or the reality of the Father and His Son, our Savior. Each of us must come to know who They really are. You must feel how very much They love you. You must trust that as you consistently live the truth the best you can, They will help



you realize the purpose of your earth life and strengthen you to qualify for the blessings promised.

### Read the Book of Mormon

To be obedient to the commandments of God requires an understanding of them. It necessitates faith in them. That comprehension is best obtained through personal study of doctrine. That is one of the reasons that in July of this year, President Hinckley and his counselors invited all members to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. They promised, “Those who read the Book of Mormon will be blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.”<sup>5</sup>

I have tested and proven that promise in my own life and have confirmed its truth. If you have conscientiously obeyed that counsel, you know what I mean. If you have not yet begun, there is still time to have your life enriched by reading the pages of the Book of Mormon. Please do it.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I solemnly testify that God our Father and Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith brought to pass the Restoration I have described, that the resplendent light of truth and the

Church of Jesus Christ are again on earth, that the true nature of God the Father and His Son has been again revealed, and that the proper way to receive spiritual guidance has been clarified. I testify that God’s plan of salvation has been made available to all who will honestly seek it. Embrace it. Live it for your peace and happiness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Abraham 3:24–26.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
3. Ephesians 1:10.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18–21.
5. See First Presidency letter, July 25, 2005.

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The choir sang “The Seer, Joseph, the Seer.”

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### President Hinckley

That was wonderful, that great rendition of “The Seer.” Thank you very much, the Tabernacle Choir and Brother Stanford Olsen, who provided the beautiful music.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “Ode for Joseph” and “Praise to the Man.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Ned B. Roueché of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Furthering the work of the Lord

My dear brothers and sisters, I thank my Father in Heaven that He has prolonged my life to be part of these challenging times. I thank Him for the opportunity of service. I have no desire but to do all that I can in furthering the work of the Lord, in serving His faithful people, and in living at peace with my neighbors.

I recently traveled around the world, more than 25,000 miles, visiting Alaska,

Russia, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, and Nigeria, where in this last place we dedicated a new temple. We then dedicated the Newport Beach California Temple. I have just been to Samoa for another temple dedication, another 10,000 miles. I do not enjoy travel, but it is my wish to get out among our people to extend appreciation and encouragement and to bear testimony of the divinity of the Lord’s work.

### Forgiveness—the greatest virtue

I often think of a poem I read long ago. It goes like this:

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,  
Where the race of men go by—  
The men who are good and the men  
who are bad,  
As good and as bad as I.

I would not sit in the scorner's seat,  
Or hurl the cynic's ban;—  
Let me live in a house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

[Sam Walter Foss, "The House by the Side of the Road," in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 422]

That is the way I feel.

Age does something to a man. It seems to make him more aware of the need for kindness and goodness and forbearance. He wishes and prays that men might live together in peace without war and contention, argument and conflict. He grows increasingly aware of the meaning of the great Atonement of the Redeemer, of the depth of His sacrifice, and of gratitude to the Son of God, who gave His life that we might live.

I wish today to speak of forgiveness. I think it may be the greatest virtue on earth, and certainly the most needed. There is so much of meanness and abuse, of intolerance and hatred. There is so great a need for repentance and forgiveness. It is the great principle emphasized in all of scripture, both ancient and modern.

### The prodigal son: the lost is found

In all of our sacred scripture, there is no more beautiful story of forgiveness than that of the prodigal son found in the 15th chapter of Luke. Everyone should read and ponder it occasionally.

"And when [the prodigal] had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:14–21).

And the father caused that a great feast should be held, and when his other son complained, he said to him, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (verse 32).

When there has been wrongdoing and then there has come repentance, followed by forgiveness, then literally the offender who was lost is found, and he who was dead is made alive.

How wonderful are the blessings of mercy and forgiveness.

### Forgiveness after World War II

The Marshall Plan following World War II, with the gift of millions of dollars, helped put Europe on its feet.

In Japan, after this same war, I saw great steel mills, the money for which I was told had come from America, Japan's former enemy. How much better this world is because of the forgiveness of a generous nation in behalf of its former enemies.

### **Love your enemies**

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord taught:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:38-44).

Those are very strong words.

Do you really think you could follow that injunction? They are the words of the Lord Himself, and I think they apply to each of us.

### **A woman taken in adultery**

The scribes and Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman taken in adultery so that they might entrap Him.

"But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them,

He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:6-11).

The Savior taught of leaving the ninety and nine to find the lost sheep, that forgiveness and restitution might come.

### **We are required to forgive all men**

Isaiah declared:

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18).

The great crowning love of the Savior was expressed when in His dying agony He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

In our day the Lord has said in revelation:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:9-10).

The Lord has offered a marvelous promise. Said He, "He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

There are so many in our day who are unwilling to forgive and forget. Children cry and wives weep because fathers and husbands continue to bring up little shortcomings that are really of no importance. And there also are many women who would make a mountain out of every little offending molehill of word or deed.

### **New York woman forgives a young man**

A time back I clipped a column from the *Deseret Morning News*, written by Jay Evensen. With his permission, I quote from a part of it. Wrote he:

"How would you feel toward a teenager who decided to toss a 20-pound frozen turkey from a speeding car headlong into the windshield of the car you were driving? How would you feel after enduring six hours of surgery using metal plates and other hardware to piece your face together, and after learning you still face years of therapy before returning to normal—and that you ought to feel lucky you didn't die or suffer permanent brain damage?

"And how would you feel after learning that your assailant and his buddies had the turkey in the first place because they had stolen a credit card and gone on a senseless shopping spree, just for kicks? . . .

"This is the kind of hideous crime that propels politicians to office on promises of getting tough on crime. It's the kind of thing that prompts legislators to climb all over each other in a struggle to be the first to introduce a bill that would add enhanced penalties for the use of frozen fowl in the commission of a crime.

"The New York Times quoted the district attorney as saying this is the sort of crime for which victims feel no punishment is harsh enough. 'Death doesn't even satisfy them,' he said.

"Which is what makes what really happened so unusual. The victim, Victoria Ruvolo, a 44-year-old former manager of a collections agency, was more interested in salvaging the life of her 19-year-old assailant, Ryan Cushing, than in exacting any sort of revenge. She pestered prosecutors for information about him, his life, how he was raised, etc. Then she insisted on offering him a plea deal. Cushing could serve six months in the county jail and be on probation for 5 years if he pleaded guilty to second-degree assault.

"Had he been convicted of first-degree assault—the charge most fitting for the crime—he could have served 25 years in prison, finally thrown back into society as a middle-aged man with no skills or prospects.

"But this is only half the story. The rest of it, what happened the day this all played out in court, is the truly remarkable part.

"According to an account in the New York Post, Cushing carefully and tentatively made his way to where Ruvolo sat in the courtroom and tearfully whispered an apology. 'I'm so sorry for what I did to you.'

"Ruvolo then stood, and the victim and her assailant embraced, weeping. She stroked his head and patted his back as he sobbed, and witnesses, including a Times reporter, heard her say, 'It's OK. I just want you to make your life the best it can be.' According to accounts, hardened prosecutors, and even reporters, were choking back tears" ("Forgiveness Has Power to Change Future," *Deseret Morning News*, Aug. 21, 2005, p. AA3).

What a great story that is, greater because it actually happened and that it happened in tough old New York. Who can feel anything but admiration for this woman who forgave the young man who might have taken her life?

I know this is a delicate and sensitive thing of which I am speaking. There are

hardened criminals who may have to be locked up. There are unspeakable crimes, such as deliberate murder and rape, that justify harsh penalties. But there are some who could be saved from long, stultifying years in prison because of an unthoughtful, foolish act. Somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.

### **The supreme act of forgiveness**

The great Atonement was the supreme act of forgiveness. The magnitude of that Atonement is beyond our ability to completely understand. I know only that it happened and that it was for me and for you. The suffering was so great, the agony so intense, that none of us can comprehend it when the Savior offered Himself as a ransom for the sins of all mankind.

It is through Him that we gain forgiveness. It is through Him that there comes

the certain promise that all mankind will be granted the blessings of salvation, with resurrection from the dead. It is through Him and His great overarching sacrifice that we are offered the opportunity through obedience of exaltation and eternal life.

May God help us to be a little kinder, showing forth greater forbearance, to be more forgiving, more willing to walk the second mile, to reach down and lift up those who may have sinned but have brought forth the fruits of repentance, to lay aside old grudges and nurture them no more. For this I humbly pray, in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Ode for Joseph” and “Praise to the Man.”

Elder Ned B. Roueché offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who has

presided at the conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “The Iron Rod.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Where Love Is.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Russell M. Nelson

and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Won Yong Ko of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “The Iron Rod.”  
Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie offered the invocation.  
The choir sang “Where Love Is.”

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Jesus Christ—the Master Healer

My beloved brothers and sisters, I extend love and greetings to each of you. From the Brethren, I express gratitude for your goodness, for your many generous acts of kindness, for your prayers and sustaining influence in our lives. Our challenges are like yours. We are all subject to sorrow and suffering, to disease and death. Through times good and bad, the Lord expects each of us to endure to the end. As we all go forward together in His sacred work, the Brethren realize the importance of your thoughtful consideration, so lovingly offered and gratefully received. We love you and pray for you, as you pray for us.

I express special gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am thankful for His loving-kindness and for His open invitation to come unto Him.<sup>1</sup> I marvel at His matchless power to heal. I testify of Jesus Christ as the Master Healer. It is but one of many attributes that characterize His incomparable life.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Creator, the great Jehovah, the promised Immanuel, our atoning Savior and Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father, our great Exemplar. And one day we will stand before Him as our just and merciful Judge.<sup>2</sup>

### Miracles of healing

As the Master Healer, Jesus directed His friends to “go . . . and tell . . . what things ye have seen and heard; how that

the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, [and] the dead are raised.”<sup>3</sup>

The books of Matthew,<sup>4</sup> Mark,<sup>5</sup> Luke,<sup>6</sup> and John<sup>7</sup> repeatedly report that Jesus went about preaching the gospel and healing all types of sickness.

When the risen Redeemer appeared to the people of ancient America, He mercifully invited those “afflicted in any manner”<sup>8</sup> to come unto Him and be healed.

Marvelously, His divine authority to heal the sick was conferred upon worthy priesthood bearers in earlier dispensations<sup>9</sup> and again in these latter days, when His gospel has been restored in its fulness.<sup>10</sup>

### Influence of prayer on healing

We can also access His healing power through prayer. I’ll never forget an experience that Sister Nelson and I had about three decades ago with President Spencer W. Kimball and his beloved Camilla. We were in Hamilton, New Zealand, for a large conference with the Saints. I was not a General Authority at that time. I had been invited to participate in this and similar meetings in other Pacific Islands while serving as general president of the Sunday School. And as a doctor of medicine, I had attended President and Sister Kimball for many years. I knew each of them very well—inside and out.

A Saturday evening cultural program had been prepared for this conference by local youth of the Church. Unfortunately, President and Sister Kimball both became very ill, each with a high fever. After receiv-



ing priesthood blessings, they rested at the nearby home of the president of the New Zealand Temple. President Kimball asked his counselor, President N. Eldon Tanner, to preside at the cultural event and to excuse President and Sister Kimball.

Sister Nelson went with President and Sister Tanner and other leaders to the event while President Kimball's secretary, Brother D. Arthur Haycock, and I watched over our feverish friends.

While President Kimball was sleeping, I was quietly reading in his room. Suddenly President Kimball was awakened. He asked, "Brother Nelson, what time was this evening's program to begin?"

"At seven o'clock, President Kimball."

"What time is it now?"

"It's almost seven," I replied.

President Kimball quickly said, "Tell Sister Kimball we are going."

I checked President Kimball's temperature. It was normal! I took Sister Kimball's temperature. It was also normal!

They quickly dressed and got into an automobile. We were driven to the stadium of the Church College of New Zealand. As the car entered the arena, there was a very loud shout that erupted spontaneously. It was most unusual! After we took our seats, I asked Sister Nelson about that sudden sound. She said that when President Tanner began the meeting, he dutifully excused President and Sister Kimball because of illness. Then one of the young New Zealanders was called upon to pray.

With great faith, he gave what Sister Nelson described as a rather lengthy but powerful prayer. He so prayed: "We are 3,000 New Zealand youth. We are assembled here, having prepared for six months to sing and dance for Thy prophet. Wilt Thou heal him and deliver him here!" After the "amen" was pronounced, the car carrying President and Sister Kimball entered the stadium. They were identified immediately, and instantly everyone shouted for joy!<sup>11</sup>

I had witnessed the healing power of the Lord! I had also witnessed revelation as received and responded to by His living prophet!

I recognize that on occasion some of our most fervent prayers may seem to go unanswered. We wonder, "Why?" I know that feeling! I know the fears and tears of such moments. But I also know that our prayers are never ignored. Our faith is never unappreciated. I know that an all-wise Heavenly Father's perspective is much broader than is ours. While we know of our mortal problems and pain, He knows of our immortal progress and potential. If we pray to know His will and submit ourselves to it with patience and courage, heavenly healing can take place in His own way and time.

### Steps toward healing

Afflictions can come from spiritual as well as physical causes. Alma the Younger remembered that his sin was so painful that he wished to "become extinct both soul and body, that [he] might not be brought to stand in the presence of . . . God, to be judged of [his] deeds."<sup>12</sup> At such times, how can we be healed by Him?

We can more fully repent! We can become more fully converted! Then the "Son of Righteousness"<sup>13</sup> can more fully bless us by His healing hand.

Early in His mortal ministry, Jesus announced that He had been sent "to heal the brokenhearted."<sup>14</sup> Wherever He taught them, His pattern was consistent. As I quote His words spoken at four different times and locations, note the pattern.

- To people of the Holy Land, the Lord said that His people "should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."<sup>15</sup>

- To people of ancient America, the resurrected Lord extended this invitation:

“Return unto me, . . . repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you.”<sup>16</sup>

- To leaders of His Church, He taught, “Continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them.”<sup>17</sup>

- Later, during the “restitution of all things,”<sup>18</sup> the Lord taught the Prophet Joseph Smith regarding the pioneers, “After their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and I will heal them.”<sup>19</sup>

The sequence of His pattern is significant. Faith, repentance, baptism, a testimony, and enduring conversion lead to the healing power of the Lord. Baptism is a covenant act—a sign of a commitment and a promise. Testimony develops when the Holy Ghost gives conviction to the earnest seeker of the truth. True testimony fosters faith; it promotes repentance and obedience to God’s commandments. Testimony engenders enthusiasm to serve God and fellow human beings.<sup>20</sup> Conversion means “to turn with.”<sup>21</sup> Conversion is a turning *from* the ways of the world *to*, and staying *with*, the ways of the Lord. Conversion includes repentance and obedience. Conversion brings a mighty change of heart.<sup>22</sup> Thus, a true convert is “born again,”<sup>23</sup> walking with a newness of life.<sup>24</sup>

As true converts, we are motivated to do what the Lord wants us to do<sup>25</sup> and to be who He wants us to be.<sup>26</sup> The remission of sins, which brings divine forgiveness, heals the spirit.

How do we know if we are truly converted? Self-examination tests are available in the scriptures. One measures the degree of conversion prerequisite to baptism.<sup>27</sup> Another measures our willingness to serve others. To His disciple Peter, the Lord said, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>28</sup> Willingness to

serve and strengthen others stands as a symbol of one’s readiness to be healed.

### Magnitude of His healing

John the Beloved declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!”<sup>29</sup> What power! Only the Master Healer could take away the sin of the world. Our debt to Him is incalculably great.

Well do I remember an experience while speaking to a group of missionaries. After I had invited questions, one elder stood. With tears in his eyes he asked, “Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?” I asked the elder to open his book of hymns and recite words from “How Great Thou Art.” He read:

And when I think that God, his Son not  
sparing,  
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin.<sup>30</sup>

Then I asked this elder to read from “Reverently and Meekly Now.” These words are particularly poignant because they are written as the Lord would express His own answer to the very question that had been asked:

Think of me, thou ransomed one;  
Think what I for thee have done.  
With my blood that dripped like rain,  
Sweat in agony of pain,  
With my body on the tree  
I have ransomed even thee. . . .

Oh, remember what was done  
That the sinner might be won.  
On the cross of Calvary  
I have suffered death for thee.<sup>31</sup>

Jesus suffered deeply because He loves us deeply! He wants us to repent and be converted so that He can fully heal us.

When sore trials come upon us,<sup>32</sup> it’s time to deepen our faith in God, to work



hard, and to serve others. Then He will heal our broken hearts. He will bestow upon us personal peace<sup>33</sup> and comfort.<sup>34</sup> Those great gifts will not be destroyed, even by death.

### Resurrection—the consummate act of healing

The gift of resurrection is the Lord's consummate act of healing. Thanks to Him, each body will be restored to its proper and perfect frame.<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Him, no condition is hopeless. Thanks to Him, brighter days are ahead, both here and hereafter. Real joy awaits each of us—on the other side of sorrow.

I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ—the Master Healer—in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 11:28–30. Indeed, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Jesus the Christ, Our Master and More,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 4–17.
3. Luke 7:22.
4. See Matthew 4:23; 8:1–3, 5–13, 16–17; 9:1–8, 32–35; 12:15; 14:14, 34–36; 15:29–31.
5. See Mark 1:32–34, 40–45; 2:1–12; 6:53–56; 7:31–37.
6. See Luke 4:40–41; 5:12–15, 17–26; 7:1–10; 11:14; 22:50–51.
7. See John 4:46–53.
8. 3 Nephi 17:7.
9. See Matthew 10:5–8; Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17; 4 Nephi 1:5.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:65–70.
11. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 172–74.
12. Alma 36:15.
13. 3 Nephi 25:2; see also Malachi 4:2.
14. Luke 4:18; see also Isaiah 61:1.
15. Matthew 13:15; see also Isaiah 6:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:27.
16. 3 Nephi 9:13.
17. 3 Nephi 18:32.
18. Acts 3:21.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 112:13; see also Doctrine and Covenants 124:104.
20. Thus keeping the two great commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27).
21. *Conversion* comes from two Latin roots: *con*, meaning “with,” and *vertere*, meaning “to turn.”
22. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
23. See John 3:3–7; 1 Peter 1:23; Mosiah 27:24–26; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:62.
24. See Romans 6:3–4.
25. See Mosiah 5:2–5.
26. See 3 Nephi 27:21, 27.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; Mosiah 18:10.
28. Luke 22:32.
29. Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:29.
30. *Hymns*, no. 86; see also Psalm 8:3–9; 9:1–2; Mosiah 4:5–13.
31. *Hymns*, no. 185; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19; 45:3–5.
32. See “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140, verse 3.
33. See John 14:27.
34. See Isaiah 40:1; John 14:16–17, 26.
35. See Alma 11:43; 40:23.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Foundation for the Restoration

This year we are commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. To the world we

testify that he was the prophet of God foreordained to bring about the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This he did under the direction of our Savior, who said to an earlier prophet, “My name is

Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.”<sup>1</sup>

I acknowledge the Lord’s hand in the restoration of the gospel. Through the inspired sacrifices of God’s children through the ages, the foundation of the Restoration was laid, and the world is preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His gospel was first established on the earth beginning with Adam and has been taught in every dispensation through such prophets as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. Each of these prophets foretold the coming of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world. Those prophecies have been fulfilled. The Savior did establish His Church. He called His Apostles and established His priesthood. Most importantly, He laid down His life and took it up that all will rise again, thus carrying out the atoning sacrifice. But that was not the end.

After the Savior’s resurrection, He commissioned His Apostles to lead the Church and administer gospel ordinances. Faithful to this charge, they were persecuted, and some were eventually martyred. As a result, the Lord’s priesthood authority was no longer on earth, and the world fell into spiritual darkness. In the centuries that followed, God’s children had the Light of Christ, could pray, and could feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. But the fulness of the gospel had been lost. There was no one left on earth with the power and authority to lead the Church or perform sacred ordinances such as baptism, conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the saving ordinances of the temple. Almost everyone was denied access to the scriptures, and most people were illiterate.

### **First step: making the scriptures available**

Making the scriptures available and helping God’s children learn to read them

was the first step to the restoration of the gospel. Originally the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, languages unknown to common people throughout Europe. Then, about 400 years after the Savior’s death, the Bible was translated by Jerome into Latin. But still the scriptures were not widely available. Copies had to be written by hand, usually by monks, each taking years to complete.

Then, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, an interest in learning began to grow in the hearts of people. This Renaissance or “rebirth” spread throughout Europe. In the late 1300s, a priest named John Wycliffe initiated a translation of the Bible from Latin into English. Because English was then an emerging, unrefined language, church leaders deemed it unsuitable to convey God’s word. Some leaders were certain that if people could read and interpret the Bible for themselves, its doctrine would be corrupted; others feared that people with independent access to the scriptures would not need the church and would cease to support it financially. Consequently, Wycliffe was denounced as a heretic and treated accordingly. After he died and was buried, his bones were dug up and burned. But God’s work could not be stopped.

While some were inspired to translate the Bible, others were inspired to prepare the means to publish it. By 1455 Johannes Gutenberg had invented a press with movable type, and the Bible was one of the first books he printed. For the first time it was possible to print multiple copies of the scriptures and at a cost many could afford.

Meanwhile, the inspiration of God also rested upon explorers. In 1492 Christopher Columbus set out to find a new path to the Far East. Columbus was led by the hand of God in his journey. He said, “God gave me the faith, and afterwards the courage.”<sup>2</sup>

These inventions and discoveries set the stage for further contributions. In the

early 1500s young William Tyndale enrolled at Oxford University. There he studied the work of the Bible scholar Erasmus, who believed that the scriptures are “the food of [a man’s] soul; and . . . must permeate the very depths of [his] heart and mind.”<sup>3</sup> Through his studies, Tyndale developed a love for God’s word and a desire that all God’s children be able to feast on it for themselves.

### **Reformation spreads the scriptures**

At about this time, a German priest and professor named Martin Luther identified 95 points of error in the church of his day, which he boldly sent in a letter to his superiors. In Switzerland, Huldrych Zwingli printed 67 articles of reform. John Calvin in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland, and many others assisted in this effort. A reformation had begun.

Meanwhile, William Tyndale had become a trained priest and was fluent in eight languages. He believed a direct translation from Greek and Hebrew into English would be more accurate and readable than Wycliffe’s translation from Latin. So Tyndale, enlightened by the Spirit of God, translated the New Testament and a portion of the Old Testament. His friends warned him that he would be killed for doing so, but he was undaunted. Once, while disputing with a learned man, he said, “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost.”<sup>4</sup>

Eventually Tyndale, like others, was killed for his efforts—strangled and burned at the stake near Brussels. But the belief for which he gave his life was not lost. Millions have come to experience for themselves what Tyndale taught throughout his life: “The nature of God’s word is, that whosoever read it, . . . it will begin immediately to make him every day better

and better, till he be grown into a perfect man.”<sup>5</sup>

Turbulent political times brought change. Because of a disagreement with the church in Rome, King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England and required that copies of the English Bible be placed in every parish church. Hungry for the gospel, people flocked to these churches, reading the scriptures to one another until their voices gave out. The Bible was also used as a primer to teach reading. Though martyrdoms continued across Europe, the dark night of ignorance was coming to an end. Declared one preacher before being burned, “We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s Grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The King James Version of the Bible**

We express gratitude to all who lived in England and throughout Europe who helped kindle that light. By God’s grace, the light grew brighter. Aware of the divisions within his own country, English King James I agreed to a new official version of the Bible. It has been estimated that over 80 percent of William Tyndale’s translations of the New Testament and a good portion of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, or Genesis through Deuteronomy, and Joshua through Chronicles) were retained in the King James Version.<sup>7</sup> In time, that version would find its way to a new land and be read by a 14-year-old plowboy named Joseph Smith. Is it any wonder that the King James Version is the approved English Bible of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today?

### **American colonists inspired**

Religious persecution in England continued under James’s son Charles, and many were prompted to seek freedom in new lands. Among them were the Pilgrims,

who landed in the Americas in 1620, the very part of the world Columbus had explored over 100 years earlier. Other colonists soon followed, including those like Roger Williams, founder and later governor of Rhode Island, who continued to search for Christ's true Church. Williams said that there was no regularly constituted church of Christ on earth, nor any person who was authorized to administer any church ordinance, nor could there be until new Apostles were sent by the great Head of the church, for whose coming he was seeking.<sup>8</sup>

Over a century later such religious feeling guided founders of a new nation on the American continent. Under God's hand they secured religious freedom for every citizen with an inspired Bill of Rights. Fourteen years later, on December 23, 1805, the Prophet Joseph Smith was born. The preparation was nearing its completion for the Restoration.

### **Restoration through Joseph Smith**

As a young man, Joseph "was called up to serious reflection"<sup>9</sup> on the subject of religion. Because he was born in a land of religious freedom, he could question which of all the churches was right. And because the Bible had been translated into English, he could seek an answer from the word of God. He read in the book of James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,"<sup>10</sup> and he did as directed. In answer to Joseph's prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him.<sup>11</sup> This humble farm boy was the prophet chosen by God to restore the ancient Church of Jesus Christ and His priesthood in these latter days. This restoration was to be the last, the dispensation of the fulness of times, restoring all the priesthood blessings which man could possess on earth. With this divine commission, his work was not to reform nor was it to protest what was already on the earth. It was to restore what had been on earth and had been lost.

### *Translation of the Book of Mormon*

The Restoration, begun with the First Vision in 1820, continued with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. On September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith was visited by the angel Moroni, who taught him of an ancient record containing "the fulness of the everlasting gospel . . . preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah."<sup>12</sup> Recorded on plates of gold, the Book of Mormon gives an account of Christ's ministry in the Western Hemisphere, just as the Bible records His life and ministry in the Holy Land. Joseph received the gold plates four years later and, in December of 1827, began to translate the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup>

### *Restoration of the priesthood*

While translating, Joseph Smith and his scribe Oliver Cowdery read about baptism. Their desire to receive this blessing for themselves prompted the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829, under the hands of John the Baptist.<sup>14</sup>

There followed the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which was bestowed on Joseph and Oliver by the Apostles Peter, James, and John, who held the keys. After centuries of spiritual darkness, the power and authority to act in God's name, to perform sacred ordinances, and to lead His Church were once again upon the earth.

### *Organization of the Church*

The first printed copies of the Book of Mormon were published on March 26, 1830. A few days later, on April 6, Christ's true Church in these latter days was once again organized, at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York. Describing the effects of these events upon the world, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote:

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;  
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!

The dawning of a brighter day, . . .  
Majestic rises on the world.<sup>15</sup>

The long night was finally over, and revelation streamed forth, resulting in additional scripture. The Doctrine and Covenants was accepted by the Church on August 17, 1835. The Pearl of Great Price translation of the book of Abraham also began in that year.

#### *Restoration of all priesthood keys*

Further authority to act in the name of the Lord soon followed. The Kirtland Temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836.<sup>16</sup> In that temple, the Savior appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, followed by the appearances of Moses, Elias, and Elijah, who gave additional priesthood keys to the Prophet.<sup>17</sup>

This gospel light would never again be taken from the earth. In 1844 Joseph Smith conferred all the keys of the priesthood upon Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and their fellow Apostles. The Prophet said: “I have lived until I have seen this burden, which has rested on my shoulders, rolled on to the shoulders of other men; . . . the keys of the kingdom are planted on the earth to be taken away no more for ever. . . . No matter what becomes of me.”<sup>18</sup> Sadly, three months later, on June 27, Joseph Smith the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were martyred at Carthage, Illinois.

Elder John Taylor, who was with the Prophet when he was martyred, testified of him, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **Be faithful in these last days**

I testify that the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith is the Savior’s work. In the

Lord’s service the path is not always easy. It often requires sacrifices, and we will likely experience adversity. But in serving Him, we discover that His hand is truly over us. So it was for Wycliffe, Tyndale, and thousands of others who prepared the way for the Restoration. So it was for the Prophet Joseph Smith and all who helped usher in the restored gospel. So it is and will be for us.

The Lord expects us to be as faithful, as devoted, as courageous as those who went before us. They were called to *give* their lives for the gospel. We are called to *live* our lives for the same purpose. In these last days we have special reason to do so.

#### **Prepare for the Savior’s Second Coming**

Before that sacred night in Bethlehem, the events of history and the words of the prophets of all dispensations prepared the way for the first coming of the Lord and His Atonement. Similarly, history and prophecy laid the groundwork for the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Do we have eyes to see that the events and prophecies of *our* time are preparing us for the Savior’s *Second* Coming?

I bear special witness that our Savior Jesus Christ lives. I testify that His hand has been over the work of the Restoration from before the foundation of this world and will continue until His Second Coming.

That each of us will prepare ourselves to greet Him is my humble prayer. In His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Abraham 2:8.
2. In Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (1975), 29.
3. In Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (2001), 89.

4. In S. Michael Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones: William Tyndale—Martyr, Father of the English Bible* (2004), 47.
5. In Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, xv.
6. In Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 168; see also James E. Kiefer, *Biographical Sketches of Memorable Christians of the Past*, “Hugh Latimer, Bishop and Martyr,” <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/269.html>.
7. See Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, 125–26, 197; see also Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 124.
8. See William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. (1872–74), 1:500–502; see also LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. (1966), 29.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:8.
10. James 1:5.
11. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20.
12. Book of Mormon introduction.
13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:27–62.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:66–72; *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2nd ed. (Church Educational System Manual, 2003), 55.
15. “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 109.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
18. Quoted by Wilford Woodruff in *Deseret News*, Dec. 21, 1869, 2.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.

## Elder Won Yong Ko

### Scriptures teach of great sacrifices

Brothers and sisters, good afternoon. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 69). If we summarize the history of the scriptures, we can say that it is the history of sacrifice.

We can find wonderful examples in the scriptures of those who sacrificed their lives in order to keep their faith and testimonies. One example is from the story of Alma and Amulek when they had to watch with pain the people of Ammonihah who were thrown into the fire and died but kept their faith (see Alma 14:7–13).

Also we think of Jesus Christ, who condescended to come down from His Father’s presence to this earth and made the sacrifice to save the world through more severe pain than anyone else has ever endured.

In this last dispensation of the gospel, many pioneers lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice to keep their faith.

### Sacrifice brings joy and blessings

Today we are not likely to be asked to make such a big sacrifice as giving up our lives, but we can see many examples of Saints who make painful sacrifices to keep their faith and testimonies alive. Maybe it is more difficult to make the small sacrifices in our daily lives. For instance, it could be regarded as a small sacrifice to keep the Sabbath day holy, to read the scriptures daily, or to pay our tithing. But these sacrifices cannot be easily made unless we have the mind and the determination to make the sacrifices that are needed to be able to keep those commandments.

As we make these small sacrifices, we are compensated by more blessings from the Lord. King Benjamin said, “And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever” (Mosiah 2:24). And, as he did with his own people, King Benjamin encourages us so that we will receive more blessings as we continue to obey the Lord’s word.

I think that the very first blessing coming from sacrifice is the joy that we can feel



when we pay the price. Perhaps the very thought that the sacrifice itself could be a blessing becomes a blessing. When we have that kind of thought and feel the joy, we might have received a blessing already.

### **Sacrifices of Korean Saints**

Recently, I have found that kind of blessing among the Saints in Korea who participated in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Church in Korea and the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth. I would like to tell you briefly about their sacrifices and the joy and blessings they received.

To celebrate the gospel, which gave hope and courage to people in Korea who were hurt so much by the Korean War, the members started to prepare for this celebration more than a year ago. Many of the members in Korea—the Primary, young men, young women, young single adults, Relief Society sisters, and others—gathered together to practice for the celebration. They prepared many traditional folk dances, including the flower dance, circle dance, fan dance, and farmer dance. They played drums; performed tae kwon do, drama, ballroom dances, and musical numbers; showed animation; and gave choir performances.

Because the young men produced such loud drum sounds, neighbors complained, and they had to stop practicing. It was really difficult to practice for long periods of time, but they did it with joy. I could not find anyone complaining about their effort and sacrifice when they had to get up at 4:00 in the morning to ride the bus for the joint practice. They felt great joy and gratitude for the blessings of the Lord and for the opportunity to show their appreciation.

Also many returned missionaries from overseas came back to Korea with their wives and children for this celebration. They made the sacrifice when they came to Korea on their missions a long time ago.

This time they made another sacrifice of time and money to bring their families and participate in the celebration during the hot summer. But they rejoiced and were grateful for all the celebrations in which they participated.

To encourage the Korean Saints and others, the Lord sent His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, to Korea. President Hinckley made a great sacrifice for this trip by scheduling a 13-day, around-the-world trip and came to Korea to meet with the Saints whom he has loved for many years and to personally convey the special love of the Lord. Nobody felt that this was a sacrifice. Instead, we had tears of joy and gratitude. This is the blessing we are talking about, isn't it?

### **Become Saints willing to sacrifice**

Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of sacrifice. Please enjoy the happiness and blessings from the sacrifice itself.

Occasionally there is a time gap between the sacrifice and the blessing. The sacrifice may come according to our time schedule, but the blessing may not come by our, but by the Lord's, calendar. Because of this, the Lord comforts us by saying, "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work" (D&C 64:33).

The blessings surely come to us. Please remember that the sacrifice itself might be a form of blessing. Let us make the sacrifice of small things.

When we read the Book of Mormon while rubbing our sleepy eyes, let us remember that we are following the counsel of our prophet and receive the joy that comes from that knowledge. We have many bills to pay, but when we pay tithing, let us feel joy for having the opportunity to donate something to the Lord.

And then greater blessings will be poured out on us. It will be just like our surprise and joy when we receive an unexpected gift.

As President Spencer W. Kimball said, “As we give, we find that ‘sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven!’ [“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.] And in the end, we learn it was no sacrifice at all” (“Becoming the Pure in Heart,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, 5). I pray that we will all become Saints willing to sacrifice and become eligible for the Lord’s special blessings. The Lord will watch over us so that it will not be too difficult to endure any sacrifice. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Paul E. Koelliker, Lowell M. Snow, and Ulisses Soares of the Seventy will address us. These brethren will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Elder Paul E. Koelliker

### Be faithful to covenants

Today I desire to express my deep feelings of reverence and love for our Father in Heaven; for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and for the Holy Spirit. I further bear my witness of the sacred call of President Gordon B. Hinckley as the Lord’s prophet, seer, and revelator. I sustain him with all my heart and energy.

I am grateful for the covenant of marriage in the temple to a gracious eternal companion, whom I love and cherish. She continually sets an example of caring service to those who are in need. Our marriage has been blessed with faithful and energetic children and grandchildren who have taught us much and continue to do so.

I feel particularly blessed that my brother, sisters, and I were born of righteous parents who have remained faithful to their temple covenants and have willingly sacrificed all that we might be securely invested in our Heavenly Father’s plan. To my angel mother, I can only say thank you for keeping the chain of love and gospel ordinances strong in our lives.

I have mentioned these sacred relationships because of the happiness that I

feel knowing there is a binding covenant with each of them sealed in the holy temple. I am profoundly grateful to know that regardless of any challenges that yet await us, there is hope and confidence in knowing that by keeping the covenants of the gospel, all of the momentary trials of life can be transcended. The scriptures teach us that all will eventually be well as we are faithful to our covenants. King Benjamin taught:

“Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . .

“Therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

“And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God” (Mosiah 5:7–9).

### Covenants are critical to salvation

Giving careful attention to covenant making is critical to our eternal salvation. Covenants are agreements we make with our Heavenly Father in which we commit our hearts, minds, and behavior to keeping



the commandments defined by the Lord. As we are faithful in keeping our agreement, He covenants, or promises, to bless us, ultimately, with all that He has.

In the Old Testament we are taught the Lord's covenant pattern in Noah's experience with a wicked world and the Lord's plan for cleansing the earth. Because of Noah's faithful, steadfast commitment, the Lord said to him:

"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. . . .

"And Noah did . . . all that the Lord commanded him" (Genesis 6:18; 7:5).

After the floods were abated, they went forth out of the ark.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord. . . .

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons [who were] with him, saying,

"And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you" (Genesis 8:20; 9:8–9).

We too have entered into sacred covenants with the Lord that we might be preserved from the adversary. Just as in Noah's time, we live in a day of prophetic promise and fulfillment. In the past eight years, 71 new temples have been dedicated—a feat, under the direction of the Lord's prophet, which may in some ways be like the building of the ark in Noah's day.

Our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has invited us to come through the door of the temple, where we can enter into covenants with the Lord.

### **Covenants require sacrifice**

As in Noah's day, our efforts to live these covenants may often be accompanied by a measure of sacrifice. This sacrifice, regardless of how great or small, often determines how committed in mind and heart we are to be submissive to the will of our Heavenly Father. The pattern of sacrifice

often includes a season of struggle where we must evaluate and weigh the consequences of our decisions. Choices may not always be clear or easy, so we struggle on. When we finally determine to rid ourselves of struggle and to sacrifice our will for the Lord's, we are lifted to a new level of understanding. This process is often more recognizable in our lives when we experience a significant tragedy or challenge.

Just a few weeks ago a young man, while at a Scout camp in the mountains east of Salt Lake City, was struck by lightning, which took his life. His parents, grief stricken and devastated at the sudden loss of their son, struggled quietly and asked why this happened. Because their hearts were submissive and their faith strong, there came a great outpouring of love from the Lord. In the midst of their grief came a quiet, tender resolve to accept without anger the outcome of this experience. With their acceptance came a larger vision of the purpose of life and a remembrance of the covenants that were in place. Though still filled with anguish from their sudden loss, they found themselves standing on a higher plane, committed to hold even faster to their covenants and to live such that they might be assured of a joyful reunion with their son.

### **Provide temple covenants for the dead**

In this dispensation, covenant making has taken on a new perspective different from the days of Noah. We are not only responsible to make covenants for ourselves, but additionally we have been given the responsibility to search out our kindred dead and open the door for all who desire to make covenants and worthily receive the gospel ordinances.

The work among those who lived previously is aggressively going forward with the forces of heaven commissioned by the Lord. In President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the dead, he records:

“But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth. . . .

“I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption” (D&C 138:30, 57).

The scriptures further teach us that the messengers included “the prophets who had testified of [the Redeemer] in the flesh” (D&C 138:36). Some of those messengers might have included Peter, Paul, Alma, John, Joseph, and Nephi.

Having read this vision of President Smith’s and knowing of the missionaries assigned to do this work, one would think it would be highly motivational for each of us to keep our covenant to find the names of our deceased family members and fill all the available hours in every temple.

I can, with some confidence, report there is still available time in many temples to accommodate the counsel of the First Presidency to put aside some of our leisure time and devote more time to performing temple ordinances. I pray that we will be responsive to this invitation to come to the door of the temple.

I feel humbled at the opportunity to serve in this trusted calling and pray that I may act upon my covenants with the Lord and be submissive to the direction of the Spirit. I declare my solemn witness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I express my love for the covenants and ordinances of the temple and commit to redouble my effort to participate in these holy houses of God. I know, as we make and keep sacred covenants, the Lord will bring us to His sacred presence. I testify of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Lowell M. Snow

Brothers and sisters, as I sat here I felt a great desire to express my love to you and to assure all who are under the sound of my voice of the love of their Heavenly Father. On behalf of the Brethren, I express gratitude for your willingness to come this day to be nourished by the good word of God.

### The Savior marks the path

I enjoy hiking in the mountains, and as I move along in the backcountry I often use a compass, maps, and signs to guide me toward my destination. These tools prove to be very helpful, even invaluable, when I am faced with unknown roads and trails that run in every direction.

Life is full of many intersecting roads and trails. There are so many paths to fol-

low, so many voices calling out “lo, here” or “lo, there.”<sup>1</sup> There is such a variety and volume of media flooding our personal space, most of it intent on herding us down a path that is broad and traveled by many.

When pondering which of these voices to listen to or which road among the many is right, have you ever asked yourself, as Joseph Smith did: “What is to be done? Who of all these [voices and roads is] right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?”<sup>2</sup>

My witness to you is that Jesus Christ continues to mark the path, lead the way, and define every point on our journey. His path is strait and narrow and leads toward “light and life and endless day.”<sup>3</sup> May I share an example from the scriptures with you.

### The Liahona showed the way

At the Lord's command, Lehi and his children left Jerusalem and began an epic journey toward a land of promise. After being camped for a season in a valley by the river, the Lord told Lehi one night that it was time to continue their journey into the wilderness. With much on his mind, he walked out his tent door the next morning and, to his great astonishment, found an object before him on the ground that could have been placed there only by the hand of God. It was a compass, a Liahona in their language, and its pointers were constructed to guide them on their journey, allowing them to steer a course where they could prosper and remain safe in the more fertile parts of their route. But that was not all. Writing appeared on this compass that was plain and easy to read and even changed from time to time, giving the family better understanding concerning the ways of the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

### Faith and diligence were required

During their journey, this Liahona, or compass, proved to be invaluable in helping Lehi's family prosper and eventually arrive at their destination. But it is important to note Nephi's observation that it was only through the faith, diligence, and heed they gave to the compass that it worked. Of this marvelous helper that guided them through the wilderness, Nephi simply observed, "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things."<sup>5</sup>

Nephi's conclusion was not lost on Alma 500 years later when he reminded his own son about the importance of the Liahona. He explained to Helaman that the Lord prepared this compass to show their fathers the course they should travel in the wilderness, but because that miraculous device worked by *small* means, their fathers were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence. As a result, this marvelous device ceased to work, and they

did not progress in their journey or travel a straight course but tarried in the wilderness and were afflicted because of their negligence.<sup>6</sup>

"O my son," Alma continued, "do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever. And now, my son, see that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live."<sup>7</sup>

### The compass of the Lord today

The Lord provides guidance and direction to individuals and families today, just as He did with Lehi. This very general conference is a modern Liahona, a time and place to receive inspired guidance and direction that prospers us and helps us follow God's path through the more fertile parts of mortality. Consider that we are gathered to hear counsel from prophets and apostles who have prayed mightily and prepared carefully to know what the Lord would have them say. We have prayed for them and for ourselves that the Comforter would teach us the mind and will of God. Surely there is no better time or place for the Lord to direct His people than in this conference.

The teachings of this conference are the compass of the Lord. In the coming days you may, as Lehi did, walk out your front door and find a *Liahona*, *Ensign*, or other Church publication in your mailbox, and it will contain the proceedings of this conference. As with the Liahona of old, this new writing will be plain and easy to read and will give you and your family understanding concerning the ways and paths of the Lord.

As Nephi and Alma both remind us, the Lord provides direction for our journey according to the faith, diligence, and heed we give to that direction. He is not

likely to reveal new paths if we have not faithfully followed Him along those He has already marked. Provident prospering along the way comes to those who diligently follow inspired counsel, making it their “walk and talk” until once again a new writing appears to help them progress in their journey toward the land of promises.

My brothers and sisters, prophets and apostles through the ages are our compass from the Lord. His direction through them is plain; the charted course from them is sure. His path, like His yoke, is easy. But do not be deceived by the easiness of His way, assuming it to be a small matter or a thing of naught, but rather take care of these sacred things and look to Him so you can be like Him and live with Him—forever.

I stand today as a witness that our Father’s promises will all be fulfilled; that He sent His Only Begotten to the earth to

mark the path and lead the way; that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith on the morning of a beautiful, clear day early in the spring of 1820, restoring thereafter all that is required to successfully complete man’s earthly journey; and that a prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, points the way for those who will look and live forever. That we will exercise our faith and diligently give heed to the directions and pointers of latter-day Prophets, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Joseph Smith—History 1:5.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
3. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
4. See 1 Nephi 16:9–16.
5. 1 Nephi 16:29.
6. See Alma 37:38–41.
7. Alma 37:46–47.

## Elder Ulisses Soares

### “Feed my sheep”

On one occasion the Savior asked a question to Peter three times:

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. [Jesus] saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”<sup>1</sup>

Because the Lord was deeply concerned with the welfare of our Heavenly Father’s children, He gave Peter the special charge of feeding the sheep. He reaffirmed this same concern in modern times through a revelation given to Joseph Smith:

“Now, I say unto you, and what I say unto you, I say unto all the Twelve: Arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep.”<sup>2</sup>

As we study the scriptures, we notice that the Savior ministered to people according to their specific needs. A good ex-

ample of this occurred when He was near Capernaum, and Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, fell down at Jesus’s feet and pleaded with the Lord to come into his house and bless his daughter, who was dying. Jesus went with Jairus even though the crowd made it difficult for Him to move fast.

And then a messenger came telling Jairus his daughter was already dead. Even grieving as he was, Jairus kept his steadfast faith in the Lord, who comforted the heart of that father, saying:

“Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

“And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

“And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. . . .

“ . . . And took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

“And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus showed patience and love to all who came to Him seeking relief for their physical, emotional, or spiritual illnesses and who felt discouraged and downtrodden.

### **Nurture each one of our sheep**

To follow the Savior’s example, each one of us must look around and reach out to the sheep who are facing the same circumstances and lift them up and encourage them to proceed on the journey toward eternal life.

This need today is as great as or perhaps even greater than when the Savior walked on this earth. As shepherds we must understand that we should nurture each one of our sheep to bring them to Christ, which is the purpose of all we do in this Church.

Any activity, meeting, or program should focus on this same objective. As we stay in tune with the needs of the people, we can strengthen them and help them overcome their challenges so they will remain steadfast in the way which will lead them back to our Heavenly Father’s presence and help them endure to the end.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about people, not programs. Sometimes, in the haste of fulfilling our Church responsibilities, we spend too much time concentrating on programs, instead of focusing on people, and end up taking their real needs for granted. When things like that happen, we lose the perspective of our callings, neglect people, and prevent them from reaching their divine potential to gain eternal life.

### **A bishop lovingly encourages a deacon**

As I was about to have my 12th birthday, my bishop invited me for an interview

and taught me how to prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained a deacon. As the interview was coming to an end, he pulled out a set of forms from his desk and challenged me to fill them out. They were mission call papers. I was astonished. After all, I was only 11. But that bishop had a vision of the future and of the blessings that would be mine if I prepared properly to serve a mission when my time came.

He showed he really cared about me. He told me the steps I should take to prepare both financially and spiritually to serve the Lord. After that day, he interviewed me at least twice a year until I was 19 and encouraged me to remain faithful in my preparation.

He kept my missionary forms in his files and mentioned them whenever we had an interview. With my parents’ help and with the encouragement of a loving and patient bishop, I served a mission. The mission helped me gain a perspective of the blessings God has in store for all who endure to the end.

### **Truly love; don’t just fulfill callings**

It does not matter whether it is a child, youth, or adult—everyone needs to feel loved. We have been counseled for several years to focus on working with new converts and less-active members. People will remain in the Church when they feel someone cares for them.

Among the last instructions the Savior gave His Apostles, He said:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”<sup>4</sup>

People are most receptive to our influence when they feel that we truly love them, and not only because we have a calling to fulfill. As we express true love for people, they will be able to feel the influ-

ence of the Spirit and may feel motivated to follow our teachings. It is not always easy to love people for what they are. The prophet Mormon explained what we should do if such challenges arise:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.”<sup>5</sup>

### Minister as the Savior did

Christ Himself ministered to people, lifting the heavy laden, giving hope to the disheartened, and seeking after the ones who were lost. He showed people how much He loved and understood them and how precious they were. He acknowledged their divine nature and eternal value. Even when calling people to repentance, He condemned the sin without condemning the sinner.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul emphasized the need of expressing this true love to each sheep of the Lord's flock:

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . .

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”<sup>6</sup>

As we follow the Savior's example and teachings, we can assist people to fulfill their earthly mission and return to live with our Heavenly Father.

Of this I bear you my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. John 21:16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 112:14.
3. Luke 8:50–52, 54–55; see also verses 41–42, 49.
4. John 13:34–35.
5. Moroni 7:48.
6. 1 Corinthians 13:3–7, 13.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### The basics of airplane flight

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends:

During my professional life as an airline pilot, I sometimes had passengers visit the cockpit of my Boeing 747. They asked about the many switches, instruments, systems, and procedures and how all this technical equipment would help such a huge and beautiful airplane fly.

As with all pilots, I enjoyed the fact that they were impressed by the apparent

complexity of this plane and that they wondered what kind of magnificent and brilliant person it takes to operate it! At this point of my story, my wife and children would kindly interrupt and say with a twinkling in their eyes, “Pilots are born with a great measure of natural humility!”

To the visitors in my cockpit, I would explain that it takes a great aerodynamic design, many auxiliary systems and programs, and powerful engines to make this flying machine equal to the task of bring-



ing comfort and safety to those joining the flight.

To simplify my explanation by focusing on the basics, I would add that all you really need is a strong forward thrust, a powerful upward lift, and the right aircraft attitude, and the laws of nature will carry the 747 and its passengers safely across continents and oceans, over high mountains and dangerous thunderstorms to its destination.

### **Doctrines, principles are the gospel core**

In recent years I have often contemplated that being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints invites us to ask similar questions. What are the basics, the fundamental principles of our membership in the kingdom of God on earth? After all is said and done, what will really carry us at times of greatest need to our desired eternal destination?

The Church, with all its organizational structure and programs, offers many important activities for its members aimed at helping families and individuals to serve God and each other. Sometimes, however, it can appear that these programs and activities are closer to the center of our heart and soul than the core doctrines and principles of the gospel. Procedures, programs, policies, and patterns of organization are helpful for our spiritual progress here on earth, but let's not forget that they are subject to change.

In contrast, the core of the gospel—the doctrine and the principles—will never change. Living according to the basic gospel principles will bring power, strength, and spiritual self-reliance into the lives of all Latter-day Saints.

Faith is such a principle of power. We need this source of power in our lives. God works by power, but this power is usually exercised in response to our faith. “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). God works according to the faith of His children.

### **Agency and spiritual self-reliance**

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves” (quoted by John Taylor, in “The Organization of the Church,” *Millennial Star*, Nov. 15, 1851, 339). To me, this teaching is beautifully straightforward. As we strive to understand, internalize, and live correct gospel principles, we will become more spiritually self-reliant. The principle of spiritual self-reliance grows out of a fundamental doctrine of the Church that God has granted us—agency. I believe that moral agency is one of the greatest gifts of God unto His children, next to life itself.

When I study and ponder moral agency and its eternal consequences, I realize that we are truly spirit children of God and therefore should act accordingly. This understanding also reminds me that as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are part of a great worldwide family of Saints.

### **The gospel offers answers to all people**

The organizational structure of the Church allows great flexibility according to the size, growth pattern, and needs of our congregations. There is the basic unit program with a very simple organizational structure and fewer meetings. We also have large wards with great organizational resources to serve one another. All are established within the inspired programs of the Church to help members “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

All these varied options are equal in divine value because the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the same in each unit. I testify as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that He lives, that the gospel is true, and that it offers the answers to all personal and collective challenges the children of God have on this earth today.

This summer my wife and I visited with members of the Church in many countries throughout Europe. In some parts of Europe the Church has been present for many years, even since 1837. There is a great heritage of faithful members in Europe. Currently we have more than 400,000 members in Europe. As we look at all the generations who have emigrated from Europe to America during the 19th and 20th centuries, that total number could easily be multiplied a few times.

Why did so many faithful members leave their home countries in those early days of the Church? Many reasons can be named: to escape persecution, to help build the Church in America, to improve their economic circumstances, the desire to be close to a temple, and many more.

Europe still feels the consequence of this exodus. But the strength that comes from several faithful generations of Church members is now becoming more apparent. We see more young men and women and more senior couples serve missions for the Lord; we see more temple marriages; we see more confidence and courage by the members to share the restored gospel. Among the peoples of Europe and many other parts of the world, there is a spiritual vacuum of Christ's true teachings. This vacuum must, can, and will be filled with the message of the restored gospel as our wonderful members live and proclaim this gospel with greater courage and faith.

### **Strong members in Russia**

With the expansion of the Church in Europe, there are now countries where the Church has been for less than 15 years. I spoke with a mission president serving in his homeland of Russia who has been a member for only seven years. He told me, "The same month I was baptized I was called as a branch president." Did he feel overwhelmed at times? Absolutely! Did he try to implement the full range of Church

programs? Fortunately not! How did he grow so strong in such a small congregation in such a short time? He explained:

"I knew with all my soul the Church was true. The doctrine of the gospel filled my mind and my heart. As we joined the Church, we felt part of a family. We felt warmth, trust, and love. We were only few, but we all tried to follow the Savior."

They supported each other, they did the best they could, and they knew the Church was true. It was not the organization that had attracted him, but the light of the gospel, and this light strengthened those good members.

### **Build the Church in your country**

In many countries the Church is still in its beginnings, and the organizational circumstances are sometimes far from perfect. However, the members may have a perfect testimony of the truth in their hearts. As the members will stay in their countries and build the Church, despite economic challenges and hardships, future generations will be grateful to those courageous modern-day pioneers. They abide by the loving invitation of the First Presidency given in 1999:

"In our day, the Lord has seen fit to provide the blessings of the gospel, including an increased number of temples, in many parts of the world. Therefore, we wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States. . . .

"As members throughout the world remain in their homelands, working to build the Church in their native countries, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church collectively" (First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1999).

May I add a word of caution to those of us who live in large wards and stakes. We have to be careful that the center of our testimony is not located in the social



dimension of the Church community or the wonderful activities, programs, and organizations of our wards and stakes. All of these things are important and valuable to have, but they are not enough. Even friendship is not enough.

We recognize that we are living in a time of turmoil, disaster, and war. We and many others feel strongly the great need for a “defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6). How do we find such a place of safety? The prophet of God, even President Hinckley, has taught: “Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 90).

### **Focus on following the Savior**

Recall with me how Jesus Christ instructed His Apostles, clearly and directly, at the beginning of His mortal ministry, “[Come,] follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). This was also the beginning of the ministry of the Twelve Apostles, and I suspect that they had a feeling of inadequacy, as I deeply have, being one who has also been called to this sacred work. May I suggest that the Savior Himself teaches us here a lesson about core doctrine and priorities in life. Individually, we need to first “follow Him,” and as we do this, the Savior will bless us beyond our own capacity to become what He wants us to be.

To follow Christ is to become more like Him. It is to learn from His character. As spirit children of our Heavenly Father, we do have the potential to incorporate Christlike attributes into our life and character. The Savior invites us to learn His gospel by living His teachings. To follow Him is to apply correct principles and then witness for ourselves the blessings that follow. This process is very complex and

very simple at the same time. Ancient and modern prophets described it with three words: “Keep the commandments”—nothing more, nothing less.

### **Develop Christlike attributes**

Developing Christlike attributes in our lives is not an easy task, especially when we move away from generalities and abstractions and begin to deal with real life. The test comes in practicing what we proclaim. The reality check comes when Christlike attributes need to become visible in our lives—as husband or wife, as father or mother, as son or daughter, in our friendships, in our employment, in our business, and in our recreation. We can recognize our growth, as can those around us, as we gradually increase our capacity to “act in all holiness before [Him]” (D&C 43:9).

The scriptures describe a number of Christlike attributes we need to develop during the course of our lives. They include knowledge and humility, charity and love, obedience and diligence, faith and hope. These personal character qualities stand independent of the organizational status of our Church unit, our economic circumstances, our family situation, culture, race, or language. Christlike attributes are gifts from God. They cannot be developed without His help. The one help we all need is given to us freely through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Having faith in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement means relying completely on Him—trusting in His infinite power, intelligence, and love. Christlike attributes come into our lives as we exercise our agency righteously. Faith in Jesus Christ leads to action. When we have faith in Christ, we trust the Lord enough to follow His commandments—even when we do not completely understand the reasons for them. In seeking to become more like the Savior, we need to reevaluate our lives regularly and rely, through the path of true

repentance, upon the merits of Jesus Christ and the blessings of His Atonement.

Developing Christlike attributes can be a painful process. We need to be ready to accept direction and correction from the Lord and His servants. This worldwide conference with its music and spoken word offers spiritual power, direction, and blessings “from on high” (D&C 43:16). It is a time when the voice of personal inspiration and revelation will bring peace to our souls and will teach us how to become more Christlike. This voice will be as sweet as the voice of a dear friend, and it will fill our souls when our hearts are sufficiently contrite.

By becoming more like the Savior, we will grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13). We will “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better” (D&C 25:10).

### **The wind beneath our wings**

This leads me back to my aerodynamic analogy from the beginning. I spoke of focusing on the basics. Christlike attributes are the basics. They are the fundamental principles that will create “the wind beneath our wings.” As we develop Christlike attributes in our own lives, step-by-step,

they will “bear [us] up as on eagles’ wings” (D&C 124:18). Our faith in Jesus Christ will provide power and a strong forward thrust; our unwavering and active hope will provide a powerful upward lift. Both faith and hope will carry us across oceans of temptations, over mountains of afflictions, and bring us safely back to our eternal home and destination.

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Young Women and Young Men choir, and the father-and-son priesthood choir. We likewise thank their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend gratitude to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Well, my brothers and sisters, we have had a remarkable conference. It has literally been an inspirational feast at the table of the Lord. The music, the prayers, the talks have been wonderful. We have been informed and uplifted; our faith has been strengthened.

### **Fulfillment of Joseph Smith’s prophecies**

The growth of the Church has been made evident by the fact that our words

have been translated into 80 languages and our message has been broadcast by satellite all across the world and heard by people in many, many lands. It is all the wonderful fruition of the words spoken by Moroni to the boy prophet on the night of September 21, 1823.

He was a young man, then a poor farm boy with very little education. He had nothing. His parents had nothing. He lived in a rural community, scarcely recognized outside its borders. And yet the angel said

to him that “he was a messenger sent from the presence of God . . . ; that God had a work for [Joseph] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

How could such a thing be? Joseph must have wondered. He must have been absolutely stunned.

And yet it has all come to pass. And far greater will yet come to pass.

### **Celebration of Joseph Smith’s birthday**

On December 23 of this year, 2005, we intend to honor his birthday with a great celebration in tribute to him.

I intend, if possible, to go to the place of his birth to repeat what Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, did on December 23, 1905, a century ago. On that occasion he dedicated the monument which marks the place of the Prophet’s birth and where a memorial cottage has also been built.

When I am in Vermont, Presidents Monson and Faust, with others of the General Authorities, will be here in the Conference Center. This great hall will be filled, and the program will be carried far and wide by satellite. There will be appropriate music and words of tribute spoken both in South Royalton and Salt Lake City to the great prophet of this dispensation.

What the choir sang so magnificently this morning in tribute to the Prophet will be but a dress rehearsal for the occasion in

December. We look forward to this and hope all of you will be with us at that time.

### **Testimony and benediction**

We leave with you our testimony of the divinity of this work. What a wonderful work it is. How empty our lives would be without it. God, our Eternal Father, lives. He loves us. He watches over us. Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. They have restored Their work in this last and final dispensation through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph. I so testify in all solemnity and leave my love and my blessing with you, my beloved brethren and sisters of this grateful Church. God bless you every one.

Now in closing, I wish to thank all of those who have done so very, very much to make of this a great conference, the many who work behind the scenes to make all of this possible. They work night and day to bring about this great result—the ushers, the technicians, the security force, the first-aid people, the traffic officers, the translators, the secretaries who labor over our talks and type them time after time.

God bless all of us, I humbly pray. May we strive to walk in righteousness before Him, I humbly ask, and leave my benediction with you in the sacred and holy name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A choir of young women and young men from stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a priesthood choir of fathers and sons from stakes in Orem, Utah. Donald Ripplinger directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-sixth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 1 and 2, 2006**



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# Report of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2006, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 2006. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koeliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Larry W. Gibbons, Ronald T. Halverson, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

We welcome you to the first general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and in the Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Dearest Children, God Is Near You." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Did You Think to Pray?" Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker, after which we shall be pleased to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Julie B. Beck, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency. The choir will then sing "For the Beauty of the Earth."

After the choir has sung, we will be pleased to hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by the choir singing "Consider the Lilies."

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The choir sang "Did You Think to Pray?"

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## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Lehi taught the principle of agency

I am grateful for the testimony of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. On behalf of all members throughout the world, I express gratitude that he chose to follow the inspiration of the Lord and asked us to read the Book of Mormon. We have been abundantly blessed by his inspired counsel.

Father Lehi, the first prophet recorded in the Book of Mormon, also chose to follow the Lord. He was instructed to “take his family and depart into the wilderness.”<sup>1</sup> Despite harsh traveling conditions and the murmuring of his sons Laman and Lemuel, Lehi led his family to a land of promise. But it was not a place of peace. As Laman and Lemuel used their agency to disobey the Lord, Lehi’s “heart [was] weighed down with sorrow [for them].”<sup>2</sup> Before his death, Lehi gathered his children around him, blessed them, and counseled them.<sup>3</sup> To his rebellious sons he urged repentance and faithfulness: “Awake, my sons. . . . Shake off the chains with which ye are bound.”<sup>4</sup> And to his righteous son Jacob he taught one final, very important lesson.

If we could leave one lesson of greatest importance for *our* children and grandchildren, what would it be? Of all the glorious principles of the gospel, Lehi chose to teach his son about the plan of salvation—and the gift of agency.

He taught that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”<sup>5</sup> This sacred instruction began in the heavens. There, in a Grand Council, our Heavenly Father would continue the gift of agency to prove us here in mortality, “to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command.”<sup>6</sup>

### Rebellion of Satan

But Satan opposed God and His plan, saying, “I will redeem all mankind . . . ;

wherefore give me thine honor.”<sup>7</sup> “Wherefore, because . . . Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, . . . I caused that he should be cast down.”<sup>8</sup> “And, at that day, many followed after him.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, “a third part of the hosts of heaven”<sup>10</sup> used their agency to reject God’s plan.

You and I were among those who used their agency to accept Heavenly Father’s plan to come to earth, to have a mortal life, to progress. “We shouted for joy . . . to have the opportunity of coming to the earth to receive bodies [for we knew] that we might become, through faithfulness, like unto our Father, God.”<sup>11</sup>

### Opposition a part of mortality

Now we are here on earth, where opportunities to use our agency abound, for here “there is an opposition in all things.”<sup>12</sup> This opposition is essential to the purpose of our lives. As Lehi explained: “To bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, . . . the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.”<sup>13</sup>

Adam and Eve were the first of God’s children to experience these enticements. Having sought the misery of all mankind, Satan, “the father of all lies,”<sup>14</sup> tempted Adam and Eve. Because they chose to partake of the “forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.”<sup>15</sup> Because of that choice, they also “brought forth children; . . . even the family of all the earth,”<sup>16</sup> and this earthly state “became a state of probation”<sup>17</sup> for them and for their posterity. For “behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things,” Lehi told Jacob. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes we forget that our Heavenly Father desires that each of us have this joy. Only by yielding to temptation and sin can we be kept from that joy. And yielding is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

I once had an opportunity to accompany President Spencer W. Kimball to a distant land. We were given a tour of the various sites in the area, including underground catacombs—burial grounds for people who had been persecuted by Christian zealots. As we came up the dark, narrow stairs of that place, President Kimball taught me an unforgettable lesson. He pulled my coat tail and said, “It has always troubled me what the adversary does using the name of our Savior.” He then said, “Robert, the adversary can never have joy unless you and I sin.”

As I contemplated this comment and studied the scriptures, I began to understand what President Kimball may have meant. I recalled the word of the Lord to all the inhabitants of the earth as recorded in the Book of Mormon: “Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people.”<sup>19</sup> It is our sins that make the devil laugh, our sorrow that brings him counterfeit joy.

### **Satan influences us only if we allow it**

Although the devil laughs, his power is limited. Some may remember the old adage: “The devil made me do it.” Today I want to convey, in absolutely certain terms, that the adversary cannot make us do anything. He does lie at our door, as the scriptures say, and he follows us each day.<sup>20</sup> Every time we go out, every decision we make, we are either choosing to move in his direction or in the direction of our Savior. But the adversary must depart if we tell him to depart. He cannot influence us unless we allow him to do so, and

he knows that! The only time he can affect our minds and bodies—our very spirits—is when we *allow* him to do so. In other words, we do not have to succumb to his enticements!

We have been given agency, we have been given the blessings of the priesthood, and we have been given the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost *for a reason*. That reason is our growth and happiness in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Today I ask, have we received that Spirit? Are we following on the strait and narrow path that leads to God and eternal life? Are we holding on to the iron rod, or are we going another way? I testify that how we choose to *feel* and *think* and *act* every day is the way we get on the path, and stay on it, until we reach our eternal destination.

### **Acting rather than being acted upon**

Now, none of us are on the narrow path *all* of the time. All of us make mistakes. That is why Lehi, who understood the Savior’s role in preserving and reclaiming our agency, taught Jacob—and us: “The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”<sup>21</sup> That is the key—“to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”

In these latter days, as in the times of old, we must avoid being acted upon by acting for ourselves to avoid evil. The Holy Ghost will prompt us. Joseph was told to flee from Potiphar’s wife. Abraham obeyed the commandment to flee out of the land of Ur. Lehi was instructed to flee Jerusalem before it was destroyed. And to protect the Savior’s life, Mary and Joseph were prompted to flee into Egypt.

The promptings that come to us to flee evil reflect our Heavenly Father’s understanding of our particular strengths

and weaknesses and His awareness of the unforeseen circumstances of our lives. When these promptings come, they will not generally stop us in our tracks, for the Spirit of God does not speak with a voice of thunder. The voice will be as soft as a whisper, coming as a thought to our minds or a feeling in our hearts. By heeding its gentle promptings, we will be protected from the destructive consequences of sin.

But if we ignore those promptings, the light of the Spirit will fade. Our agency will be limited or lost, and we will lose the confidence and ability to act. We will be “walking in [spiritual] darkness at noon-day.”<sup>22</sup> Then how easy it is to wander into strange paths and become lost! How quickly we are bound in the chains of sin spoken of by Lehi to his rebellious sons.<sup>23</sup> For example, if we make choices that put us deeply in debt, we will lose our agency to meet our wants and needs or to save for that inevitable rainy day. If we choose to break the law, we may be put in prison, where our agency is so limited that we cannot choose where we go, who we see, or what we do. Spirit prison is very much like that. Therefore, to retain our agency we must daily walk in the light of our Lord and Savior and follow the path of obedience. It is the only path that leads to our Father in Heaven.

### **Exercising agency to overcome sin**

If, through our unrighteous choices, we have lost our footing on that path, we must remember the agency we were given, agency we may choose to exercise again. I speak especially to those overcome by the thick darkness of addiction. If you have fallen into destructive, addictive behaviors, you may feel that you are spiritually in a black hole. As with the real black holes in space, it may seem all but impossible for light to penetrate to where you are. How do you escape? I testify the only way is through the very agency you exercised so valiantly in your premortal life, the agency

that the adversary cannot take away without your yielding it to him.

How do you reclaim that agency? How do you begin again to exercise it in the right way? You choose to act in faith and obedience. May I suggest a few basic choices that you can begin to make now—this very day.

*Choose* to accept—truly accept—that you are a child of God, that He loves you, and that He has the power to help you.

*Choose* to put everything—literally everything—on the altar before Him. Believing that you are His child, decide that your life belongs to Him and that you will use your agency to do His will. You may do this multiple times in your life, but never, never give up.

*Choose* to put yourself in a position to have experiences with the Spirit of God through prayer, in scripture study, at Church meetings, in your home, and through wholesome interactions with others. When you feel the influence of the Spirit, you are beginning to be cleansed and strengthened. The light is being turned on, and where that light shines, the darkness of evil cannot remain.

*Choose* to obey and keep your covenants, beginning with your baptismal covenant. Renew these covenants weekly by worthily partaking of the sacrament.

*Choose* to prepare to worthily attend the temple, make and renew sacred covenants, and receive all of the saving ordinances and blessings of the gospel.

Finally, and most importantly, *choose* to believe in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Accept the Savior’s forgiveness, and then forgive yourself. Because of His sacrifice for you, He has the power to “remember [your sins] no more.”<sup>24</sup> You must do likewise.

After you are on the path and are “free to choose” again, choose to reject feelings of shame for sins you have already repented of, refuse to be discouraged about the past, and rejoice in hope for the future. Remember, it is Satan who desires

that we be “miserable like unto himself.”<sup>25</sup> Let your desires be stronger than his. Be happy and confident about your life and about the opportunities and blessings that await you here and throughout eternity.

Finally, remember our agency is not only for us. We have the responsibility to use it in behalf of others, to lift and strengthen others in their trials and tribulations. Some of our brothers and sisters have lost the full use of their agency through unrighteous choices. Without exposing ourselves to temptation, we can and should invite others to receive the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through friendship and love, we may lead them along the path of obedience and encourage them to use their agency to make the right choices once again.

### Blessings of agency

As Father Lehi testified to his family of the blessings of agency, I also desire to testify to you, my beloved brothers and sisters throughout the world, and to my family. Agency was manifested in the Council in Heaven as we chose to follow our Heavenly Father’s plan and come to mortality for this probationary period. Agency allows us to be tested and tried to see whether or not we will endure to the end and return to our Heavenly Father with honor. Agency is the catalyst that leads us to express our inward spiritual desires in outward Christlike behavior. Agency permits us to make faithful, obedient choices that strengthen us so that we can lift and strengthen others. Agency used righteously allows light to dispel the darkness and enables us to live with joy and happiness in the present, look with faith to the future, even into the eternities, and not dwell on the things of the past. Our use of agency determines who we are and what we will be.

To all who desire to enjoy the supernal blessings of agency, I testify that agency is strengthened by our faith and obedience. Agency leads us to act: to seek that we may find, to ask that we may receive guidance from the Spirit, to knock on that door that leads to spiritual light and ultimately salvation. I bear special witness that our Savior Jesus Christ is the source of that light, even the Light and Life of the World. As we use our agency to follow Him, His light will grow within us brighter and brighter until that perfect day<sup>26</sup> when we are welcomed into the presence of our Father in Heaven for all eternity. That we will use our agency to that sacred and glorious end, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 2:2.
2. 2 Nephi 1:17.
3. See 2 Nephi 1:14.
4. 2 Nephi 1:23.
5. 2 Nephi 2:5.
6. See Abraham 3:24–25.
7. Moses 4:1.
8. Moses 4:3.
9. Abraham 3:28.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
11. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (1965), 277.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. 2 Nephi 2:15–16.
14. 2 Nephi 2:18.
15. 2 Nephi 2:19.
16. 2 Nephi 2:20.
17. 2 Nephi 2:21.
18. 2 Nephi 2:24–25.
19. 3 Nephi 9:2.
20. See Genesis 4:7; Moses 5:23.
21. 2 Nephi 2:26.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 95:6.
23. See 2 Nephi 1:13.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
25. 2 Nephi 2:27.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

## Bishop H. David Burton

Last evening Sister Burton and I were enjoying a little Chinese food. Embedded in my fortune cookie was the message, “The stress you are experiencing will soon be relieved.” True story.

### **Bearing one another’s burdens**

A group of men were talking with the Prophet Joseph Smith one day when news arrived that the house of a poor brother who lived some distance from town was burned down. Everyone expressed sorrow for what had happened. The Prophet listened for a moment, then “put his hand in his pocket, took out five dollars and said, ‘I feel sorry for this brother to the amount of five dollars; how much do you all feel sorry?’”<sup>1</sup> The immediacy of the Prophet’s response is significant. Last year millions of you responded to the sorrow of others with your means, tender hearts, and helping hands. Thank you for your wonderful measure of generosity.

Compassion for others has always been a fundamental characteristic of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The prophet Alma said:

“Ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>2</sup>

The Savior asks us to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>3</sup>

I have witnessed firsthand the commitment of Latter-day Saints and others not of our faith who have tender hearts and helping hands, who “bear . . . one another’s burdens.”<sup>4</sup> I have been deeply sor-

rowed as I have seen massive devastation and visited victims who are without hope.

### **Relief for tsunami victims**

In recent years, Mother Nature has displayed her vengeance and supremacy in unusual and powerful ways. Late December 2004 brought a terrible earthquake off the coast of Indonesia creating a deadly tsunami that killed thousands and shattered the lives of those who remained behind. Under the direction of local priesthood leaders and adult missionary couples, help was mobilized immediately, providing urgent assistance to hospitals, first responders, and communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand.

Within a short time, several Church members traveled to one of the hardest-hit areas—Aceh region in northern Sumatra. Sister Bertha Suranto, a district Young Women president from Jakarta, Indonesia, and her associates drove trucks filled with needed items that would save lives and provide comfort to those who had lost so much.

“Every time we came into a village,” Bertha said, “the people surrounded us and offered food to distribute—even when they only had a little rice and some fish they had caught in the ocean. From the mosques, community leaders announced that another donation from the Jesus church had arrived.”

As immediate needs were met, longer-term projects were undertaken. Plans to assist in building well over a thousand permanent houses and restoring hospitals and schools are being implemented. Villagers were assisted in replacing fishing boats and nets. Looms and sewing machines were

distributed to help families return to self-reliance.

### **Help for earthquake and flood victims**

Northern Pakistan and India experienced the strongest earthquake in the region in a hundred years, with thousands of lives lost and many left without homes. Because of the extreme winters in the area, concern was extended not only for the injured but also for those left without shelter.

Four days after the earthquake, the Islamic Relief Agency provided a Boeing 747 cargo plane, which was quickly filled to capacity with blankets, tents, hygiene kits, medical supplies, sleeping bags, coats, and tarps from the bishops' storehouse. Large containers with more supplies and winter tents for over 75,000 people were shipped by air, land, and sea.

When floods hit Central America, meetinghouses were opened to provide temporary shelter for evacuees. In areas where vehicles couldn't go, Church members strapped supplies upon their backs and walked over flooded streams and treacherous terrain to bring relief to those in distress.

### **Refugee aid and measles vaccinations**

Following a period of civil unrest in the Sudan, more than a million people have fled their homes and villages, seeking safety. Many refugees walked hundreds of miles through unfriendly terrain to arrive at refugee camps, seeking to reconnect with their families and regain their health.

Atmit, a vitamin-fortified porridge that has proven effective in saving the lives of starving children and the elderly, was provided. Medical supplies and thousands of hygiene and newborn kits were also supplied.

The Church has joined with other prominent charitable organizations to

help vaccinate millions of African children in a campaign to eradicate measles. Two thousand faithful African Church members volunteered many hours in advertising, gathering children, and providing help as the shots were given.

### **Relief for areas hit by hurricanes**

The 2005 hurricane season in the southern United States and the western Caribbean was the costliest and most devastating on record. Storm after storm lashed at homes and businesses from Honduras to Florida. Thousands of priesthood-directed volunteers were there each time a hurricane struck, providing the necessities to sustain life. Hygiene and cleaning kits, food, water, kitchen sets, bed linen, and other commodities helped clean homes and establish temporary housing.

Brother Michael Kagle took a convoy of trucks loaded with equipment from his own company to Mississippi. Many employees, who are not of our faith, volunteered to go with him every weekend to give assistance in the storm-stricken areas. Walkie-talkies were used for communication along the way. Mike's high priests group leader, while driving along with them in his pickup truck, said he had white knuckles from driving so fast. Trying to slow the convoy down, he got on the walkie-talkie and said, "Gentlemen, do you realize we are going 80 miles per hour?" One of the truck drivers came on and said, "Well, you have to understand that's all these big trucks will do. We can't go any faster."

### **Gratitude for members' efforts**

Hundreds of letters of gratitude have been received. One woman, a nurse from Mississippi, wrote: "I was speechless. Had God answered my prayers so quickly? Tears immediately began to roll down my cheeks as men in hard hats and boots, with chain saws of all shapes and sizes, ap-

peared out of the debris. It was absolutely, unequivocally, one of the most supreme sacrifices that has ever happened to me personally.”

May I express thanks to the nimble fingers that have produced thousands of beautiful blankets and a special thanks to the not-so-nimble fingers of our more senior sisters who have also crafted the much-needed quilts. One 92-year-old great-grandmother has produced several hundred blankets. In her case, both the creator and receiver have been blessed. As her son admired her handiwork, she asked, “Do you think anyone will ever use one of my blankets?” A letter from a young mother in Louisiana answers that question:

“I live in Louisiana, and I go to a local health unit for my children. While I was there, they gave me some outfits, diapers, wipes, and two beautiful baby blankets. One blanket has a yellow backing with footprints and handprints on the front, and the other blanket is tan with zebras. They are beautiful. My four-year-old loves the zebra one, and of course my seven-month-old can’t say much. I just wanted to say thank you to you and your Church members for your generosity. God bless you and your family.”

In response to the recent mud slides in the Philippines, the Saints in the area assembled hygiene kits and food boxes and distributed these with blankets to those in need.

### **Work and self-reliance taught**

Welfare principles of work and self-reliance are maintained and taught as relief is given throughout the world. During 2005 many villages received clean water through new wells. Villagers were taught how to dig wells, install pumps, and make repairs when needed.

Training and equipment provided by local volunteers and ever-so-devoted missionary couples allow families to sup-

plement their diets with homegrown, nutritious food.

Many wheelchairs have been supplied that allow the disabled to become self-reliant. Thousands of medical personnel have been trained to save the lives of newborns. Medical professionals have performed cataract surgery, restoring the vision of many. Tender counseling has been provided worldwide by LDS Family Services.

### **Church reaches out to all people**

Bridges of understanding and respect have been built in many nations as we collaborate with other established and trusted agencies.

Dr. Simbi Mubako, former African ambassador to the United States, has said, “The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is all the more impressive because it is not limited to just the members of the Church, but it spreads to all human beings of different cultures and different religions because [they] see in every person the image of Jesus Christ.”

Our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley has been instrumental in the development of this great humanitarian work. “We must reach out to all mankind,” he has said. “They are all sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father, and He will hold us accountable for what we do concerning them. . . . May we bless humanity with an outreach to all, lifting those who are downtrodden and oppressed, feeding and clothing the hungry and the needy, extending love and neighborliness to those about us who may not be part of this Church.”<sup>5</sup>

This modern-day humanitarian effort is a wonderful manifestation of the charity that burns within the souls of those whose hearts are tender and whose hands are ready to help. This selfless service truly demonstrates the pure love of Christ.

The Savior promises great blessings to those who give of themselves: “Give,

and it shall be given unto you. . . . For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>6</sup>

### Church leaders express appreciation

The things I have spoken of today are not even a hundredth part of what is happening in villages and nations throughout the world. Everywhere I travel, expressions of profound gratitude are received. On behalf of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Church Welfare Executive Committee, whose assignment it is to guide this work, may I express our deepest appreciation and admiration.

It is impossible for me to find the words to adequately express the sacred feelings burning within my soul. The simple word *thanks* seems almost trite. To each of you whose tender hearts and help-

ing hands have eased the burdens of so many, please accept my heartfelt gratitude. I invoke the Lord’s choicest blessings to be with you and your families as you continue to remember those with heavy hearts and hands that hang down, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Andrew Workman, in “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, Oct. 15, 1892, 641.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. Galatians 6:2.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 4–5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 6.
6. Luke 6:38.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Sister Julie B. Beck

### The priesthood is woven into our lives

In Kirtland, when the remaining priesthood keys were restored, the Lord said, “This is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people.”<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for the outpouring of blessings that has come to each of us through the priesthood of God. By the power of the priesthood, this world and everything in it, including each of us, were created. The priesthood is intricately woven into who we are and have ever been.<sup>2</sup> As sons and daughters of God, we each have unique responsibilities and roles, and through the blessings of the priesthood, we are all given equal partnership, gifts, and blessings.

Last fall our oldest granddaughter was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. After she received the Holy Ghost, her newest sister was blessed and given a name. The following month, an-

other new granddaughter was named and blessed. Since then I have reflected often on the privileges those little girls enjoy because the priesthood of God has been restored.

I hope our granddaughters and grandsons grow up knowing that they are not and have never been third-party observers of the priesthood. The blessings of the priesthood, which “are available to men and women alike,”<sup>3</sup> are woven in and through and around their lives. Each of them is blessed by sacred ordinances, and each of them can enjoy the blessings of spiritual gifts by virtue of the priesthood.

### Priesthood ordinances bless members

All faithful members of the Lord’s Church are equally blessed by priesthood ordinances. The first ordinance<sup>4</sup> in a child’s life usually takes place when he or she is a baby and is given a name and a blessing.



When children reach the age of accountability, they are baptized. There is not a separate baptism for boys and girls. The same baptismal ordinance is performed for a young girl and a young boy, who are baptized in the same font. When those children are confirmed and receive the Holy Ghost, the same power is given to each of them. They qualify for the help of that holy power through their faithfulness and not in any other way.

As members of the Church, we are equal before the Lord as we partake of the sacrament. Through our faith in Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement made possible because of that ordinance, we can all repent and become better.

Each of us is equally entitled to a priesthood blessing when we are sick or need added support from the Lord in our lives. A young woman who desires a patriarchal blessing is equally entitled to know her lineage and potential as a young man her same age. The blessings that come to each of them through Abraham are powerful and important.

We teach all young men and young women to prepare to go to the temple so they can “receive the blessings of [the] fathers that [they] may be entitled to the highest blessings of the priesthood.”<sup>5</sup> When one of my nieces received her temple endowment a few months ago, she exclaimed with joy: “I made it! All of my life I have been taught about preparing for the temple, and I made it!”

Every man and woman who is willing to serve the Lord and can qualify for a temple recommend makes covenants of obedience and sacrifice. Each is endowed “with power from on high.”<sup>6</sup>

Every elder and sister who receives a mission call is set apart to do the Lord’s work, and each is given authority to preach the gospel of Christ.

A man and a woman who enter into the full partnership of a covenant temple marriage share equally in the blessings of that covenant if they are faithful.<sup>7</sup> The

Lord has said that their covenant will be in force after this life, and together they are promised power and exaltation.<sup>8</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “When our children obey the Lord and go to the temple to receive their blessings and enter into the marriage covenant, they enter into the same *order of the priesthood* that God instituted in the very beginning with father Adam.”<sup>9</sup>

I saw the power of priesthood blessings when I visited a family where the young father lay dying. Surrounding him were his wife and beautiful daughters. On each wall of that room was at least one picture of the family or the temple. The mother testified of their blessings when she said: “We are empowered and protected by our covenants. Our family will endure forever. The Lord is watching over us, and we are not alone.” All faithful members are equally blessed by the outpouring of blessings they receive through priesthood ordinances.

### **The blessings of spiritual gifts**

Because the priesthood has been restored, we also share equally in the blessings of spiritual gifts. The Lord gives us these gifts for our own benefit<sup>10</sup> and to help each other.<sup>11</sup>

Moroni said that “there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

“For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

“And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

“And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.”<sup>12</sup>

As I have tried to learn Spanish and remember Portuguese (which I knew as a child), I have prayed for and felt the help

of the Lord as I communicate in those tongues. I have heard other Church leaders and missionaries bear powerful testimonies in languages they have barely studied. I know people who are given the spiritual gift of a believing spirit. When they hear the gospel, it rings true in their hearts. I know others who are given the gift of wisdom or the ability to use knowledge in righteous ways. Some have the ability to work miracles, some are gifted healers, and others have great discernment.<sup>13</sup>

When I was a little girl, I often experienced serious illness. My father was always willing and worthy to use the priesthood power he held to bless me. But I have also felt that my mother's special gifts contributed to my healing. She was truly gifted in her ability to minister to my needs and help me get well. Her great faith that the Lord would lead her to answers about medical treatment was a comfort to me. How blessed I was to have two parents who lovingly used their spiritual gifts.

President Wilford Woodruff said that "it is the privilege of every man and woman in this kingdom to enjoy the spirit of prophecy, which is the Spirit of God; and to the faithful it reveals such things as are necessary for their comfort and consolation, and to guide them in their daily duties."<sup>14</sup>

The blessings of the priesthood make it possible for every person who is set apart to serve in any office in the Lord's Church to receive "authority, responsibility, and blessings connected with the office."<sup>15</sup>

Spiritual gifts are numerous and varied and come to us as we seek them and use them appropriately. We enjoy them because of the power of the Holy Ghost, which is in and around and woven through our lives.<sup>16</sup>

### **Priesthood blessings serve as equalizer**

Through the blessings of the priesthood, the Lord shows us that He is "no

respector of persons."<sup>17</sup> In my travels, I usually have the chance to visit members in their homes. Some of those homes are very basic dwellings. At first I would say to myself: "Why am I blessed with a house that has electricity and plumbing when this family does not even have water near their home? Does the Lord love them less than He loves me?"

Then one day I sat in a temple next to a sister who lives in a humble house. I spent two hours at her side. I looked often into her beautiful eyes and saw the love of the Lord in them. As we finished our work in the temple, I had a powerful realization. In all of the eternal blessings, in all of our most important privileges and opportunities, we were equals. I had been "baptized unto repentance,"<sup>18</sup> and so had she. I had spiritual gifts, and so did she. I had the opportunity to repent, and so did she. I had received the Holy Ghost, and so had she. I had received temple ordinances, and so had she. If both of us had left this world together at that moment, we would have arrived equal before the Lord in our blessings and potential.

Priesthood blessings are the great equalizer. Those blessings are the same for men and women, for boys and girls; they are the same for married and single, rich and poor, for the intellectual and the illiterate, for the well-known and the obscure.

I am grateful that through the infinite fairness and love of God, all men and women were given equal partnership, gifts, blessings, and potential through priesthood ordinances and spiritual gifts. Because of the priesthood, which is woven in and around and through our lives, every power, every covenant we need to do our life's work and walk back to our heavenly home has been poured out upon our heads. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 110:10.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–45; Abraham 3.

3. Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 26.
4. See *Family Guidebook* (2001), 19.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 10.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 95:8.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–2.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
9. *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 10.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:26.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:12.
12. Moroni 10:8–11.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:10–26.
14. *Deseret News*, July 30, 1862, 33.
15. Boyd K. Packer, "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government," *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 10.
16. See Moroni 10:7–17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 38:16.
18. Alma 9:27.

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The choir sang "For the Beauty of the Earth."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A rock of safety in perilous times

The prophets of God have foreseen the times in which we live. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."<sup>1</sup> Anyone with eyes to see the signs of the times and ears to hear the words of prophets knows that the peril is great. The peril comes from the forces of wickedness. Those forces are increasing. And so it will become harder, not easier, to keep the covenants we must make to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For those of us who are concerned about such a future for ourselves and for those we love—in our families, in our quorums, and in our classes—there is hope in the promise the Lord has given us of a place of safety in the storms ahead. Here is a word picture of that place. You have read about it in scripture. It has been repeatedly described by living prophets. A loving father told his sons of it this way as he tried to strengthen them against the storms of temptation:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty

winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall."<sup>2</sup>

### King Benjamin's last sermon

It has never been more important than it is now to understand how to build on that sure foundation. For me, there is no better place to look than in the last sermon of King Benjamin recorded in the Book of Mormon. Most of us have read it again recently and have pondered it more than once. King Benjamin could see us and our descendants. He knew by prophetic power what we face. He knew from his own experience the terrors of war. He had defended his people in combat, relying on the power of God. He saw clearly the terrible powers of Lucifer to tempt and to overcome us.

He was a great and a holy man. And he knew how to invite people to build on that rock of safety as well as any of the Lord's prophets.

### **A warning against ignoring peril**

He started in his discourse where we must all begin to help people escape spiritual disaster. People have to believe that the danger is real to want to find safety. They have to fear the consequence of ignoring the peril. He made clear the hazards we face because we are free to choose between right and wrong and because we cannot avoid the consequence of those choices. He spoke directly and sharply because he knew what sorrow would come to those who might not hear and heed his warnings.

Here is how he described the consequences which follow our choice either to follow the prompting of the Spirit of Christ or to follow the evil messages which come from Satan, whose purpose is to tempt us and trap us into sin:

“For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that [evil] spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge. . . .

“Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.”

King Benjamin went on: “O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression.”<sup>3</sup>

For me, the power of that warning is the picture it forms in my mind of that

time when we will each stand before the Savior after this life to be judged. When King Benjamin speaks to me of shrinking from the presence of the Lord, it puts fear into my heart. I can see myself standing in that day of judgment before the glorified and resurrected Savior. I want with all my heart not to shrink, but rather to look up at Him and see Him smile and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter in.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Becoming as a child**

King Benjamin makes it clear how we can earn the hope to hear those words if we find the way in this life to have our natures changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is the only way we can build on the sure foundation and so stand firm in righteousness during the storms of temptation.

King Benjamin describes that change with a beautiful comparison, used by prophets for millennia and by the Lord Himself. It is this: that we can, and we must, become as a child—a little child.

For some that will not be easy to understand or to accept. Most of us want to be strong. We may well see being like a child as being weak. Most parents have wanted their children at times to be less childish. Even the Apostle Paul used these words as he was about to urge us to incorporate charity, the pure love of Christ, into our lives: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”<sup>5</sup>

But King Benjamin, who understood as well as any mortal what it meant to be a man of strength and courage, makes it clear that to be like a child is not to be childish. It is to be like the Savior, who prayed to His Father for strength to be able to do His will and then did it. Our natures must be changed to become as a child to gain the strength we must have to be safe in the times of moral peril.

Here is King Benjamin's stirring description of what that change to become like a child is and how it comes to us:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."<sup>6</sup>

We are safe on the rock which is the Savior when we have yielded in faith in Him, have responded to the Holy Spirit's direction to keep the commandments long enough and faithfully enough that the power of the Atonement has changed our hearts. When we have, by that experience, become as a child in our capacity to love and obey, we are on the sure foundation.

From King Benjamin we learn what we can do to take us to that safe place. But remember: the things we do are the means, not the end we seek. What we do allows the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change us into what we must be. Our faith in Jesus Christ brings us to repentance and to keeping His commandments. We obey and we resist temptation by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. In time our natures will change. We will become as a little child, obedient to God and more loving. That change, if we do all we must to keep it, will qualify us to enjoy the gifts which come through the Holy Ghost. Then we will be safe on the only sure rock.

### **Answers to humble, childlike prayers**

Like you, I have felt what King Benjamin meant when he said that we could become like a little child before God. I have prayed, as you have, to know what to do when choices that I faced would have eternal consequences. Over many years I

have seen a recurring pattern in the times when the answers to such a prayer have come most clearly.

Once, for instance, I prayed through the night to know what I was to choose to do in the morning. I knew that no other choice could have had a greater effect on the lives of others and on my own. I knew what choice looked most comfortable to me. I knew what outcome I wanted. But I could not see the future. I could not see which choice would lead to which outcome. So the risk of being wrong seemed too great to me.

I prayed, but for hours there seemed to be no answer. Just before dawn, a feeling came over me. More than at any time since I had been a child, I felt like one. My heart and my mind seemed to grow very quiet. There was a peace in that inner stillness.

Somewhat to my surprise, I found myself praying, "Heavenly Father, it doesn't matter what I want. I don't care anymore what I want. I only want that Thy will be done. That is all that I want. Please tell me what to do."

In that moment I felt as quiet inside as I had ever felt. And the message came, and I was sure who it was from. It was clear what I was to do. I received no promise of the outcome. There was only the assurance that I was a child who had been told what path led to whatever He wanted for me.

I learned from that experience and countless repetitions that the description of the Holy Ghost as a still, small voice is real. It is poetic, but it is not poetry. Only when my heart has been still and quiet, in submission like a little child, has the Spirit been clearly audible to my heart and mind.

### **Knowing and loving the Lord**

King Benjamin taught us how those moments may come more often, which they must in the perils we face. He told us

that there are things we can and must do to invite the blessing of that change to a childlike heart.

All of them have to do with doing what it takes to build greater faith in Jesus Christ and so qualify for the help of the Holy Ghost. King Benjamin gave the reason for that:

“And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>7</sup>

What we need is faith in Him and to love Him. We must know that He lives and who He is. When we do, we will love Him. King Benjamin suggested how to know Him in these words, which you have heard often:

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”<sup>8</sup>

We come to love those we serve. If we choose to begin to serve the Master out of even a glimmer of faith, we will begin to know Him. We will come to know His purposes for the people we serve for Him. Even when they do not accept our offer to serve them, we will feel His appreciation if we persist.

As we persist, we will feel the need for the influence of the Holy Ghost because our task will seem beyond us. Our humble prayer to our Heavenly Father will be answered. The Holy Ghost has as a major purpose witnessing that Jesus is the Christ. As we plead for help in His service, the Holy Ghost will come and confirm our faith in Him. Our faith in the Savior will increase. And, as we continue to serve Him, we will come to love Him. To be called to serve is a call to come to love the Master we serve. It is a call to have our natures changed.

## The need to guard against sin

To keep the blessing of that change in our hearts will require determination, effort, and faith. King Benjamin taught at least some of what that will require. He said that to retain a remission of our sins from day to day we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and help people spiritually and temporally.<sup>9</sup> He warned that we must guard against even the feelings of contention entering into our hearts.<sup>10</sup> He made it clear that the mighty change which comes through the Atonement working in us can diminish if we are not on guard against sin. The Lord said in warning, “Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation; yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.”<sup>11</sup>

Through sin the gift can be lost. King Benjamin taught that we are responsible for the determined effort necessary to resist temptation. He warned his people about specific temptations. But after giving those warnings, he put the obligation on them. As often as we pray not to be overcome by temptation and to be delivered from evil, we are responsible for ourselves. Here are the words he spoke, which are not his, but from God:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”<sup>12</sup>

With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can watch over ourselves. We can pray to

recognize and reject the first thoughts of sin. We can pray to recognize a warning not to speak words which would hurt or tempt someone else. And we can, when we must, pray for the humility and the faith to repent.

### **The Savior helps us overcome weaknesses**

There will surely be some who hear my voice who will have this thought come into their minds: “But the temptations are too great for me. I have resisted as long as I can. For me, the commandments are too hard. The standard is too high.”

That is not so. The Savior is our Advocate with the Father. He knows our weaknesses. He knows how to succor those who are tempted.<sup>13</sup>

I bear you my witness that the Savior lives and that He is the sure foundation. I know that by acting on our faith in Him we can be cleansed and changed to become pure and strong, as a little child. I bear you my testimony that the Holy Ghost can lead us to truth and away from sin.

Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. The Book of Mormon is the word of God and a witness of Jesus Christ as our Savior. This is the true Church. I know that we can choose the promised joy of eternal life, however perilous the times.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Helaman 5:12.
3. Mosiah 2:33, 38, 40.
4. See Matthew 25:21.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Mosiah 3:17.
8. Mosiah 5:13.
9. See Mosiah 4:26.
10. See Mosiah 2:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 20:33–34.
12. Mosiah 4:29–30.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 62:1.

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The choir sang “Consider the Lilies.”

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### **President Faust**

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session of the conference.

Following President Monson’s remarks, the choir will sing “High on the Mountain Top.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

### **Object lesson of the *maka-feke***

Many years ago, on an assignment to the beautiful islands of Tonga, I was privileged to visit our Church school, the Liahona High School, where our youth are taught by teachers with a common bond of faith—providing training for the mind and preparation for life. On that occasion,

entering one classroom, I noticed the rapt attention the children gave their native instructor. His textbook and theirs lay closed upon the desks. In his hand he held a strange-appearing fishing lure fashioned from a round stone and large seashells. This, I learned, was a *maka-feke*, an octopus lure. In Tonga, octopus meat is a delicacy.

The teacher explained that Tongan fishermen glide over a reef, paddling their outrigger canoes with one hand and dangling the maka-feke over the side with the other. An octopus dashes out from its rocky lair and seizes the lure, mistaking it for a much-desired meal. So tenacious is the grasp of the octopus and so firm is its instinct not to relinquish the precious prize, that fishermen can flip it right into the canoe.

It was an easy transition for the teacher to point out to the eager and wide-eyed youth that the evil one—even Satan—has fashioned so-called maka-fekes with which to ensnare unsuspecting persons and take possession of their destinies.

### **Maka-fekes of the evil one**

Today we are surrounded by the maka-fekes which the evil one dangles before us and with which he attempts to entice us and then to ensnare us. Once grasped, such maka-fekes are ever so difficult—and sometimes nearly impossible—to relinquish. To be safe, we must recognize them for what they are and then be unwavering in our determination to avoid them.

### *Immorality*

Constantly before us is the maka-feke of immorality. Almost everywhere we turn, there are those who would have us believe that what was once considered immoral is now acceptable. I think of the scripture, “Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”<sup>1</sup> Such is the maka-feke of immorality. We are reminded in the Book of Mormon that chastity and virtue are precious above all things.

When temptation comes, remember the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who declared, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:

but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Pornography*

Next, the evil one also dangles before us the maka-feke of pornography. He would have us believe that the viewing of pornography really hurts no one. How applicable is Alexander Pope’s classic *An Essay on Man*:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.<sup>3</sup>

Some publishers and printers prostitute their presses by printing millions of pieces of pornography each day. No expense is spared to produce a product certain to be viewed, then viewed again. One of the most accessible sources of pornography today is the Internet, where one can turn on a computer and instantly have at his fingertips countless sites featuring pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said:

“I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit forming. It will take [you] down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished.”<sup>4</sup>

Tainted as well is the movie producer, the television programmer, or the entertainer who promotes pornography. Long gone are the restraints of yesteryear. So-called realism is the quest, with the result that today we are surrounded by this filth.

Avoid any semblance of pornography. It will desensitize the spirit and erode the conscience. We are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, “That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.”<sup>5</sup> Such is pornography.



### *Drugs*

I mention next the maka-feke of drugs, including alcohol. Once grasped, this maka-feke is particularly difficult to abandon. Drugs and alcohol cloud thinking, remove inhibitions, fracture families, shatter dreams, and shorten life. They are everywhere to be found and are placed purposely in the pathway of vulnerable youth.

Each one of us has a body that has been entrusted to us by a loving Heavenly Father. We have been commanded to care for it. Can we deliberately abuse or injure our bodies without being held accountable? We cannot! The Apostle Paul declared: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”<sup>6</sup> May we keep our bodies—our temples—fit and clean, free from harmful substances which destroy our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

### *Excessive debt*

The final maka-feke I wish to mention today is one which can crush our self-esteem, ruin relationships, and leave us in desperate circumstances. It is the maka-feke of excessive debt. It is a human tendency to want the things which will give us prominence and prestige. We live in a time when borrowing is easy. We can purchase almost anything we could ever want just by using a credit card or obtaining a loan. Extremely popular are home equity loans, where one can borrow an amount of money equal to the equity he has in his home. What we may not realize is that a home equity loan is equivalent to a second mortgage. The day of reckoning *will* come if we have continually lived beyond our means.

My brothers and sisters, avoid the philosophy that yesterday’s luxuries have become today’s necessities. They aren’t

necessities unless we make them so. Many enter into long-term debt, only to find that changes occur: people become ill or incapacitated, companies fail or downsize, jobs are lost, natural disasters befall us. For many reasons, payments on large amounts of debt can no longer be made. Our debt becomes as a Damocles sword hanging over our heads and threatening to destroy us.

I urge you to live within your means. One cannot spend more than one earns and remain solvent. I promise you that you will then be happier than you would be if you were constantly worrying about how to make the next payment on non-essential debt. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read: “Pay the debt thou hast contracted. . . . Release thyself from bondage.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Beware the pitfalls**

There are, of course, countless other maka-fekes which the evil one dangles before us to lead us from the path of righteousness. However, our Heavenly Father has given us life and with it the capacity to think, to reason, and to love. We have the power to resist any temptation and the ability to determine the path we will take, the direction we will travel. Our goal is the celestial kingdom of God. Our purpose is to steer an undeviating course in that direction.

To all who walk the pathway of life, our Heavenly Father cautions: beware the detours, the pitfalls, the traps. Cunningly positioned are those cleverly disguised maka-fekes beckoning us to grasp them and to lose that which we most desire. Do not be deceived. Pause to pray. Listen to that still, small voice which speaks to the depths of our souls the Master’s gentle invitation, “Come, follow me.”<sup>8</sup> By doing so, we turn from destruction, from death, and find happiness and life everlasting.

## The fall of Cardinal Wolsey

Yet there are those who do not hear, who will not obey, who listen to the enticings of the evil one, who grasp those makafekes until they cannot let go, until all is lost. I think of that person of power, that cardinal of the cloth, even Cardinal Wolsey. The prolific pen of William Shakespeare described the majestic heights, the pinnacle of power to which Cardinal Wolsey ascended. That same pen told how principle was eroded by vain ambition, by expediency, by a clamor for prominence and prestige. Then came the tragic descent, the painful lament of one who had gained everything, then lost it all.

To Cromwell, his faithful servant, Cardinal Wolsey speaks:

O Cromwell, Cromwell!  
Had I but served my God with half the  
zeal  
I served my king, He would not in mine  
age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.<sup>9</sup>

That inspired mandate which would have led Cardinal Wolsey to safety was ruined by the pursuit of power and prominence, the quest for wealth and position. Like others before him and many more yet to follow, Cardinal Wolsey fell.

## The faithfulness of Daniel

In an earlier time and by a wicked king, a servant of God was tested. Aided by the inspiration of heaven, Daniel interpreted to King Belshazzar the writing on the wall. Concerning the proffered rewards—even a royal robe and a necklace of gold—Daniel said, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another.”<sup>10</sup>

Darius, a later king, also honored Daniel, elevating him to the highest position of prominence. There followed the

envy of the crowd, the jealousy of princes, and the scheming of ambitious men.

Through trickery and flattery, King Darius signed a proclamation providing that anyone who made a request of any god or man, except the king, should be thrown into the lions’ den. Prayer was forbidden. In such matters, Daniel took direction not from an earthly king but from the King of heaven and earth, his God. Overtaken in his daily prayers, Daniel was brought before the king. Reluctantly, the penalty was pronounced. Daniel was to be thrown into the lions’ den.

I love the biblical account which follows:

“The king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

“And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice . . . , O Daniel, . . . is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

“Then said Daniel unto the king, . . .

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me. . . .

“Then was the king exceeding glad. . . . Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.”<sup>11</sup>

In a time of critical need, Daniel’s determination to remain true and faithful provided divine protection and a sanctuary of safety.

The clock of history, like the sands of the hourglass, marks the passage of time. A new cast occupies the stage of life. The problems of our day loom ominously before us. Surrounded by the challenges of modern living, we look heavenward for that unfailing sense of direction, that we might chart and follow a wise and proper course. Our Heavenly Father will not deny our petition.

## Gustav and Margarete Wacker

When I think of righteous individuals, the names of Gustav and Margarete Wacker come readily to mind. Let me describe them. I first met the Wackers when I was called to preside over the Canadian Mission in 1959. They had immigrated to Kingston, Ontario, Canada, from their native Germany.

Brother Wacker earned his living as a barber. His means were limited, but he and Sister Wacker always paid more than a tenth as tithing. As branch president, Brother Wacker started a missionary fund, and for months at a time he was the only contributor. When there were missionaries in the city, the Wackers fed and cared for them, and the missionaries never left the Wacker home without some tangible donation to their work and welfare.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker's home was a heaven. They were not blessed with children, but they mothered and fathered their many Church visitors. Men and women of learning and sophistication sought out these humble, unlettered servants of God and counted themselves fortunate if they could spend an hour in their presence. The Wackers' appearance was ordinary, their English halting and somewhat difficult to understand, their home unpretentious. They didn't own a car or a television, nor did they do any of the things to which the world usually pays attention. Yet the faithful beat a path to their door in order to partake of the spirit that was there.

In March of 1982, Brother and Sister Wacker were called to serve as full-time ordinance workers in the Washington D.C. Temple. On June 29, 1983, while Brother and Sister Wacker were still serving in this temple assignment, Brother Wacker, with his beloved wife at his side, peacefully passed from mortality to his eternal reward. Fitting are the words, "Who honors God, God honors."<sup>12</sup>

## Follow straight path to Heavenly Father

My brothers and sisters, let us resolve here and now to follow that straight path which leads home to the Father of us all so that the gift of eternal life—life in the presence of our Heavenly Father—may be ours. Should there be those things which need to be changed or corrected in order to do so, I encourage you to take care of them now.

In the words of a familiar hymn, may we ever be

True to the faith that our parents  
have cherished,  
True to the truth for which martyrs  
have perished,  
To God's command,  
Soul, heart, and hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.<sup>13</sup>

That each of us may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 15:20; see also Isaiah 5:20.
2. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 409.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:23.
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 19:35.
8. Luke 18:22.
9. *King Henry the Eighth*, act 3, scene 2, lines 455–58.
10. Daniel 5:17.
11. Daniel 6:19–23.
12. See 1 Samuel 2:30.
13. "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254.

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The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing "Have I Done Any Good?"

Following the singing, the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church will be presented for sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2005.

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The choir sang "Have I Done Any Good?"

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the

First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. Those opposed may so manifest it, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum:

Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2006:

Salvador Aguirre, Jose C. Aleson, Daniel P. Alvarez, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Yatyr M. Cesar, Robert M. Cowan, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Franz R. Gaag, Daniel L. Johnson, Joel H. McKinnon, Marcus B. Nash, Armando A. Sierra, Jeffrey C. Swinton, Remus G. Villarete. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Elders Keith K. Hilbig, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Daniel L. Johnson, Marcus B. Nash, and Anthony

D. Perkins, and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Elders Craig A. Cardon, Don R. Clarke, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, and Larry W. Gibbons. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Jose L. Alonso, Vladimiro J. Campero, Juan A. Etchegaray, Hernan I. Herrera, David J. Hoare, César H. Hooker, Javier Ibañez, Daniel M. Jones, Stephen C. Kerr, Joni L. Koch, Daniel A. Moreno, Kent H. Murdock, J. Michel Paya, Stephen D. Posey, Carlos F. Rivas, Juan M. Rodriguez, Carlos Villanova. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called General Authorities to take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2005

### Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and

operations. After receiving the council's authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff

consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the

year 2005 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2005

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2005:

#### Number of Church units

Stakes . . . . .	2,701
Missions . . . . .	341
Districts . . . . .	643
Wards and branches . . . . .	27,087

#### Church membership

Total membership . . . . .	12,560,869
Increase in children of record during 2005 . . . . .	93,150
Converts baptized during 2005 . .	243,108

#### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries . . . . .	52,060
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#### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2005 . . . . .	3
(San Antonio Texas, Aba Nigeria, Newport Beach California)	
Temples rededicated during 2005 . . . . .	1
(Apia Samoa)	
Temples in operation . . . . .	122

### Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Rex C. Reeve*, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder F. Arthur Kay*, a former member of the Seventy; *Elder Helvécio Martins*, a former member of the Seventy; *Sister Amelia Smith McConkie*, widow of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Geniel Johnson Christensen*, wife of Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elders David F. Evans and Wolfgang H. Paul of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Alma's rebuke of his son Corianton

My message is about a father and a son. Alma, the father, was a prophet; his son Corianton, a missionary.

Two of Alma's sons—Shiblon and Corianton, the youngest—were on a mission to the Zoramites. Alma was greatly disappointed at the failure of his son Corianton to live the standards of a missionary. Corianton forsook his ministry and went to the land of Siron after the harlot Isabel (see Alma 39:3).

"This was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted" (Alma 39:4).

Alma told his son that the devil had led him away (see Alma 39:11). Unchastity is "most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost" (Alma 39:5).

"I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime." He then said: "I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good. But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God" (Alma 39:7–8).

He sternly commanded his son to accept the counsel of his older brothers (see Alma 39:10).

Alma told him that his iniquity was great because it turned away investigators: "When they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.

"And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities" (Alma 39:11–12).

### Alma teaches his son about Christ

After this severe rebuke, Alma the loving father became Alma the teacher.

He knew that "the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5). So Alma taught Corianton.

He spoke first of Christ: "My son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people" (Alma 39:15).

Corianton asked how they should know about the coming of Christ so far in advance.

Alma replied, "Is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?" (Alma 39:17).

### Alma's teachings on the Resurrection

Corianton was "worried concerning the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 40:1).

Alma had inquired of God concerning the Resurrection and told Corianton of the First Resurrection and of other resurrections. "There is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead" (Alma 40:4).

He had inquired as to "what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection" (Alma 40:7).

He then told Corianton, "All men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life" (Alma 40:11). The "righteous are received into a state of happiness" (Alma 40:12), and the evil are "led captive by the will of the devil" (Alma 40:13). The righteous remain "in paradise, until the time of their resurrection" (Alma 40:14).

"Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that

I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34).

Alma told his son “that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works” (Alma 40:21).

“The soul”—that is, the spirit—“shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul” (Alma 40:23). “This,” he said, “is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets” (Alma 40:24). Alma said that “some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing” (Alma 41:1).

### **Alma’s teachings on justice and mercy**

Alma then said:

“And now, my son, I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand—which is concerning the justice of God in the punishment of the sinner; for ye do try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery.

“Now behold, my son, I will explain this thing unto thee” (Alma 42:1–2).

He told Corianton about the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Adam and Eve: “And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will” (Alma 42:7).

“It was appointed unto man to die” (Alma 42:6).

He then explained why death is absolutely necessary: “If it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were

miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:11).

Alma taught Corianton about justice and mercy: “According to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men” (Alma 42:13).

He explained that “the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15).

He taught Corianton about the unwavering standard of eternal law (see Alma 42:17–25).

He very bluntly explained why punishment was necessary: “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul” (Alma 42:16).

### **Alma’s own experience with repentance**

Alma knew personally the pain of punishment and the joy of repentance. He himself had once greatly disappointed his own father, Corianton’s grandfather. He rebelled and went about “seeking to destroy the church” (Alma 36:6). He was struck down by an angel, not because he deserved it but because of the prayers of his father and others (see Mosiah 27:14).

Alma felt the agony and guilt and said: “As I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on



me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

“Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy. . . .

“Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:17–21, 24).

Alma asked Corianton, “Do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice?” (Alma 42:25). He explained that because of the Atonement of Christ, both could be satisfied by eternal law.

### **Alma shows his son an increase of love**

“Moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:43; see also Alma 39:12), he had rebuked Corianton with sharpness. Then, after plainly, patiently teaching these fundamental principles of the gospel, there came the abundance of love.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was taught through revelation that “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and

then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

“That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death” (D&C 121:41–44).

Alma said: “O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility” (Alma 42:30).

Corianton’s grandfather, also named Alma, was among the priests who had served the wicked King Noah. He heard Abinadi the prophet testify of Christ, and he was converted. Condemned to death, he fled the evil court to teach of Christ. (See Mosiah 17:1–4.)

Now Alma, in turn, was the father pleading with his son Corianton to repent.

After sternly rebuking his son and patiently teaching the doctrine of the gospel, Alma the loving father said, “And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance” (Alma 42:29).

In agony and shame, Corianton was brought “down to the dust in humility” (Alma 42:30).

### **Corianton sent back to the mission field**

Alma, who was Corianton’s father and also his priesthood leader, was now satisfied with Corianton’s repentance. He lifted the terrible burden of guilt his son carried and sent him back to the mission field: “And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people. . . . Go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness. . . . And may God

grant unto you even according to my words” (Alma 42:31).

Corianton joined his brothers, Helaman and Shiblon, who were among the priesthood leaders. Twenty years later in the land northward, he was still faithfully laboring in the gospel. (See Alma 49:30; 63:10.)

### **Satan’s lie that sinners cannot repent**

It is a wicked, wicked world in which we live and in which our children must find their way. Challenges of pornography, gender confusion, immorality, child abuse, drug addiction, and all the rest are everywhere. There is no way to escape from their influence.

Some are led by curiosity into temptation, then into experimentation, and some become trapped in addiction. They lose hope. The adversary harvests his crop and binds them down.

Satan is the deceiver, the destroyer, but his is a temporary victory.

The angels of the devil convince some that they are born to a life from which they cannot escape and are compelled to live in sin. The most wicked of lies is that they cannot change and repent and that they will not be forgiven. That cannot be true. They have forgotten the Atonement of Christ.

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him” (D&C 18:11).

Christ is the Creator, the Healer. What He made, He can fix. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of repentance and forgiveness (see 2 Nephi 1:13; 9:45; Jacob 3:11; Alma 26:13–14; Moroni 7:17–19).

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

### **Account of Alma and Corianton a type**

The account of this loving father and a wayward son, drawn from the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, is a type, a pattern, an example.

Each of us has a loving Father in Heaven. Through the Father’s redeeming plan, those who may stumble and fall “are not cast off forever” (Book of Mormon title page).

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:13).

“The Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless” (D&C 1:31–32), the Lord said, “he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

Could there be any more sweeter or more consoling words, more filled with hope, than those words from the scriptures? “I, the Lord, remember [their sins] no more” (D&C 58:42). That is the testimony of the Book of Mormon, and that is my testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder David A. Bednar**

### **Companionship of the Holy Ghost**

Today, I speak by way of reminder and admonition to those of us who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I pray for and invite the

Holy Ghost to now assist me and you as we learn together.

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins “is the introductory ordinance of the gospel” of Jesus Christ and must be preceded by faith in the Savior and by sin-

cere and complete repentance. “Baptism in water . . . must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete” (see Bible Dictionary, “Baptism,” 618). As the Savior taught Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). My message this afternoon focuses on the baptism of the Spirit and the blessings that flow from the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

### **The ordinance of and covenant associated with baptism**

As each of us was baptized, we entered into a solemn covenant with our Heavenly Father. A covenant is an agreement between God and His children upon the earth, and it is important to understand that God determines the conditions of all gospel covenants. You and I do not decide the nature or elements of a covenant. Rather, exercising our moral agency, we accept the terms and requirements of a covenant as our Eternal Father has established them (see Bible Dictionary, “Covenant,” 651).

The saving ordinance of baptism must be administered by one who has proper authority from God. The fundamental conditions of the covenant into which we entered in the waters of baptism are these: we witnessed that we were willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, that we would always remember Him, and that we would keep His commandments. The promised blessing for honoring this covenant is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* (see D&C 20:77). In other words, baptism by water leads to the authorized opportunity for the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead.

### **Confirmation and the baptism of the Spirit**

Following our baptism, each of us had hands placed upon our head by those with

priesthood authority and was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us (see D&C 49:14). The statement “receive the Holy Ghost” in our confirmation was a directive to strive for the baptism of the Spirit.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost” (*History of the Church*, 5:499). We were baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. We must also be baptized by and immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, “and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).

As we gain experience with the Holy Ghost, we learn that the intensity with which we feel the Spirit’s influence is not always the same. Strong, dramatic spiritual impressions do not come to us frequently. Even as we strive to be faithful and obedient, there simply are times when the direction, assurance, and peace of the Spirit are not readily recognizable in our lives. In fact, the Book of Mormon describes faithful Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

The influence of the Holy Ghost is described in the scriptures as “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12; see also 3 Nephi 11:3) and a “voice of perfect mildness” (Helaman 5:30). Thus, the Spirit of the Lord usually communicates with us in ways that are quiet, delicate, and subtle.

### **Withdrawing ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord**

In our individual study and classroom instruction, we repeatedly emphasize the importance of recognizing the inspiration and promptings we receive from the Spirit

of the Lord. And such an approach is correct and useful. We should seek diligently to recognize and respond to promptings as they come to us. However, an important aspect of baptism by the Spirit may frequently be overlooked in our spiritual development.

We should also endeavor to discern when we “withdraw [ourselves] from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in [us] to guide [us] in wisdom’s paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved” (Mosiah 2:36). Precisely because the promised blessing is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*, we should attend to and learn from the choices and influences that separate us from the Holy Spirit.

The standard is clear. If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we know we should shun, then such things definitely are not for us.

I recognize we are fallen men and women living in a mortal world and that we might not have the presence of the Holy Ghost with us every second of every minute of every hour of every day. However, the Holy Ghost can tarry with us much, if not most, of the time—and certainly the Spirit can be with us more than it is not with us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions when they come and the influences or events that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

Taking “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (D&C 45:57) is possible and is essential for our spiritual growth and sur-

vival in an increasingly wicked world. Sometimes as Latter-day Saints we talk and act as though recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives is the rare or exceptional event. We should remember, however, that the covenant promise is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. This supernal blessing applies to every single member of the Church who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to “receive the Holy Ghost.”

### **The Liahona as a type and shadow for our day**

In our day the Book of Mormon is the primary source to which we should turn for help in learning how to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona, the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in their journey in the wilderness, specifically was included in the record as a type and a shadow for our day and as an essential lesson about what we should do to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Ghost.

As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost today.

### **The Liahona: purposes and principles**

As we study and ponder the purposes of the Liahona and the principles by which it operated, I testify that we will receive inspiration suited to our individual and family circumstances and needs. We can and will be blessed with ongoing direction from the Holy Ghost.

The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were traveling in the wilderness (see Alma 37:38; D&C 17:1). This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and his caravan should go (see 1 Nephi 16:10), even “a straight course to the promised land” (Alma 37:44). The pointers in the Liahona operated “according to the faith and diligence and heed” (1 Nephi 16:28) of the travelers and failed to work when family members were contentious, rude, slothful, or forgetful (see 1 Nephi 18:12, 21; Alma 37:41, 43).

The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi and his family could obtain greater “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:29). Thus, the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence.

Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior’s Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the

way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45–46).

And the Holy Ghost provides for us today the means whereby we can receive, “by small and simple things” (Alma 37:6), increased understanding about the ways of the Lord: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

### **Inviting the Holy Ghost into our lives**

The Spirit of the Lord can be our guide and will bless us with direction, instruction, and spiritual protection during our mortal journey. We invite the Holy Ghost into our lives through meaningful personal and family prayer, feasting upon the words of Christ, diligent and exacting obedience, faithfulness and honoring of covenants, and through virtue, humility, and service. And we steadfastly should avoid things that are immodest, coarse, crude, sinful, or evil that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

We also invite the ongoing companionship of the Holy Ghost as we worthily partake of the sacrament each Sabbath day: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9).

Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see Mosiah 4:12, 26). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell.

In February of 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet Joseph replied: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to *keep* the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it

will yield the fruits of the kingdom” (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 41; italics added). Of all the truths the Prophet Joseph might have taught Brigham Young on that sacred occasion, he emphasized the importance of obtaining and keeping the Spirit of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. May each of us so live *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* and thereby qualify for the blessings of direction, instruction, and protection that are essential in these latter days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Elder David F. Evans

It has been a year since I was sustained in general conference. I am grateful for this year and for all that I have experienced. I love the Lord and am so very grateful for His sacrifice and for His gospel. I love President Hinckley and sustain him as the Lord’s prophet on the earth. Together with faithful Saints everywhere, I testify of prophets and apostles in our time and pledge my life to His cause.

### **Appreciation for missionaries**

A few years ago, I was interviewing missionaries. A winter storm was blowing in as missionaries came and went throughout the day. The storm changed from icy rain to snow and back again. Some missionaries arrived by train from nearby cities and walked to the church through the storm. Others rode their bicycles. Almost without exception they were cheerful and happy. They were the Lord’s

missionaries. They had His Spirit and felt joy in His service regardless of their circumstances.

As each companionship concluded their interviews, I will never forget watching them go back out into the storm to preach the gospel and do what the Lord had called them to do. I could see their commitment and dedication. I could feel the love they had for the people and for the Lord. As I watched them leave, I felt an overwhelming love for them and for what they were doing.

Later that night I attended a priesthood meeting in the same city. The storm had continued and was now mostly snow. During the opening song, the branch president of the smallest and farthest branch and his two missionary counselors, Elder Warner and Elder Karpowitz, came into the chapel. As they got ready to sit down, these two wonderful missionaries took off their winter hats and gloves. They took off

their outer coats. Then they each took off a second winter coat and sat down. Like the missionaries earlier in the day, despite the weather these missionaries were happy. They felt the Spirit of the Lord in their lives. Through service in the Lord's cause, they felt a certain love and warmth and joy that are difficult to describe.

As I watched these great young missionaries that evening, I had a remarkable experience. In my mind's eye, I saw missionaries throughout the mission going out into that winter night. Some were knocking doors and facing rejection as they sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some were in homes or apartments teaching individuals and families. In spite of the conditions they faced, they were doing what they could to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who would listen, and they were happy. Into my heart came a feeling that I cannot fully explain.

By a wonderful gift of the Spirit, I felt His love, the pure love of Christ that He has for faithful missionaries everywhere, and it changed me forever. I understood how precious each missionary is to Him. I caught a glimpse of what prophets would describe as the "greatest generation of missionaries" the world has ever known (see M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47). I began to understand why it was necessary to raise the bar so that missionaries everywhere would be entitled to the protection, direction, and happiness that accompany the Spirit of the Lord. I also began to understand why—as parents, bishops, stake presidents, and other leaders—we must do everything we can to help the young people of the Church become worthy of the blessings of missionary service.

### **President Hinckley's mission experience**

President Hinckley described what happens to the heart of every missionary who commits his or her life and work to

the Lord when he talked about his own missionary experiences. It was early in his mission, and he was discouraged. The work was hard, and the people were not receptive. However, there came a time when discouragement turned to commitment. For him, the beginning was a letter from his father in which he read: "Dear Gordon, I have your letter. . . . I have only one suggestion: Forget yourself and go to work." In describing what happened next, he said: "I got on my knees in that little bedroom . . . and made a pledge that I would try to give myself unto the Lord.

"The whole world changed. The fog lifted. The sun began to shine in my life. I had a new interest. I saw the beauty of this land. I saw the greatness of the people. . . . Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that decision made in that little house" (in Mike Cannon, "Missionary Theme Was Pervasive during Visit of President Hinckley," *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

President Hinckley continued by saying: "You want to be happy? Forget yourself and get lost in this great cause, and bend your efforts to helping people" (in *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

### **Invitation to missionary service**

To every young man I would say, do you want to be happy? If so, come and join with us, 52,000 strong and counting, and serve your fellowman as a missionary for the Lord. Make the commitment to give two years of your life to the Lord. It will change everything. You will be happy. The fog will lift. You will come to love the culture and the people you are called to serve. The work will be difficult, but there will also be great satisfaction and joy as you serve. If you are faithful during your mission and thereafter, you will look back on your life and say with President Hinckley, "Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that

decision to serve a mission and give my life to the Lord.”

President Hinckley has reminded us that it is not only young elders who are entitled to these blessings. Couples serve wonderfully and are needed so very much. While young sisters are not obligated to serve, the President has said: “We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27). We also know that there are some who, for health or other reasons, are honorably excused from service. We love them and know that our Heavenly Father will provide compensating blessings in their lives as they serve in other ways and live faithfully.

A year ago, Elder Ballard asked that parents, bishops, and branch presidents work together and help at least one more young man, in addition to those who would normally be prepared to serve, become worthy and be called from each ward and branch of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 72; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 71). Many have responded. As leaders, we should all recommit ourselves to following this inspired request.

### **Elder Evans’s mission experience**

Brothers and sisters, many good bishops have been doing for a long time what Elder Ballard asked. Thirty-six years ago, Bishop Matheson called my home and invited me to his office. Because of world

circumstances, the number of missionaries any ward could send was limited, but an additional space had become available, and he had the responsibility to recommend one more missionary. He told me he and his counselors had been praying. He told me that he was impressed that now was the time that the Lord wanted me to serve my mission. I was stunned. Never before had anyone said to me that the Lord had something He wanted me to do. I felt the Spirit of the Lord testify to me that I should go and that I should go now. I said to the bishop, “If the Lord wants me to serve, then I will go.”

For me, everything changed. The fog really did lift, and happiness and joy came into my life. In one way or another, every good thing that has happened to me since that day has come because of the commitment made to serve the Lord and His children and give two years of my life in His service.

I say again: Come and join with us. Come and be clean. Come and be happy. Come and experience the very thing that the Lord has said is of “most worth” (D&C 15:6) to you at this time in your life. Come and be part of the greatest generation of missionaries the world has ever known.

This is the work of the Lord. Our Father in Heaven lives, and His Son, Jesus Christ, leads and directs this work today. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Wolfgang H. Paul**

### **Confusion about the meaning of freedom**

Some time ago, as I was driving, I had to stop at a red light. The vehicle in front of me caught my attention. A sticker read, “I do what I want.”

I wondered why someone would choose to place such a statement on his

vehicle. What was the message he wanted to send? Perhaps the driver of this vehicle wanted to express publicly that he has achieved total freedom by just doing what he likes to do. As I thought about this, I realized that our world would be quite chaotic if everyone would just do what he or she wants to do.



It is obvious that there is some confusion in our society about this subject. In the media, advertisements, entertainment, and elsewhere, we find the idea widespread that when someone can do what he wants, he enjoys freedom and will be happy. It suggests that the only criteria for our decisions are what is pleasing to us, what is fun, or what matches our individual desires.

### **Freedom and Heavenly Father's plan**

Our Heavenly Father has given us a better concept. It is His great plan of happiness, which gives us real freedom and happiness. We read in the Book of Mormon:

“And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”<sup>1</sup>

When we came into this world, we brought with us from our heavenly home this God-given gift and privilege which we call our agency. It gives us the right and power to make decisions and to choose. Agency is an eternal law. President Brigham Young, speaking of our agency, taught:

“This is a law which has always existed from all eternity, and will continue to exist throughout all the eternities to

come. Every intelligent being must have the power of choice.”<sup>2</sup>

President Wilford Woodruff observed on the same subject: “This agency has always been the heritage of man under the rule and government of God. He possessed it in the heaven of heavens before the world was, and the Lord maintained and defended it there against the aggression of Lucifer and those that took sides with him. . . . By virtue of this agency you and I and all mankind are made responsible beings, responsible for the course we pursue, the lives we live, [and] the deeds we do.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Agency allows earth life to be a test**

When the Lord taught Abraham about the eternal nature of spirits and that he was chosen before he was born, He explained one of the important purposes for coming to this earth by saying, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, our agency makes our life on this earth a test period. If we did not have this wonderful gift of agency, we would not be able to show our Father in Heaven whether we will do all that He commanded us.

In order for us to use our agency, we must have a knowledge of good and evil, we must have the freedom to make choices, and after we have exercised our agency, there must be consequences that follow our choices.

I have learned that as we obey our Heavenly Father's commandments, our faith increases, we grow in wisdom and spiritual strength, and it becomes easier for us to make right choices.

### **The Savior set example for use of agency**

Our great example, the Lord Jesus Christ, set the perfect example for all of us

as to how to use our agency. In that Council in Heaven, when the plan of our Father was presented to us—that we would have the opportunity to come to this earth and receive a body—the Beloved Son, who was the Beloved and Chosen of the Father from the beginning, said to His Father, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, we should make our choices using the same criteria. Instead of saying, “I do what I want,” our motto should be “I do what the Father wants me to do.”

If we do this, we can be certain that the blessings of the Lord will be upon us. It may well be that we have to make some of these choices when it is not convenient for us. I have learned, however, that although the time is sometimes not convenient for our schedule, nevertheless, if we make the right choice, the Lord will take care of us in His own way, which at that time is not yet known to us.

When we were transferred in 1989 from the Germany Hamburg Mission to East Germany to preside over the Dresden mission, the time was not convenient for our family. Our children had just adapted to their new school in Hamburg and now had to become acquainted with

the socialistic school system in East Germany. One child could not even come with us because she needed to finish school in the West. However, we have learned from this experience that what seemed to be hard for us in the beginning eventually turned into a great blessing for all of us. The Lord had His own way to take care of our challenges.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am so grateful for the wonderful gift of agency, which our Father in Heaven has given us. I am grateful to know that we are His children. I know from many of my own experiences that He loves us and that He cares for us. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son and that he is the prophet of the Restoration. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26–27.
2. *Deseret News*, Oct. 10, 1866, 355.
3. *Millennial Star*, Oct. 14, 1889, 642.
4. Abraham 3:25.
5. Moses 4:2.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Nurturing marriage

My beloved brethren and sisters, thank you for your love of the Lord and His gospel. Wherever you live, your righteous lives provide good examples in these days of decaying morals and disintegrating marriages.

As we Brethren travel about the world, sometimes we see worrisome scenes. On a recent flight, I sat behind a husband and wife. She obviously loved her husband. As she stroked the back of his neck I could see her wedding ring. She would nestle

close to him and rest her head upon his shoulder, seeking his companionship.

In contrast, he seemed totally oblivious to her presence. He was focused solely upon an electronic game player. During the entire flight, his attention was riveted upon that device. Not once did he look at her, speak to her, or acknowledge her yearning for affection.

His inattention made me feel like shouting: “Open your eyes, man! Can’t you see? Pay attention! Your wife loves you! She needs you!”

I don't know more about them. I haven't seen them since. Perhaps I was alarmed unduly. And very possibly, if this man knew of my concern for them, he might feel sorry for me in not knowing how to use such an exciting toy.

But these things I do know: I know "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."<sup>1</sup> I know that the earth was created and that the Lord's Church was restored so that families could be sealed and exalted as eternal entities.<sup>2</sup> And I know that one of Satan's cunning methods of undermining the work of the Lord is to attack the sacred institutions of marriage and the family.

Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully.

I realize that many mature members of the Church are not married. Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that in the Lord's own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.<sup>3</sup> For those who are now or will be married, I suggest two steps you can take to have a more joyful marriage.

### **I. Doctrinal foundation**

The first step is to comprehend the doctrinal foundation for marriage. The Lord declared that marriage is the legal wedding of one man and one woman: "Marriage is ordained of God unto man.

"Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be

one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."<sup>4</sup>

Worldly trends to define marriage in some other way would sadly serve to destroy the institution of marriage. Such schemes are contrary to the plan of God.

It was He who said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."<sup>5</sup>

Scripture further reaffirms that "the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."<sup>6</sup>

Marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation. Marriage has been divinely designated as an eternal and everlasting covenant.<sup>7</sup> Marriage is sanctified when it is cherished and honored in holiness. That union is not merely between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.<sup>8</sup> "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other."<sup>9</sup> Children born of that marital union are "an heritage of the Lord."<sup>10</sup> Marriage is but the beginning bud of family life; parenthood is its flower. And that bouquet becomes even more beautiful when graced with grandchildren. Families may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.<sup>11</sup>

Marriage is both a commandment and an exalting principle of the gospel.<sup>12</sup> Because it is ordained of God, the intimate physical expressions of married love are sacred. Yet all too commonly, these divine gifts are desecrated. If a couple allows lewd language or pornography to corrupt their intimacy, they offend their Creator while they degrade and diminish their own divine gifts. True happiness is predicated upon personal purity.<sup>13</sup> Scripture commands: "Be ye clean."<sup>14</sup> Marriage should ever be a covenant to lift husbands and wives to exaltation in celestial glory.

Marriage was intended by the Lord to endure beyond physical death. His plan offers eternal perpetuation of the family

in the kingdom of God. His plan provides temples and opportunities to officiate therein for the living and the dead. A marriage sealed there launches a husband and wife into that grand order of unity so necessary to the perfection of God's work.<sup>15</sup>

Doctrines related to marriage include individual agency and accountability. All of us are accountable for our choices. Couples blessed with children are accountable to God for the care they give to their children.

As I meet with priesthood leaders, I often ask about the priorities of their various responsibilities. Usually they mention their important Church duties to which they have been called. Too few remember their responsibilities at home. Yet priesthood offices, keys, callings, and quorums are meant to exalt families.<sup>16</sup> Priesthood authority has been restored so that families can be sealed eternally. So brethren, your foremost priesthood duty is to nurture your marriage—to care for, respect, honor, and love your wife. Be a blessing to her and your children.

## II. Strengthening marriage

With these doctrinal underpinnings in mind, let us consider the second step—specific actions that would strengthen a marriage. I will offer sample suggestions and invite each couple privately to ponder them and adapt them as needed to their own particular circumstances.

My suggestions use three action verbs: to *appreciate*, to *communicate*, and to *contemplate*.

To *appreciate*—to say “I love you” and “thank you”—is not difficult. But these expressions of love and appreciation do more than acknowledge a kind thought or deed. They are signs of sweet civility. As grateful partners look for the good in each other and sincerely pay compliments to one another, wives and husbands will strive to become the persons described in those compliments.

Suggestion number two—to *communicate* well with your spouse—is also important. Good communication includes taking time to plan together. Couples need private time to observe, to talk, and really listen to each other. They need to cooperate—helping each other as equal partners. They need to nurture their spiritual as well as physical intimacy. They should strive to elevate and motivate each other. Marital unity is sustained when goals are mutually understood. Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse's good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage.

My third suggestion is to *contemplate*. This word has deep meaning. It comes from Latin roots: *con*, meaning “with,” and *templum*, meaning “a space or place to meditate.” It is the root from which the word *temple* comes. If couples contemplate often—with each other in the temple—sacred covenants will be better remembered and kept. Frequent participation in temple service and regular family scripture study nourish a marriage and strengthen faith within a family. Contemplation allows one to anticipate and to resonate (or be in tune) with each other and with the Lord. Contemplation will nurture both a marriage and God's kingdom. The Master said, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>17</sup>

I invite each marital partner to consider these suggestions and then determine specific goals to nurture your own relationship. Begin with sincere desire. Identify those actions needed to bless your spiritual unity and purpose. Above all, do not be selfish! Generate a spirit of selflessness and generosity. Celebrate and commemorate each day together as a treasured gift from heaven.

President Harold B. Lee said “that the most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls

of our own homes.”<sup>18</sup> And President David O. McKay declared, “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.”<sup>19</sup>

When you as husband and wife recognize the divine design in your union—when you feel deeply that God has brought you to each other—your vision will be expanded and your understanding enhanced. Such feelings are expressed in words of a song that has long been a favorite of mine:

Because you come to me with naught  
save love,

And hold my hand and lift mine eyes  
above,

A wider world of hope and joy I see,  
Because you come to me.

Because you speak to me in accents  
sweet,

I find the roses waking round my feet,  
And I am led through tears and joy to  
thee,

Because you speak to me.

Because God made thee mine, I'll  
cherish thee

Through light and darkness, through  
all time to be,

And pray His love may make our love  
divine,

Because God made thee mine.<sup>20</sup>

That each marriage may be so nurtured is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102, paragraph 1.
2. Whenever scriptures warn that the “earth would be utterly wasted,” the warning is connected to the need for priesthood authority to seal families together in holy temples (see D&C 2:3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39).
3. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–16.
5. Matthew 19:5; see also Mark 10:7–8.
6. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
8. See Matthew 19:6.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” paragraph 6.
10. Psalm 127:3.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
12. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, 10th ed. (1953), 232–33.
13. See Alma 41:10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42; see also Isaiah 52:11; 3 Nephi 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
17. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (see Matthew 6:33, footnote a).
18. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
19. Quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
20. “Because,” words by Edward Teschemacher (1902).

## President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank this combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following the remarks of Brother Perry, the choir will sing “Come, Follow Me,” and at the conclusion of the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Memories of becoming a deacon

I had the opportunity a year or two ago of visiting the Logan Utah Institute of Religion. The building where the institute meets was recently remodeled. I was told that as the workers removed the old pulpit from the chapel, they discovered some shelves that had been sealed off for some time. In removing the cover, they found a sacrament tray. It apparently dates back many years because the sacrament cups were made of glass. One of those glass cups, as you see here, was mounted and presented to me—probably because I was the only one old enough to remember the days when glass cups were used.

Seeing the glass cup flooded my mind with pleasant memories. Glass sacrament cups were being used at the time I reached my 12th birthday, a very significant milestone in my life. My 12th birthday happened to fall on Sunday. For years I had watched the deacons pass the sacrament, anticipating the day that I would be blessed to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and have that privilege.

When that day finally arrived, I was asked to come to church early and meet with Brother Ambrose Call, second counselor in our ward bishopric. Brother Call invited me into a classroom and asked me to offer a prayer. He then opened the scriptures and read section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants to me:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

Brother Call then asked me to comment on this section. My explanation was surely not complete enough, so Brother

Call took some time to explain to me what it meant to be a bearer of the holy priesthood. Being worthy to hold the priesthood entitled me to use the power God delegates to man. One who worthily holds the priesthood can legitimately perform the ordinances God has prescribed for the salvation of the human family. This authority comes directly from the Savior Himself through a continuing line of priesthood holders.

My interview with Brother Call must have been somewhat satisfactory, for I was taken into the deacons quorum meeting. There, the members of the bishopric laid their hands upon my head, and the bishop, who happened at the time to be my father, conferred upon me the Aaronic Priesthood and ordained me to the office of a deacon. I was also sustained by the other deacons to become a member with them in a quorum of the priesthood.

### Sacred nature of the sacrament

In sacrament meeting that evening, I had my first opportunity to exercise the priesthood by passing the sacrament to the membership of our ward. The sacrament took on new meaning to me that day. As I watched the tray go up and down the rows of the members of the Church, I noticed that not everyone approached the sacrament with the same attitude. There were those who seemed to partake of the sacrament just as a matter of routine, but there were many, many who accepted the sacrament with great reverence.

Over the years, I have participated, as all of us have, in many sacrament meetings, and to me they really are more than just another meeting. Partaking of the sacrament provides us with a sacred moment in a holy place. We do it in accordance with the commandment the Lord gave us in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (v. 9).

From the very beginning, before the world was organized, God laid out a plan whereby He would offer blessings to His children based on their obedience to His commandments. He understood, however, that we would be distracted at times by the things of the world and would need to be reminded regularly of our covenants and His promises.

### **Adam commanded to offer sacrifices**

One of the first commandments given to Adam was that he should worship the Lord and offer the firstlings of his flocks as an offering to Him. This ordinance was given to remind the people that Jesus Christ would come into the world and would ultimately offer Himself as a sacrifice.

“And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

“And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

“And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth” (Moses 5:5–7).

### **Institution of the sacrament**

From that day down until the time of our Savior, Heavenly Father’s children were commanded to offer sacrifices. It was discontinued with the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. Then, the night before He completed that sacrifice, the Savior instituted the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to help us remember Him and the Atonement He made for all mankind. Thus, in the ancient law of sacrifice and in the sacrament, the

Lord has helped us be certain that we do not forget His promises and the requirement that we follow Him and obey His will.

In the New Testament we have an account of the Lord administering the sacrament to His disciples. This is found in Matthew, the 26th chapter:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (verses 26–28).

The Book of Mormon, in 3 Nephi, chapter 18, gives us a detailed account of the Savior’s administration of the sacrament to the Nephites:

“And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.

“And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

“And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

“And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

“And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.

“And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

“And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

“And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.

“And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.

“And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you” (verses 1–10).

His instructions are very clear that we should be willing to do what He has commanded us to do. It would surely be expected that in our day we would again be commanded to partake of the sacrament. As the Doctrine and Covenants tells us:

“It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (D&C 20:75).

### **Renewal of covenants**

The purpose of partaking of the sacrament is, of course, to renew the covenants we have made with the Lord.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley instructed us in this when he said about covenants:

“The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a covenant between God and his people. . . . When baptized by an authorized servant of God, we covenant to do God’s will and to obey his commandments. . . . By partaking of the Sacrament we renew all covenants entered into with the Lord and pledge ourselves to take upon us the name

of his Son, to always remember him and keep his commandments” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14).

### **Opportunity for spiritual growth**

The sacrament is one of the most sacred ordinances in the Church. Partaking of the sacrament worthily gives us an opportunity for spiritual growth.

I remember that when I was a child, beautiful music was played during the passing of the sacrament. The Brethren soon asked us to stop that practice because our minds were centered on the music rather than on the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. During the administration of the sacrament, we set aside the world. It is a period of spiritual renewal as we recognize the deep spiritual significance of the ordinance offered to each of us personally. If we were to become casual in partaking of the sacrament, we would lose the opportunity for spiritual growth.

Elder Melvin J. Ballard once said:

“I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load is lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food” (“The Sacramental Covenant,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1919, 1027).

When we partake of the sacrament worthily, we remember the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, that He gave up His life and took upon Himself the sins of the world that we may have the blessing of immortality. We take upon ourselves the name of our Savior and promise to always remember Him and to keep His commandments—that is, to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44).

### **Attending sacrament meeting**

Parents, you have the responsibility of teaching your families the importance of



attending sacrament meeting weekly. It should be a regular family practice. Every family needs that time of renewing and committing to live the gospel in accordance with the teachings of the Savior. Families, properly prepared, will attend sacrament meeting with a spirit of reverence and with gratitude for the opportunity of partaking of the sacred emblems.

I remember an experience our family had while on vacation at a resort area. Because the period of our stay included a Sunday, we made arrangements to attend a sacrament meeting at a nearby chapel. So did hundreds of others staying at the resort. The chapel was filled to overflowing. Before the meeting started, the bishop invited any attending deacons who were worthy and properly dressed to participate in the passing of the sacrament. An adequate number, dressed in white shirts and ties, came forward to receive instructions on how to handle such a large congregation. The ordinance was administered reverently and efficiently. As I observed the congregation, I saw that many were deeply moved by the spirit of the meeting.

After we returned to the resort, there was an obvious difference in the Sabbath-day activities compared to that of the

weekdays. Boats remained tied at the dock; the lake was almost free of swimmers; and the dress for the Sabbath day was very appropriate. Those families saw the fulfillment of the Lord's promise: by going to the house of prayer on His holy day and renewing their covenants to obey the commandments, they were able to keep themselves more fully unspotted from the world (see D&C 59:9).

May there be instilled in each of us an increased reverence for the Sabbath. May we more fully realize the special blessing of being able to partake of the sacrament and its significance in our lives. May we always remember Him and keep His commandments, which He has given us to fulfill the purpose of life and the hope of the eternities that are to come. This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. We're permitted to be part of this great gospel plan, of which the sacrament is such a vital part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 176th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes. Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Mis-

sionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!”

Elder Ronald T. Halverson offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.” Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Hinckley of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

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## **Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

My dear brethren, it is wonderful and humbling to be with you in this worldwide assembly of priesthood holders. I love and admire you. I feel honored to be counted as one of you. I salute you who have the authority to act in the name of God and to perform ordinances which are a vital source of eternal strength and energy for the well-being of mankind.

### **See the end from the beginning**

I will speak today to you wonderful young men who are preparing to make a difference in the world—you who have entered the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood and you who have already received the sacred oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The priesthood you bear is a wonderful force for good. You live in a time of great challenges and opportunities. As spirit sons of heavenly parents, you are free to make the right choices. This requires hard work, self-discipline, and an optimistic outlook, which will bring joy and freedom into your life now and in the future.

The Lord said to Abraham, “My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee” (Abraham 2:8). My young friends, today I say to you that if you trust the Lord and obey Him, His hand shall be over you, He will help you achieve the great potential He sees in you, and He will help you to see the end from the beginning.

### **Working as a laundry delivery boy**

Allow me to share with you an experience from my own boyhood. When I was 11 years old, my family had to leave East Germany and begin a new life in West Germany overnight. Until my father could get back into his original profession as a government employee, my parents operated a small laundry business in our little town. I became the laundry delivery boy. To be able to do that effectively, I needed a bicycle to pull the heavy laundry cart. I had always dreamed of owning a nice, sleek, shiny, sporty red bicycle. But there had never been enough money to fulfill

this dream. What I got instead was a heavy, ugly, black, sturdy workhorse of a bicycle.

I delivered laundry on that bike before and after school for quite a few years. Most of the time, I was not overly excited about the bike, the cart, or my job. Sometimes the cart seemed so heavy and the work so tiring that I thought my lungs would burst, and I often had to stop to catch my breath. Nevertheless, I did my part because I knew we desperately needed the income as a family, and it was my way to contribute.

If I had only known back then what I learned many years later—if I had only been able to *see the end from the beginning*—I would have had a better appreciation of these experiences, and it would have made my job so much easier.

Many years later, when I was about to be drafted into the military, I decided to volunteer instead and join the air force to become a pilot. I loved flying and thought being a pilot would be my thing.

To be accepted for the program I had to pass a number of tests, including a strict physical exam. The doctors were slightly concerned by the results and did some additional medical tests. Then they announced, “You have scars on your lung which are an indication of a lung disease in your early teenage years, but obviously you are fine now.” The doctors wondered what kind of treatment I had gone through to heal the disease.

Until the day of that examination I had never known that I had any kind of lung disease. Then it became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness. Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain.

### **We are taught by modern prophets**

We don’t always know the details of our future. We do not know what lies

ahead. We live in a time of uncertainty. We are surrounded by challenges on all sides. Occasionally discouragement may sneak into our day; frustration may invite itself into our thinking; doubt might enter about the value of our work. In these dark moments Satan whispers in our ears that we will never be able to succeed, that the price isn’t worth the effort, and that our small part will never make a difference. He, the father of all lies, will try to prevent us from seeing the end from the beginning.

Fortunately, you young priesthood holders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are taught by prophets, seers, and revelators of our day. The First Presidency said:

“We have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits. . . . You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 2). “You have a responsibility to learn what Heavenly Father wants you to do and then to do your best to follow His will” (*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* [2001], 4).

How deeply grateful I am for the inspired leadership of our dear President Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophet of God in our time, and his noble counselors. Their prophetic view helps you to see the end from the beginning.

### ***For the Strength of Youth* gives standards**

The Lord loves you; that is why He has given you commandments and the words of prophets to guide you on your journey through life. Some of the most important guidelines for your life are found in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. The physical appearance of this little paper booklet would qualify it for the scriptural description “Out of small things

proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

The pamphlet itself has little material value, perhaps just a few cents. But the doctrine and principles it presents are an invaluable treasure. You young men who are already 18 or older, if you don’t have this booklet anymore, make sure to get one, keep it, and use it. This little booklet is a gem for any age-group. It contains standards which are sacred symbols representing our membership in the Church.

### **Temples provide an eternal perspective**

I call your attention to the fact that *For the Strength of Youth*, the accompanying *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth*, and the temple recommend of the Church all have a picture of the Salt Lake Temple imprinted on the front. The temple is the binding link between generations, in this life and for eternity. All the temples have been dedicated for the same purpose: to assist in accomplishing the divine work and glory of God, our Eternal Father, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). These temples are sacred structures in which eternal questions are answered, truths are taught, and ordinances performed so that we can live with an understanding of our divine inheritance as children of God and with an awareness of our potential as eternal beings (see Gordon B. Hinckley, “Why These Temples?” in *Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [1999], 14). The house of the Lord helps you to see the end from the beginning.

### **Regard bodies as temples given by God**

Just as the temples of God are sacred, so are your temporal bodies. The Apostle Paul said:

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

My dear fellow priesthood holders of all ages and in all places around this world, let us use our thoughts, our minds and hearts, and our bodies with the respect and dignity worthy of a sacred temple given to us by our Heavenly Father.

### **Promises for keeping standards**

The prophets of our day have promised you, my friends, that as you keep the standards given in *For the Strength of Youth* and “live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life’s work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost. . . . You will be worthy to go to the temple to receive holy ordinances. These blessings and many more can be yours” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 2–3).

We know that God keeps His promises. We need to fulfill our part to receive His blessings. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

### **Preparation for going to the temple**

Every member who wants to go to the temple, regardless of age, needs to prepare for this sacred experience. Certain questions will be asked by your bishop and stake president, who hold keys of priesthood authority and are common judges in the Church. These vital questions will include: Are you honest? Are you morally clean? Do you keep the Word of Wisdom? Do you obey the law of tithing? And do you sustain the authorities of the Church? The answers to these key questions reflect your attitudes and actions.

You younger men might not be aware that the standards set by the Lord in the

temple recommend questions are very similar to the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. In times of calmness but also in times of greatest temptation, these standards and the guidance of the Holy Ghost will help you make the right choices about your education, friends, dress and appearance, entertainment, media and the Internet, your language, proper dating, sexual purity, honesty, Sabbath-day observance, and service to others. How you apply these standards will say much about who you are and what you seek to become.

### **A bright and wonderful future**

The Lord wants you, my young friends, to desire with all your heart to keep these standards and live by the gospel truths found in the scriptures. As you do this, you will see beyond the moment, and you will see your bright and wonderful future with great opportunities and responsibilities. You will be willing to work hard and endure long, and you will have an optimistic outlook on life. You will see that your life's road will lead you to the house of the Lord first and then to serve a full-time mission, representing the Savior wherever He will send you. After your mission you will organize and plan your life based on the same standards. Therefore, in your mind's eye you will see yourself entering the house of the Lord for an eternal marriage and family. Your priorities in life will change to match the priorities given to us by the Savior. And God will bless you and open the eyes of your understanding so you can see the end from the beginning.

Living the standards set in *For the Strength of Youth* will make you feel good about yourself. Write those standards into your heart and mind, and live accordingly. Compare each of those standards with where you are today. Listen to the Spirit, who will teach you what you need to do to become more like Jesus. If you recognize a need for change, make the change; don't procrastinate. Use true repentance and

the gift and power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to clear up those things that are keeping you from reaching your true potential. If this process appears tough, hang in there; it is worth it. The Lord has a promise for you as He had for the Prophet Joseph: "Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

### **The need to teach youth by example**

Now, my dear grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends of our young people, we can be of great help in this process. King Benjamin taught that when parents are truly converted, they "will teach [their children] to walk in the ways of truth and soberness [and] will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:15). It has been said, "Teaching by example is *one* way to teach." I would say, "Teaching by example is the *best* way to teach."

Please teach our young people by your example of being a temple-worthy priesthood holder. Your good life, your love for God and fellowmen, your applied testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will be a convincing power to our youth, and it will help them to see the end from the beginning.

My dear young friends, please perfect your lives in living these standards given by the prophets of our day. As you do this, step-by-step, day after day, you will honor the priesthood and you will be prepared to make a difference in the world. You will also be on the right track to return with honor to our Heavenly Father.

My dear fellow servants of the priesthood, I promise you today that when you follow this pattern, the Lord will help you to make more out of your life than you ever can by yourself. He will help you always to see the end from the beginning!

Of this I testify as an Apostle of the Lord, our Savior, and in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Ronald A. Rasband

Good evening, my dear brethren of the priesthood. Tonight throughout the world we are gathered nearer to the temples of the Lord than ever before in the history of mankind. Through the loving-kindness of our Savior in directing His prophets, 122 temples are now accessible to the Lord's covenant people to obtain their own temple blessings and perform vital ordinances for their departed ancestors. And more have been announced and are coming! We thank you, President Hinckley, for your inspired leadership in this tremendous effort.

### King Benjamin's sermon near the temple

In an early Book of Mormon time, the members of the Church also gathered near a temple to receive instruction from their prophet and leader. Late in his life, King Benjamin called upon fathers to bring their families together, to give them counsel and admonitions. From Mosiah we read:

"And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, . . . every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them" (Mosiah 2:5–6).

I love the imagery of these verses. Figuratively speaking, brethren, are the doors of our homes pitched towards the temples we so love? Do we attend as often as we can, showing our children through our example the importance of these sacred and special places?

As recorded in Mosiah, families received the word of the Lord through their prophet with enthusiasm and commitment. The people were so moved by King Benjamin's teachings that they entered

into a new covenant to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, there is a sad epilogue to this story. We learn later in Mosiah concerning those who were but little children in the tents at the time of King Benjamin's sermon:

"Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers" (Mosiah 26:1).

### What of our rising generation?

What happened to that rising generation, brethren? Why didn't the young children accept the righteous traditions of their fathers? More importantly, here we are centuries later, in a day of many temples and constant prophetic direction, and what of our rising generation? Do we have reason to be concerned? Certainly we do!

The young men here and throughout the world, and their young women counterparts, are very special. President Hinckley has spoken of them:

"I have said many times that I believe we have the finest generation of young people that this Church has ever known. . . . They try to do the right thing. They are bright and able, clean and fresh, attractive and smart. . . . They know what the gospel is about, and they are trying to live it, looking to the Lord for His guidance and help" ("Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 97–98).

All of us who are involved with these youth know the truth of President Hinckley's words.

### Warning that youth will be tested

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, however, provides

us with a somber warning, speaking of the youth:

“Many of them are remarkable in their spiritual maturity and in their faith. But even the best of them are sorely tested. And the testing will become more severe” (“We Must Raise Our Sights,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2004, 14).

This warning that “the testing will become more severe” gets my attention. Our rising generation is worthy of our best efforts to support and strengthen them in their journey to adulthood.

### **“All hands on deck”**

In these perilous times, as our youth are faced with this increased adversity, we can learn from others. In the armed forces, particularly in all the navies throughout the world, every seaman understands one phrase that is a clarion call for immediate help, no matter what he is doing or where he is on the ship. The call is “All hands on deck.” Many a battle at sea has been won or lost by the response to this call.

We—as members of the Church, leaders of youth, anxious fathers, and concerned grandfathers—all need to respond to the call for “all hands on deck” as it pertains to our youth and young single adults. We must all look for opportunities to bless the youth whether or not we are currently closely associated with them. We must continue to teach and fortify fathers and mothers in their divinely declared roles with their children in the home. We must ask ourselves constantly if that extra sporting event, that extra activity or errand outside of the home is more important than families being together at home.

Now is the time, brethren, when in every action we take, in every place we go, with every Latter-day Saint young person we meet, we need to have an increased awareness of the need for strengthening, nurturing, and being an influence for good in their lives.

### **Spiritual experiences with children**

In our own family, we have had such an experience with wonderful, watchful priesthood leaders. When I was first called to the Seventy some years ago, we were assigned to move to Solihull, England, to serve in the Area Presidency. Sister Rasband and I took our two youngest children with us on this assignment. Our daughter was a young single adult and our son a 17-year-old who liked American-style football and played it very well. We were very concerned about them. No friends, no extended family, and no American football! I wondered, would this exciting new experience prove to be a serious trial for our family?

The answer came in an early assignment I received. I had been asked to speak to the missionaries at the Missionary Training Center in Preston, England. I called President White of the center and was pleased to hear that he knew of my family situation. He suggested we include our children on our visit to Preston. Once we were there, he even invited our daughter and son to speak to the missionaries! What a thrill for them to be and feel included and share their testimonies of the Lord’s work!

When finished and after tender good-byes to those missionaries, we visited the beautiful Preston England Temple, which was close to the Missionary Training Center. As we walked near the front door, there stood President and Sister Swanney, the temple president and matron. They greeted us and welcomed us into the temple with, “Elder Rasband, how would you and your family like to perform baptisms for the dead?” What a wonderful idea! We looked at each other and gratefully accepted. After performing the ordinances and while my son and I were still in the font with tears of joy in our eyes, he put his hand on my shoulder and asked, “Dad, why haven’t we ever done this before?”

I thought of all the football games, all the movies we had attended together, all of the good times we had shared—certainly happy memories and traditions that are so important to build.

However, I realized we had an opportunity to add more meaningful spiritual experiences with our children like what we had experienced in Preston that day. Thanks to those caring and observant priesthood leaders, I knew then that our family was going to do fine in Europe. How grateful we are for the many priesthood and Young Women leaders who have always been watchful and loving to our children and yours.

### **Teach children to look to Christ**

Looking to another Book of Mormon time: Nephi lived in a situation where some members of his family struggled with obedience, harmony, and faithfulness. He most certainly understood the necessity

for attentive commitment to children of the rising generation. He said late in his life:

“And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

I pray that as the holders of the priesthood of God we may each of us do all things that lie in our power to teach our youth what source they may look to for a remission of their sins, even the Lord Jesus Christ. May we each respond with our most sincere efforts to “all hands on deck” as it pertains to saving our own rising generation—they are certainly worth our very best efforts.

I testify that this is the Lord’s true Church, directed by Him through our dear prophet, even Gordon B. Hinckley, whom I love and sustain. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard G. Hinckley**

### **Gratitude for family**

My dear brethren, I am both humbled and honored to occupy this position. For reasons obvious to you, it never entered my mind that such a calling would come to me. One year ago when I was sustained, President Hinckley made it clear to the entire Church that he had not initiated the process that resulted in my call. I told him later that I was likely the only General Authority in the history of the Church to be sustained by the members in spite of a disclaimer by the prophet!

Nevertheless, I am grateful for your sustaining vote and pledge my whole heart to this great cause. I am grateful beyond expression for my family, for my wife and children, and for my good parents. My mother passed away two years ago, just

two days after April conference. She was small in stature, yet I stand on her shoulders every day. Her influence will ever be with me. I cannot honor her properly by what I say but only by how I live.

I do not know what to say of my father that would not embarrass him, except that I love him and that I sustain him. At the risk of being too personal, I will say that as I watch him grow older, my mind goes back to days when we were little children, when he would lie on the floor and wrestle and play with us and lift us in his arms and hug us and tickle us, or pull us up into bed with Mother and him when we were sick or frightened in the night. My memories of him will ever be of laughter and love, of steadiness, of testimony, of relentless hard work, of faith and fidelity. He is kind and wise, and I am blessed beyond measure



that I not only sustain him as my prophet for this season of mortality but that I also claim him as my father now and throughout all eternity.

### **“What Church membership means to me”**

Several weeks ago my mind was stimulated when Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy was asked to give a brief history of his grandfather LeGrand Richards in a quorum meeting. Among other interesting things he reported was this: When Elder Richards was a young bishop, he visited those who were less active. He boldly invited them to speak in sacrament meeting to the subject “What my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means to me.” Remarkably, several of them responded positively, and that experience put them on the road back to full activity in the Church.

I would like to speak to that same theme this evening. I invite each of you, young or old, to dedicate a small notebook to this theme. Write at the top of the first page the words “What my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means to me.” Then briefly list those things that come to mind. Over time, additional thoughts will come, which you can add to your list. Soon you will have a growing booklet that will fill you with gratitude and appreciation for your membership in the Lord’s Church. It may even provide a resource for talks you may be asked to give in the future.

My list is already long, and I have selected just a single item from it to discuss this evening. I must save other topics for another place and time.

### **The principle of repentance**

I will speak briefly of the principle of repentance. How grateful I am for the understanding we have of this great principle. It is not a harsh principle, as I thought when I was a boy. It is kind and merciful.

The Hebrew root of the word means, simply, “to turn,”<sup>1</sup> or to *return*, to God. Jehovah pled with the children of Israel: “Return . . . and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful . . . and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.”<sup>2</sup>

When we acknowledge our sins, confess them and forsake them, and turn to God, He will forgive us.

### **A young widow seeks forgiveness**

While I was serving as mission president recently, two of our elders asked if I would meet with an investigator who was scheduled for baptism the following day. She had some questions they were unable to answer. We drove to her home, where I met a young widow in her late 20s with a child. Her husband had been killed in a tragic accident a few years earlier. Her questions were thoughtful, and she was receptive. After these were resolved, I asked if she had any other concerns. She indicated that she did and that she wanted to speak with me alone. I asked the elders to step outside and stand on the lawn where they could see us clearly through a large window.

As soon as the door closed behind them, she began to weep. She recounted her years alone, filled with heartache and loneliness. During those years she had made some serious mistakes. She had known better, she said, but had lacked the strength to choose the right path until she had met our missionaries. During the weeks they taught her, she had pled with the Lord to forgive her. She sought assurance from me that through her repentance and through the ordinances of baptism and the receipt of the Holy Ghost, she could be cleansed and become worthy of membership in the Church. I taught her from the scriptures and bore testimony of the principle of repentance and of the Atonement.

The next day my wife and I attended her baptism and that of her little girl. The room was filled with friends from her ward, ready and anxious to stand by her as a new member of the Church. As we left that service, I was overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for the magnificent principle of repentance and for the Atonement that makes it possible, for the miracle of conversion, for this great Church and its members, and for our missionaries.

What does my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mean to me? It means everything. It influences, enlivens, permeates, and gives purpose and meaning to everything in life that is important to me: my relationship with God, my Eternal Father, and with His Holy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It teaches me that through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel, I will find peace and happiness in this life and be invited to live in God's presence, with my

family, in the life that surely will follow mortality, where His mercy will satisfy the demands of justice and encircle me and mine, and you and yours, in the arms of safety.<sup>3</sup> I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Joseph P. Healey, "Repentance," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (1992), 5:671.
2. Jeremiah 3:12–13.
3. See Alma 34:16.

#### President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," for indeed we do. Following the singing, it will be my pleasure to address you.

## President James E. Faust

### Blessing of holding Aaronic Priesthood

My dear brethren, it is always a great privilege and heavy responsibility to address the priesthood of the Church. This is possibly the largest gathering of priesthood in the history of the world. I should like to speak to you young men about how blessed you are to hold the Aaronic Priesthood, which is also known as the "lesser priesthood." But the word *lesser*, however, does not in any way take away from its importance. There's nothing small about it—especially when I see how big some of you young men are!

### The honor of passing the sacrament

I'm sure you remember how excited you were the first time you passed the sacrament. As you Aaronic Priesthood

holders assist in preparing, blessing, administering, and passing the sacrament, you help all members who partake thereof to recommit themselves to the Lord and to renew their faith in the Savior's atoning sacrifice. Members who take the sacrament are reminded to take upon themselves the name of the Son, always remember Him, keep His commandments, and seek to have His Spirit to be with them. I hope that you will value the priesthood you hold and always honor your priesthood duties.

I recently read the account of some deacons who got a little careless in their attitude towards passing the sacrament. They began to think of it as a chore, something that no one else wanted to do. They often came in late, and sometimes they didn't dress appropriately. One Sunday their priesthood adviser told them: "You

don't have to worry about the sacrament today. It's been taken care of."

They were, of course, surprised to hear this, but as usual, they were late for sacrament meeting. They slipped in casually during the opening hymn and sat in the congregation. That's when they noticed who was sitting on the deacons' bench—their adviser and the high priests of the ward, who included men who had served as bishops and stake president. They were all dressed in dark suits with white shirts and ties. But more than that, their bearing was one of total reverence as they took the sacrament trays from row to row. Something was deeper and more significant about the sacrament that day. Those deacons who had become so perfunctory in their duties learned by example that passing the sacrament was a sacred trust and one of the greatest of honors.<sup>1</sup> They began to realize that the priesthood is, as the Apostle Peter called it, "a royal priesthood."<sup>2</sup>

Generally, the Aaronic Priesthood, under the direction of the bishopric, has the responsibility to administer and pass the sacrament. In our home ward here in Salt Lake City, we have a good number of faithful, older members but few of Aaronic Priesthood age. Over the years I have watched these high priests and elders, men of faith and great accomplishments, humbly and reverently pass the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For a while this group of priesthood holders included a senior federal judge, a candidate for the office of governor of the state of Utah, and other prominent men of stature. Yet they were honored and obviously felt privileged to perform this sacred priesthood duty.

The Aaronic Priesthood is a great gift of spiritual power that the Lord conferred upon Aaron and his sons.<sup>3</sup> It holds "the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel"<sup>4</sup> and also includes "the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."<sup>5</sup>

## **The ministering of angels**

I would like to say a word about the ministering of angels. In ancient and modern times angels have appeared and given instruction, warnings, and direction, which benefited the people they visited. We do not consciously realize the extent to which ministering angels affect our lives. President Joseph F. Smith said, "In like manner our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and friends who have passed away from this earth, having been faithful, and worthy to enjoy these rights and privileges, may have a mission given them to visit their relatives and friends upon the earth again, bringing from the divine Presence messages of love, of warning, or reproof and instruction, to those whom they had learned to love in the flesh."<sup>6</sup> Many of us feel that we have had this experience. Their ministry has been and is an important part of the gospel. Angels ministered to Joseph Smith as he reestablished the gospel in its fullness.

## **Alma the Younger's conversion**

Alma the Younger had a personal experience with ministering angels. As a young man, he was numbered among the unbelievers and "led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities." One day, "while he was going about to destroy the church of God" in company with the sons of Mosiah, an "angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake." The angel then cried out, "Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God?"

Alma was so overcome by this experience that he fainted and had to be carried to his father. Only after his father and others had fasted and prayed for two days was Alma restored to full health and strength. He then stood up and declared, "I have repented of my sins, and have been re-

deemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Alma went on to become one of the greatest missionaries in the Book of Mormon. Yet in all his many years of missionary service, he never spoke of the angel’s visit. Instead, he chose to testify that the truth had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit of God.

To be instructed by an angel would be a great blessing. However, as Alma taught us, his final and lasting conversion came only after he had “fasted and prayed many days.”<sup>8</sup> His complete conversion came from the Holy Ghost, which is available to all of us if we are worthy.

Miraculous events have not always been a source of conversion. For example, when Laman and Lemuel physically mistreated their younger brothers, an angel appeared and warned them to stop. The angel also reassured all of the brothers that Laban would be delivered into their hands. Nephi, on the one hand, believed and claimed the brass plates from Laban. Laman and Lemuel, on the other hand, did not believe, nor did they change their behavior as a result of the angelic visit. As Nephi reminded them, “How is it that ye have forgotten that ye have seen an angel of the Lord?”<sup>9</sup>

You young men are building your testimonies. These are strengthened by spiritual confirmation through the Holy Ghost in the ordinary experiences of life. While some great manifestation could strengthen your testimony, it won’t likely happen that way.

### **Blessings and obligations of the Aaronic Priesthood**

While holding the priesthood brings great blessings, the priesthood also carries with it great obligations.

1. All priesthood holders need to magnify their callings, acting in the Lord’s name to the extent their office and calling permit. We magnify our callings by following the direction of our quorum presi-

dency, the bishop, and our quorum adviser. It means preparing, administering, and passing the sacrament as we are asked to do so. It also means performing other responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood, such as cleaning our Church meeting-houses, setting up chairs for stake conference and other Church meetings, and performing other duties as assigned.

2. Holders of the Aaronic, or preparatory, Priesthood are obligated to qualify for the higher priesthood and to receive training for greater responsibilities in Church service.

3. Holding the Aaronic Priesthood carries with it the obligation of being a good example, with clean thoughts and proper behavior. We acquire these attributes as we carry out our priesthood duties.

4. You will be associated in your quorum and other activities with young men who have the same standards that you have. You can strengthen each other.

5. You can study the scriptures and learn gospel principles to help you prepare for a mission.

6. You can learn to pray and recognize answers.

### **Duties of the Aaronic Priesthood**

The Doctrine and Covenants describes different kinds of authority relating to the Aaronic Priesthood. First, ordination to the priesthood gives authority to perform the ordinances and possess the power of the Aaronic Priesthood. The bishopric is the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward.<sup>10</sup> Second, within this priesthood are different offices, each with different responsibilities and privileges. As a deacon, you are to watch over the Church as a standing minister.<sup>11</sup> As a teacher, in addition to watching over the Church, you are to “be with and strengthen them.”<sup>12</sup> As a priest, you are “to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the

house of each member.”<sup>13</sup> Your bishop, who holds the office of high priest, is also the president of the priests quorum and directs the work of the quorum.

As you progress from one of these offices of the Aaronic Priesthood to the next, you will retain the authority of the previous one. For example, those of you who are priests still have authority to do everything you did as deacons and teachers. Indeed, even when you are ultimately ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, you will still keep and act in the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood. The late Elder LeGrand Richards, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve for many years, understood this principle well. He often used to say, “I’m just a grown-up deacon.”

As I have noted, teaching is one of the important duties of the Aaronic Priesthood. The opportunity for you young teenagers to teach often comes as you serve as a home teaching companion to your father or some other Melchizedek Priesthood holder. Looking after needs in a temporal and spiritual way is a very significant part of watching over the Church.

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave high priority to home teaching. A Brother Oakley was the Prophet’s home teacher, and whenever Brother Oakley went home teaching to the Smith home, “the Prophet called his family together and gave his own chair to Oakley, telling his family” to listen carefully to Brother Oakley.<sup>14</sup>

### The evil of addiction

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood need to have the Spirit with you in your personal lives as well as in home teaching, preparing or passing the sacrament, or other priesthood activities. You will need to avoid some stumbling blocks. One of the biggest of these is addiction.

I counsel all of you brethren to avoid every kind of addiction. At this time Satan and his followers are enslaving some of our choicest young people through addic-

tion to alcohol, all kinds of drugs, pornography, tobacco, gambling, and other compulsive disorders. Some people seem to be born with a weakness for these substances so that only a single experimentation will result in uncontrollable addiction. Some addictions are actually mind-altering and create a craving that overpowers reason and judgment. These addictions destroy the lives not only of those who do not resist them but also their parents, spouses, and children. As the prophet Jeremiah lamented, “The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates.”<sup>15</sup>

The Lord in His wisdom has warned us that substances that are not good for us should be totally avoided. We have been warned not to take the first drink, smoke the first cigarette, or try the first drug. Curiosity and peer pressure are selfish reasons to dabble with addictive substances. We should stop and consider the full consequences, not just to ourselves and our futures, but also to our loved ones. These consequences are physical, but they also risk the loss of the Spirit and cause us to fall prey to Satan.

I testify of the refining, spiritual, comforting, strengthening, and restraining influence the priesthood has had in my life. I have lived under its spiritual influence all my life—in my grandfather’s home, in my father’s home, and then in my own home. It is humbling to use the transcending power and authority of the priesthood to empower others and to heal and bless. May we live worthy of holding the priesthood authority to act in the name of God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Adapted from Laird Roberts, “On Water and Bread,” *New Era*, May 1984, 8–9.
2. 1 Peter 2:9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:18.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 436.
7. See Mosiah 27:8–24.
8. Alma 5:46.
9. 1 Nephi 7:10.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:15.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:111; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:57–59.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–47.

14. William G. Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851–1883,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1976, 384.
15. Lamentations 4:12.

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### A great blessing to hold the priesthood

Some years ago as our youngest son, Clark, was approaching his 12th birthday, he and I were leaving the Church Administration Building when President Harold B. Lee approached and greeted us. I mentioned to President Lee that Clark would soon be 12, whereupon President Lee turned to him and asked, “What happens to you when you turn 12?”

This was one of those times when a father prays that a son will be inspired to give a proper response. Clark, without hesitation, said to President Lee, “I will be ordained a deacon!”

The answer was the one for which I had prayed and which President Lee had sought. He then counseled our son, “Remember, it is a great blessing to hold the priesthood.”

### Be prepared to share testimony

I hope with all my heart and soul that every young man who receives the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which is conveyed when it is conferred. May each of us who holds the priesthood of God know what he believes. As the Apostle Peter admonished, may we ever be ready “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”<sup>1</sup> There will be occasions in each of our lives when we

will be called upon to explain or to defend our beliefs. When the time for performance arrives, the time for preparation is past.

Most of you young men will have the opportunity to share your testimonies when you serve as missionaries throughout the world. Prepare now for that wonderful privilege.

### Answering a state secretary’s questions

I have experienced many opportunities. One occurred 21 years ago, prior to the time when the German Democratic Republic—or East Germany, as it was more commonly known—was freed from Communist rule. I was visiting with the East German state secretary, Minister Gysi. At that time our temple at Freiberg, in East Germany, was under construction, along with two or three meetinghouses. Minister Gysi and I visited on a number of subjects, including our worldwide building program. He then asked, “Why is your church so wealthy that you can afford to build buildings in our country and throughout the world? How do you get your money?”

I answered that the Church is not wealthy but that we follow the ancient biblical principle of tithing, which principle is reemphasized in our modern scripture. I explained also that our Church has no paid ministry and indicated that these

were two reasons why we were able to build the buildings then under way, including the beautiful temple at Freiberg.

Minister Gysi was most impressed with the information I presented, and I was very grateful I was able to answer his questions.

The opportunity to declare a truth may come when we least expect it. Let us be prepared.

### **“Divine authority by direct revelation”**

On one occasion, President David O. McKay was asked by a woman not a member of the Church what specific belief set apart the teachings of the Church from those of any other faith. In speaking of this later, President McKay indicated that he had felt impressed to answer, “That which differentiates the beliefs of my church from those of others is divine authority by direct revelation.”<sup>2</sup>

Where could we find a more significant example of divine authority by direct revelation than in the events which occurred that “beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty,” when the lad Joseph Smith retired to the woods to pray. His words describing that moment in history are overpowering:

“I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>3</sup>

Our thoughts turn to the visit of that heavenly messenger John the Baptist on May 15, 1829. There on the bank of the Susquehanna River, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John laid his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and ordained them, saying, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by

immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>4</sup> The messenger announced that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Ordination and baptism followed. This is yet another example of divine authority by direct revelation.

In due time, Peter, James, and John were sent to bestow the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood. These Apostles sent by the Lord ordained and confirmed Joseph and Oliver to be Apostles and special witnesses of His name. Divine authority by direct revelation characterized this sacred visitation.

As a result of these experiences, all of us carry the requirement—even the blessed opportunity and solemn duty—to be true to the trust we have received.

President Brigham Young declared, “The Priesthood of the Son of God is . . . the law by which the worlds are, were, and will continue for ever and ever.”<sup>5</sup> President Joseph F. Smith, expanding on this theme, advised, “It is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, but authority that has been given in this day in which we live by ministering angels and spirits from above, direct from the presence of Almighty God.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Interview with stake president**

As I approached my 18th birthday and prepared to enter military service in World War II, I was recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Mine was the task to telephone President Paul C. Child, my stake president, for an interview. He was one who loved and understood the holy scriptures, and it was his intent that all others should similarly love and understand them. As I knew from others of his

rather detailed and searching interviews, our telephone conversation went something like this:

“Hello, President Child. This is Brother Monson. I have been asked by the bishop to visit with you relative to being ordained an elder.”

“Fine, Brother Monson. When can you see me?”

Knowing that his sacrament meeting time was 4:00 and desiring minimum exposure of my scriptural knowledge to his review, I suggested, “How would 3:00 be?”

His response: “Oh, Brother Monson, that would not provide us sufficient time to peruse the scriptures. Could you please come at 2:00 and bring with you your personally marked set of scriptures?”

Sunday finally arrived, and I visited President Child’s home. I was greeted warmly, and then the interview began. He said, “Brother Monson, you hold the Aaronic Priesthood.” Of course, I knew that. He continued, “Have you ever had an angel minister to you?”

My reply, “I’m not sure.”

“Do you know,” said he, “that you are entitled to such?”

Came my response: “No.”

Then he instructed, “Brother Monson, repeat from memory the 13th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.”

I began, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels . . .”

“Stop,” President Child directed. Then in a calm, kindly tone, he counseled, “Brother Monson, never forget that as a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood you are entitled to the ministering of angels. Now continue the passage.”

I recited from memory the remainder of the section. President Child said, “Splendid.” He then discussed with me several other sections of the Doctrine and

Covenants pertaining to the priesthood. It was a long interview, but I have never forgotten it. At the conclusion, President Child put his arm around my shoulder and said, “You are now ready to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Remember that the Lord blesses the person who serves Him.”

### **Experience at leadership meeting**

Many years later, Paul C. Child, then of the Priesthood Welfare Committee, and I attended a stake conference together. At the priesthood leadership session, when it was his turn to speak, he took his scriptures in hand and walked from the stand into the congregation. Knowing President Child as I did, I knew what he was going to do. He quoted from the Doctrine and Covenants, including section 18 concerning the worth of a soul, indicating that we should labor all our days to bring souls unto the Lord. He then turned to one elders quorum president and asked, “What is the worth of a soul?”

The stunned quorum president hesitated as he formulated his reply. I had a prayer in my heart that he would be able to answer the question. He finally responded, “The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God.”

Brother Child closed his scriptures, walked solemnly and quietly up the aisle and back to the stand. As he passed by me, he said, “A most profound reply.”

### **Oath and covenant of the priesthood**

We need to know the oath and covenant of the priesthood because it pertains to all of us. To those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is a declaration of our requirement to be faithful and obedient to the laws of God and to magnify the callings which come to us. To those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, it is a pronouncement concerning future



duty and responsibility, that they may prepare themselves here and now.

This oath and covenant is set forth by the Lord in these words:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”<sup>7</sup>

The late Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Quorum of the Twelve once observed: “There are two main requirements of this oath and covenant. First is faithfulness, which denotes obedience to the laws of God and connotes true observance of all gospel standards. . . .

“The second requirement . . . is to magnify one’s calling. To magnify is to honor, to exalt and glorify, and cause to be held in greater esteem or respect. It also means to increase the importance of, to enlarge and make greater.”<sup>8</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith was once asked, “Brother Joseph, you frequently urge that we magnify our callings. What does this mean?” He is said to have replied, “To magnify a calling is to hold it up in dignity and importance, that the light of heaven may shine through one’s performance to the gaze of other men. An elder magnifies his calling when he learns what his duties as an elder are and then performs them.”

### **Priest’s experience blessing the sacrament**

Those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood should be given opportunity to magnify their callings in that priesthood.

One Sunday two years ago I was attending sacrament meeting in my ward. That’s a rarity. There were three priests at the sacrament table, with the young man in the center being somewhat handicapped in movement but particularly so in speech. He tried twice to bless the bread but stumbled badly each time, no doubt embarrassed by his inability to give the prayer perfectly. One of the other priests then took over and gave the blessing on the bread.

During the passing of the bread, I thought to myself, “I just can’t let that young man experience failure at the sacrament table.” I had a strong feeling that if I didn’t doubt, he would be able to bless the water effectively. Inasmuch as I was on the stand near the sacrament table, I leaned over and said to the priest closest to me, pointing to the young man who had experienced the difficulty, “Let him bless the water; it’s a shorter prayer.” And then I prayed. I didn’t want a double failure. I love that passage of scripture which tells us that we should not doubt but believe.<sup>9</sup>

When it was time to bless the water, that young man knelt again and gave the prayer, perhaps somewhat haltingly but without missing a word. I rejoiced silently. While the deacons were passing the trays, I looked over at the boy and gave him a thumbs-up. He gave me a broad smile. When the young men were excused to sit with their families, he sat on the row between his mother and father. What a joy it was to see his mother give him a big smile and a warm hug, while his father congratulated him and put his arm around his shoulder. All three of them looked in my direction, and I gave them all a thumbs-up. I could see the mother and father wiping

tears from their eyes. I felt impressed that this young man would do just fine in the future.

### Example of Isaac Reiter

The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

Not long ago I received a letter concerning a choice young deacon, Isaac Reiter, and the deacons, teachers, and priests who served, lifted, and blessed his life and their own lives.

Isaac fought cancer from the time he was seven months old until his death at age 13. When he and his family moved to a home near a hospital so that Isaac could receive proper medical attention, the Aaronic Priesthood members in the nearby ward were asked to provide the sacrament to them each Sunday. This weekly ordinance became a favorite of the Aaronic Priesthood holders who participated. Along with their leaders and Isaac's family, they would gather around Isaac's hospital bed, sing hymns, and share testimonies. Then the sacrament would be blessed. Isaac always insisted that, as a deacon, he pass the sacrament to his family and to those who had brought it. As he lay in his bed, he gathered the strength to hold a plate of either the blessed bread or water. All present would come to Isaac and partake of the sacrament from the plate. Nurses and other medical staff soon began to participate in the meeting as they realized that Isaac was close to his Heavenly Father and always honored Him. Though weak and in pain, Isaac always held himself with the honor of someone holding a royal priesthood.

Isaac was a great example to the young men in the ward. They saw his desire to fulfill his duties, even on his deathbed, and they realized that those duties were really privileges. They began showing up earlier in order to prepare the sacrament and to

be in their seats on time. There was more reverence.

Isaac Reiter became a living sermon concerning honoring the priesthood. At his funeral, it was said that throughout his life he had one foot in heaven. No doubt he continues to magnify his duties and assist in the work beyond the veil.

### Whom God calls, God qualifies

For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep do look up, ready to be fed the bread of life. Are we prepared, brethren, to feed the flock of God? It is imperative that we recognize the worth of a human soul, that we never give up on one of His precious sons.

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the words of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."<sup>10</sup>

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. Whom God calls, God qualifies.

May our Heavenly Father ever bless, ever inspire, and ever lead all who hold His precious priesthood is my sincere prayer, and I offer it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 1 Peter 3:15.
2. See David O. McKay, *Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life* (1971), 375.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:14, 17.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.

5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 130.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139–40.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–38.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 76.
9. See Mormon 9:27.
10. Ether 12:27.

### **President Monson**

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 a.m. We encourage you to move

your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes for the beautiful music, the inspiring music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, a man of God, will be our concluding speaker at this priesthood session. Listen carefully, brethren, to the prophet speak. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Come, O Thou King of Kings.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Brother Monson is a very difficult man to follow. He is full of humor and yet great sincerity.

Thank you, my brethren, for your faith and prayers. I deeply appreciate them.

### **Why so much hatred in the world?**

When a man grows old he develops a softer touch, a kindlier manner. I have thought of this much of late.

I have wondered why there is so much hatred in the world. We are involved in terrible wars with lives lost and many crippling wounds. Coming closer to home, there is so much of jealousy, pride, arrogance, and carping criticism; fathers who rise in anger over small, inconsequential things and make wives weep and children fear.

### **Racial hatred has no basis among us**

Racial strife still lifts its ugly head. I am advised that even right here among us there is some of this. I cannot understand how it can be. It seemed to me that we all rejoiced in the 1978 revelation given Pres-

ident Kimball. I was there in the temple at the time that that happened. There was no doubt in my mind or in the minds of my associates that what was revealed was the mind and the will of the Lord.

Now I am told that racial slurs and denigrating remarks are sometimes heard among us. I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ. Nor can he consider himself to be in harmony with the teachings of the Church of Christ. How can any man holding the Melchizedek Priesthood arrogantly assume that he is eligible for the priesthood whereas another who lives a righteous life but whose skin is of a different color is ineligible?

Throughout my service as a member of the First Presidency, I have recognized and spoken a number of times on the diversity we see in our society. It is all about us, and we must make an effort to accommodate that diversity.

Let us all recognize that each of us is a son or daughter of our Father in Heaven, who loves all of His children.

Brethren, there is no basis for racial hatred among the priesthood of this Church. If any within the sound of my voice is inclined to indulge in this, then let him go before the Lord and ask for forgiveness and be no more involved in such.

### **Duty of husbands to support families**

I receive letters from time to time suggesting items that the writers feel should be dealt with at conference. One such came the other day. It is from a woman who indicates that her first marriage ended in divorce. She then met a man who seemed to be a very kind and considerate individual. However, she discovered soon after marriage that his finances were in disarray; he had little money, yet he quit his job and refused employment. She was then forced to go to work to provide for the family.

Years have passed, and he still is unemployed. She then speaks of two other men who are following the same pattern, refusing to work while their wives are compelled to spend long hours providing for their households.

Said Paul to Timothy, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Those are very strong words.

The Lord has said in modern revelation:

"Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken. . . .

"All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:2, 4).

From the early days of this Church, husbands have been considered the breadwinners of the family. I believe that no man can be considered a member in good standing who refuses to work to support his family if he is physically able to do so.

### **Conflict is work of the adversary**

Now I indicated earlier that I did not know why there was so much conflict and hatred and bitterness in the world. Of course, I know that all of this is the work of the adversary. He works on us as individuals. He destroys strong men. From the time of the organization of this Church he has done so. President Wilford Woodruff said this:

"I have seen Oliver Cowdery when it seemed as though the earth trembled under his feet. I never heard a man bear a stronger testimony than he did when under the influence of the Spirit. But the moment he left the kingdom of God, that moment his power fell. . . . He was shorn of his strength, like Samson in the lap of Delilah. He lost the power and testimony which he had enjoyed, and he never recovered it again in its fulness while in the flesh, although he died [a member of] the Church" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 105).

### **One young man's experience**

I have permission to tell you the story of a young man who grew up in our community. He was not a member of the Church. He and his parents were active in another faith.

He recalls that when he was growing up, some of his LDS associates belittled him, made him feel out of place, and poked fun at him.

He came to literally hate this Church and its people. He saw no good in any of them.

Then his father lost his employment and had to move. In the new location, at the age of 17, he was able to enroll in college. There, for the first time in his life, he felt the warmth of friends, one of whom, named Richard, asked him to join a club of which he was president. He writes:

“For the first time in my life someone wanted me around. I didn’t know how to react, but thankfully I joined. . . . It was a feeling that I loved, the feeling of having a friend. I had prayed for one my whole life. And now after 17 years of waiting, God answered that prayer.”

At the age of 19 he found himself as a tent partner with Richard during their summer employment. He noticed Richard reading a book every night. He asked what he was reading. He was told that he was reading the Book of Mormon. He adds:

“I quickly changed the subject and went to bed. After all, that is the book that ruined my childhood. I tried forgetting about it, but a week went by and I couldn’t sleep. Why was he reading it every night? I soon couldn’t stand the unanswered questions in my head. So one night I asked him what was so important in that book. What was in it? He handed me the book. I quickly stated that I never wanted to touch the book. I just wanted to know what was in there. He started to read where he had stopped. He read about Jesus and about an appearance in the Americas. I was shocked. I didn’t think that the Mormons believed in Jesus.”

Richard asked him to sing in a stake conference choir with him. The day came and the conference started. “Elder Gary J. Coleman from the First Quorum of the Seventy was the guest speaker. I found out during the conference that he also [was a convert]. At the end Richard proceeded to pull me by the arm up to talk to him. I finally agreed, and as I was approaching him he turned and smiled at me. I introduced myself and said that I wasn’t a member and that I had just come to sing in the choir. He smiled and said he was happy that I was there and stated that the music was great. I asked him how he knew the Church was true. He told me a short version of his testimony and asked if I had read the Book of Mormon. I said no. He

promised me that the first time I read it, I would feel the Spirit.”

On a subsequent occasion this young man and his friend were traveling. Richard handed him a Book of Mormon and asked that he read it aloud. He did so, and suddenly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit touched him.

Time passed and his faith increased. He agreed to be baptized. His parents opposed him, but he went forward and was baptized a member of this Church.

His testimony continues to strengthen. Only a few weeks ago he was married to a beautiful Latter-day Saint girl for time and eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. Elder Gary J. Coleman performed his sealing.

### **Need for kindness, respect, and love**

That is the end of the story, but there are great statements in that story. One is the sorry manner in which his young Mormon associates treated him.

Next is the manner in which his new-found friend, Richard, treated him. It was totally opposite from his previous experience. It led to his conversion and baptism in the face of terrible odds.

This kind of miracle can happen and will happen when there is kindness, respect, and love. Why do any of us have to be so mean and unkind to others? Why can’t all of us reach out in friendship to everyone about us? Why is there so much bitterness and animosity? It is not a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Joseph Smith’s example of forgiving**

We all stumble occasionally. We all make mistakes. I paraphrase the words of Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer: “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (see Matthew 6:12; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13).

William W. Phelps, who was close to the Prophet Joseph, betrayed him in 1838, which led to Joseph's incarceration in Missouri. Recognizing the great evil of the thing he had done, Brother Phelps wrote to the Prophet, asking forgiveness. The Prophet replied in part as follows:

"It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior—the cup of gall, already full enough for mortals to drink, was indeed filled to overflowing when you turned against us. . . .

"However, the cup has been drunk, the will of our Father has been done, and we are yet alive, for which we thank the Lord. . . .

"Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal.

"Your letter was read to the Saints last Sunday, and an expression of their feeling was taken, when it was unanimously Resolved, That W. W. Phelps should be received into fellowship.

"Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

"For friends at first, are friends again at last' " (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 165–66).

Brethren, it is this spirit, expressed by the Prophet, which we must cultivate in our lives. We cannot be complacent about it. We are members of the Church of our Lord. We have an obligation to Him as well as to ourselves and others. This sinful old world so much needs men of strength, men of virtue, men of faith and righteousness, men willing to forgive and forget.

### Examples of members' love and concern

Now, in concluding, I am pleased to note that the examples and stories I have given do not represent the actions and attitudes of the great majority of our peo-

ple. I see all around me a marvelous outpouring of love and concern for others.

A week ago this hall was filled with beautiful young women who are striving to live the gospel. They are generous toward one another. They seek to strengthen one another. They are a credit to their parents and the homes from which they come. They are approaching womanhood and will carry throughout their lives the ideals which presently motivate them.

Think of the vast good done by the women of the Relief Society. The shadow of their benevolent activities extends all across the world. Women reach down and give of their time, their loving care, and their resources to assist the sick and the poor.

Think of the welfare program with volunteers reaching out to supply food, clothing, and other needed items to those in distress.

Think of the far reaches of our humanitarian efforts in going beyond the membership of the Church to the poverty-ridden nations of the earth. The scourge of measles is being eradicated in many areas through the contributions of this Church.

Observe the workings of the Perpetual Education Fund in lifting thousands out of the slough of poverty and into the sunlight of knowledge and prosperity.

And thus I might go on reminding you of the vast efforts of the good people of this Church in blessing the lives of one another and with an outreach that extends across the world to the poor and distressed of the earth.

### Radiate the light of the gospel

There is no end to the good we can do, to the influence we can have with others. Let us not dwell on the critical or the negative. Let us pray for strength; let us pray for capacity and desire to assist others. Let us radiate the light of the gospel

at all times and all places, that the Spirit of the Redeemer may radiate from us.

In the words of the Lord to Joshua, brethren, “be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God [will be] with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9).

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

Elder Robert J. Whetten offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 2, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. The choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction

of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” and will now favor us with “He Sent His Son.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “I Stand All Amazed.”

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The choir sang “He Sent His Son.”

Elder H. Bryan Richards offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Stand All Amazed.”

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### **President Monson**

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Redeemer of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. Following her remarks, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. The choir will then sing “O Lord Most Holy.”

## President James E. Faust

### The fulness of the restored gospel

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we care about all of God's children who now live or who have ever lived upon the earth. "Our message," as stated by the First Presidency in 1978, "is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father."<sup>1</sup> As Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated a few years ago:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has many beliefs in common with other Christian churches. But we have differences, and those differences explain why we send missionaries to other Christians, why we build temples in addition to churches, and why our beliefs bring us such happiness and strength to deal with the challenges of life and death."<sup>2</sup>

I wish to testify today of the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which adds to the religious beliefs of other denominations, both Christian and non-Christian. This fulness was originally established by the Savior in His earthly ministry. But then there was a falling away.

### The Apostasy

Some of the early Apostles knew that an apostasy would occur before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote concerning this event, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.*"<sup>3</sup>

With this falling away, priesthood keys were lost, and some precious doctrines of the Church organized by the Savior were changed. Among these were baptism by immersion;<sup>4</sup> receiving the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands;<sup>5</sup> the nature of the

Godhead—that They are three distinct personages;<sup>6</sup> all mankind will be resurrected through the Atonement of Christ, "both . . . the just and [the] unjust";<sup>7</sup> continuous revelation—that the heavens are not closed;<sup>8</sup> and temple work for the living and the dead.<sup>9</sup>

The period that followed came to be known as the Dark Ages. This falling away was foreseen by the Apostle Peter, who declared that "heaven must receive [Jesus Christ] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."<sup>10</sup> Restitution would only be necessary if these precious things had been lost.

### The Reformation

In the centuries that followed, religious men came to recognize that there had been a gradual falling away from the Church organized by Jesus Christ. Some of them suffered greatly for their beliefs, in what came to be called the Reformation, a 16th-century movement that aimed at reforming Western Christianity. This resulted in the separation of the Protestant churches from the main Christian church.

Among these reformers was the Reverend John Lathrop, vicar of the Egerton Church in Kent, England. Incidentally, the Prophet Joseph Smith was descended from John Lathrop. In 1623 the Reverend Lathrop resigned his position because he questioned the authority of the Anglican church to act in the name of God. As he read the Bible, he recognized that apostolic keys were not on the earth. In 1632 he became the minister of an illegal independent church and was put in prison. His wife died while he was in prison, and his orphaned children pleaded with the bishop for his release. The bishop agreed to release Lathrop on condition that he



leave the country. This he did, and with 32 members of his congregation he sailed to America.<sup>11</sup>

Roger Williams, a 17th-century pastor who founded Rhode Island, refused to continue as pastor in Providence on the grounds that there was “no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking.”<sup>12</sup>

These are but two of the religious scholars who recognized an apostasy from the Church organized by Jesus Christ and the need for a restoration of the priesthood keys that had been lost. The Apostle John saw in vision the time when “another angel [would] fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>13</sup> This prophecy has been fulfilled. Because we believe the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in our time by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we wish to give all people an opportunity to know and accept this message.

### **Restoration of priesthood and keys**

We now have in the restored Church apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists, as spoken of by Paul to the Ephesians.<sup>14</sup> These priesthood offices were established by the Savior when He organized His Church in the meridian of time. We recognize the two orders of the priesthood and the offices contained within them: the lesser priesthood is the Aaronic Priesthood, named after Aaron; and the greater priesthood is the Melchizedek Priesthood, named after Melchizedek, to whom Abraham paid tithes. The Aaronic Priesthood was restored on May 15, 1829, under the hands of John the Baptist, and the Melchizedek Priesthood within a month under the hands of the an-

cient Apostles Peter, James, and John to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Thus those possessing the priesthood today claim the power to act in the name of God through the priesthood, “which power commands respect both on earth and in heaven.”<sup>15</sup>

In the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, Moses appeared and gave the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the keys of the gathering of Israel. After this, Elias appeared and committed the gospel of Abraham, that in “our seed all generations after us should be blessed.”<sup>16</sup> After this, Elijah the prophet appeared and gave to them the keys of this dispensation, including the sealing power, to bind in heaven that which is bound on earth within the temples.<sup>17</sup> Thus, prophets of previous gospel dispensations presented their keys to the Prophet Joseph Smith in this, the “dispensation of the fulness of times” spoken of by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians.<sup>18</sup>

### **Establishment of tithing**

I am grateful the Lord has seen fit to establish again the law of tithes and offerings for this people. When we keep the law of tithing, the windows of heaven open for us. Great are the blessings poured down upon those who have the faith to keep the law of tithing.

### **Temple blessings available again**

Through the earth’s long history, temple worship has been a significant part of the Saints’ worship, by which they show their desire to come closer to their Creator. The temple was a place of learning for the Savior when He was on the earth; it was very much a part of His life. Temple blessings are available once again in our day. A unique feature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its teaching concerning temples and the eternal significance of all that occurs within

them. Our majestic and beautiful temples now dot much of the earth. In them the most sacred work is done.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated, “Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are sacred structures in which [man’s] eternal questions are answered.”<sup>19</sup> The solemn mysteries of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going are answered more fully in the temples. We came from God’s presence and are here on earth to prepare to return to His presence.

Of transcendent significance is that within the sacred walls of the temple, husbands and wives make eternal covenants. These covenants are sealed by priesthood authority. Children of that union, if they are worthy, may enjoy an eternal relationship as part of a family and as children of God. As the Apostle John wrote: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? . . . Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”<sup>20</sup>

The Lord has said that His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>21</sup> It follows then that all mankind, living and dead, should have the opportunity of hearing the gospel either in this life or in the spirit world. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”<sup>22</sup> This is the reason we do ordinance work in temples for our deceased ancestors. No person’s choice or agency is taken away. Those for whom the work is done may accept it or not, as they choose.

### **Coming forth of the Book of Mormon**

The Apostle John saw in vision the time when an angel would come to the earth as part of the Restoration of the gospel. That angel was Moroni, who appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He directed

Joseph to the place where golden plates containing ancient writings were deposited. Joseph Smith then translated these plates by the gift and power of God, and the Book of Mormon was published. This is a record of two groups of people who lived centuries ago on the American continent. Little was known about them before the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. But more importantly, the Book of Mormon is another testament of Christ. It restored precious truths concerning the Fall, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and life after death.

### **Latter-day revelation**

Prior to the Restoration, the heavens had been closed for centuries. But with prophets and apostles upon the earth once more, the heavens were opened once again with visions and revelations. Many of the revelations that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith were written down in a book that came to be known as the Doctrine and Covenants. This contains further insights about principles and ordinances and is a valuable source concerning the structure of the priesthood. In addition, we have another canon of scripture called the Pearl of Great Price. It contains the book of Moses, which came by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the book of Abraham, which he translated from a purchased Egyptian scroll. From these we learn not only a great deal more about Moses, Abraham, Enoch, and other prophets but also many more details about the Creation. We learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ was taught to all of the prophets from the beginning—even from the time of Adam.<sup>23</sup>

### **Restored gospel calls for respect for others**

We believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restoration of the original Church established by Jesus

Christ, which was built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>24</sup> It is not a break-off from any other church.

We believe that the fulness of the gospel of Christ has been restored, but this is no reason for anyone to feel superior in any way toward others of God’s children. Rather, it requires a greater obligation to invoke the essence of the gospel of Christ in our lives—to love, serve, and bless others. Indeed, as the First Presidency stated in 1978, we believe that “the great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, we have respect for the sincere religious beliefs of others and appreciate others extending the same courtesy and respect for the tenets we hold dear.

I have a personal witness of the truth of the covenants, teachings, and authority restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This assurance has been with me all of my life. I am grateful that the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel has taken place in our time. It contains the pathway to eternal life. May the strength, peace, and concern of God the Father and the abiding love and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. “Statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s Love for All Mankind,” Feb. 15, 1978.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 112; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.
3. 2 Thessalonians 2:3; italics added.
4. See Mark 1:9–10.
5. See Acts 8:14–17; 19:3–6.
6. See Matthew 3:17; Acts 7:55; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
7. Acts 24:15.
8. See Daniel 2:28; Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 121:26.
9. See Obadiah 1:21; Malachi 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Revelation 7:15.
10. Acts 3:20–21.
11. See Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (1975), 34–35.
12. See William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. (1872–74), 1:502; see also LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. (1966), 29.
13. Revelation 14:6.
14. See Ephesians 4:11.
15. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 204.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
18. Ephesians 1:10.
19. “Why These Temples?” in *Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1999), 14.
20. Revelation 7:13, 15.
21. Moses 1:39.
22. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
23. See Moses 5:58; 8:19; Abraham 2:10–11.
24. Ephesians 2:20.
25. First Presidency statement, Feb. 15, 1978.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### “Blessed are the poor in spirit”

The first words Jesus spoke in His majestic Sermon on the Mount were to the troubled, the discouraged and downhearted. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,”

He said, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup> Whether you are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or among the tens of thousands listening this morning who are not of our faith, I speak to those who are facing per-

sonal trials and family struggles, those who endure conflicts fought in the lonely foxholes of the heart, those trying to hold back floodwaters of despair that sometimes wash over us like a tsunami of the soul. I wish to speak particularly to you who feel your lives are broken, seemingly beyond repair.

### **“Come unto me”**

To all such I offer the surest and sweetest remedy that I know. It is found in the clarion call the Savior of the world Himself gave. He said it in the beginning of His ministry, and He said it in the end. He said it to believers, and He said it to those who were not so sure. He said it to everyone, whatever their personal problems might be:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”<sup>2</sup>

In this promise, that introductory phrase, “come unto me,” is crucial. It is the key to the peace and rest we seek. Indeed, when the resurrected Savior gave His sermon at the temple to the Nephites in the New World, He began, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who *come unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

When Andrew and John first heard Christ speak, they were so moved they followed Him as He walked away from the crowd. Sensing He was being pursued, Jesus turned and asked the two men, “What seek ye?” They answered, “Where dwellest thou?” And Christ said, “Come and see.” The next day He found another disciple, Philip, and said to him, “Follow me.”<sup>4</sup> Just a short time later He formally called Peter and others of the new Apostles with the same spirit of invitation. Come, “follow me,”<sup>5</sup> He said.

It seems clear that the essence of our duty and the fundamental requirement of our mortal life is captured in these brief

phrases from any number of scenes in the Savior’s mortal ministry. He is saying to us, “Trust me, learn of me, do what I do. Then, when you walk where *I* am going,” He says, “we can talk about where *you* are going and the problems you face and the troubles you have. If you will follow me, I will lead you out of darkness,” He promises. “I will give you answers to your prayers. I will give you rest to your souls.”

My beloved friends, I know of no other way for us to succeed or to be safe amid life’s many pitfalls and problems. I know of no other way for us to carry our burdens or find what Jacob in the Book of Mormon called “that happiness which is prepared for the saints.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Exercising faith**

So how does one “come unto Christ” in response to this constant invitation? The scriptures give scores of examples and avenues. You are well acquainted with the most basic ones. The easiest and the earliest comes simply with the desire of our heart, the most basic form of faith that we know. “If ye can no more than *desire* to believe,” Alma says, exercising just “a *particle* of faith,” giving even a *small place* for the promises of God to find a home—that is enough to begin.<sup>7</sup> Just believing, just having a “molecule” of faith—simply hoping for things which are not yet seen in our lives, but which are nevertheless truly there to be bestowed<sup>8</sup>—that simple step, when focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair.

### **Changing what we can by repentance**

Second, we must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. In short, we must repent, perhaps the most hopeful and encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. We thank our Father in Heaven we are *allowed* to change,

we thank Jesus we *can* change, and ultimately we do so only with Their divine assistance. Certainly not everything we struggle with is a result of our actions. Often it is the result of the actions of others or just the mortal events of life. But anything we can change we *should* change, and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior's Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there.

### **Taking upon us the name of Christ**

Third, in as many ways as possible we try to take upon us His identity, and we begin by taking upon us His name. That name is formally bestowed by covenant in the saving ordinances of the gospel. These start with baptism and conclude with temple covenants, with many others, such as partaking of the sacrament, laced throughout our lives as additional blessings and reminders. Teaching the people of his day the message we give this morning, Nephi said:

"Follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, . . . with real intent, . . . take upon you the name of Christ. . . . Do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer [will] do."<sup>9</sup>

Following these most basic teachings, a splendor of connections to Christ opens up to us in multitudinous ways: prayer and fasting and meditation upon His purposes, savoring the scriptures, giving service to others, "succor[ing] the weak, lift[ing] up the hands which hang down, . . . strengthen[ing] the feeble knees."<sup>10</sup> Above all else, loving with "the pure love of Christ," that gift that "never faileth," that gift that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, [and] endureth all things."<sup>11</sup> Soon, with that kind of love, we realize our days hold scores of thoroughfares leading to the Master and that every time we reach out, however feebly, for Him, we discover He has been anxiously trying to reach us.

So we step, we strive, we seek, and we never yield.<sup>12</sup>

My desire today is for *all* of us—not just those who are "poor in spirit" but *all* of us—to have more straightforward personal experience with the Savior's example. Sometimes we seek heaven too obliquely, focusing on programs or history or the experience of others. Those are important but not as important as personal experience, true discipleship, and the strength that comes from experiencing firsthand the majesty of His touch.

### **Trust in the Lord's promises**

Are you battling a demon of addiction—tobacco or drugs or gambling, or the pernicious contemporary plague of pornography? Is your marriage in trouble or your child in danger? Are you confused with gender identity or searching for self-esteem? Do you, or someone you love, face disease or depression or death? Whatever other steps you may need to take to resolve these concerns, come *first* to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trust in heaven's promises. In that regard Alma's testimony is my testimony: "I do know," he says, "that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions."<sup>13</sup>

This reliance upon the merciful nature of God is at the very center of the gospel Christ taught. I testify that the Savior's Atonement lifts from us not only the burden of our sins but also the burden of our disappointments and sorrows, our heartaches and our despair.<sup>14</sup> From the beginning, trust in such help was to give us both a reason and a way to improve, an incentive to lay down our burdens and take up our salvation. There can and will be plenty of difficulties in life. Nevertheless, the soul that comes unto Christ, who knows His voice and strives to do as He did, finds a strength, as the hymn says, "beyond [his] own."<sup>15</sup> The Savior reminds us that He has "graven [us] upon the

palms of [His] hands.”<sup>16</sup> Considering the incomprehensible cost of the Crucifixion and Atonement, I promise you He is not going to turn His back on us now. When He says to the poor in spirit, “Come unto me,” He means He knows the way out and He knows the way up. He knows it because He has walked it. He knows the way because He *is* the way.

### “Be not afraid”

Brothers and sisters, whatever your distress, *please* don’t give up and *please* don’t yield to fear. I have always been touched that as his son was departing for his mission to England, Brother Bryant S. Hinckley gave young Gordon a farewell embrace and then slipped him a handwritten note with just five words taken from the fifth chapter of Mark: “Be not afraid, only believe.”<sup>17</sup> I think also of that night when Christ rushed to the aid of His frightened disciples, walking as He did on the water to get to them, calling out, “It is I; be not afraid.” Peter exclaimed, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”

Christ’s answer to him was as it *always* is *every* time: “Come,” He said. Instantly, as was his nature, Peter sprang over the vessel’s side and into the troubled waters. While his eyes were fixed upon the Lord, the wind could toss his hair and the spray could drench his robes, but all was well—he was coming to Christ. It was only when his faith wavered and fear took control, only when he removed his glance from the Master to look at the furious waves and the ominous black gulf beneath, only then did he begin to sink into the sea. In newer terror he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

Undoubtedly with some sadness, the Master over every problem and fear, He who is the solution to every discouragement and disappointment, stretched out His hand and grasped the drowning disciple with the gentle rebuke, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”<sup>18</sup>

### The broken can be mended

If you are lonely, please know you can find comfort. If you are discouraged, please know you can find hope. If you are poor in spirit, please know you can be strengthened. If you feel you are broken, please know you can be mended.

In Nazareth, the narrow road,  
That tires the feet and steals the  
breath,  
Passes the place where once abode  
The Carpenter of Nazareth.

And up and down the dusty way  
The village folk would often wend;  
And on the bench, beside Him, lay  
Their broken things for Him to mend.

The maiden with the doll she broke,  
The woman with the broken chair,  
The man with broken plough, or yoke,  
Said, “Can you mend it, Carpenter?”

And each received the thing he sought,  
In yoke, or plough, or chair, or doll;  
The broken thing which each had  
brought

Returned again a perfect whole.

So, up the hill the long years through,  
With heavy step and wistful eye,  
The burdened souls their way pursue,  
Uttering each the plaintive cry:

“O Carpenter of Nazareth,  
This heart, that’s broken past repair,  
This life, that’s shattered nigh to death,  
Oh, can You mend them, Carpenter?”

And by His kind and ready hand,  
His own sweet life is woven through  
Our broken lives, until they stand  
A New Creation—“all things new.”

“The shattered [substance] of [the]  
heart,  
Desire, ambition, hope, and faith,  
Mould Thou into the perfect part,  
O, Carpenter of Nazareth!”<sup>19</sup>

May we all, especially the poor in spirit, come unto Him and be made whole,

I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 5:3.
2. Matthew 11:28–29.
3. 3 Nephi 12:3; italics added.
4. John 1:35–39, 43.
5. Matthew 4:19.
6. 2 Nephi 9:43.
7. See Alma 32:27; italics added.
8. See Alma 32:21.
9. 2 Nephi 31:13, 17.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
11. See Moroni 7:45–47.
12. See Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson* (1898), 89.
13. Alma 36:3.
14. See Alma 7:11–12.
15. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
16. 1 Nephi 21:16.
17. Mark 5:36.
18. Matthew 14:27–31; italics added.
19. George Blair, “The Carpenter of Nazareth,” in Obert C. Tanner, *Christ’s Ideals for Living* (Sunday School manual, 1955), 22.

## Elder Earl C. Tingey

### The great plan of happiness

The prophet Jacob asked, “Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?”<sup>1</sup>

I take that question as the subject of my talk—why not speak of the Atonement of Jesus Christ?

Alma refers to the Atonement as “the great plan of happiness.”<sup>2</sup> I shall use that phrase to describe the beautiful doctrine we know as the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

President Hugh B. Brown, in speaking of the immortality of the soul, and man’s relationship to Deity, said: “Sooner or later life’s vicissitudes bring each of us to grips with this important subject. . . . Each of us, regardless of color, creed, or nationality, has a rendezvous with the experience that we call death.”<sup>3</sup>

Most of us, in sorrow and loss, have reverently stood at the grave of a loved one and asked the question, “Is there any happiness in death?”

A Book of Mormon prophet answers this question for us with joyful expressions of thanksgiving for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which ransoms us from death: “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and

grace! . . . O the greatness and the justice of our God!”<sup>4</sup>

Let me share five truths of the great plan of happiness that have brought this kind of joy to me.

### Reality of the Father and the Son

*First:* A knowledge of the plan confirms that there is a God and He has a Son, Jesus Christ. The Father and the Son are perfect. They live in heaven, and They possess glorified bodies of spirit, flesh, and bones.

These truths were revealed to us in this dispensation when the boy Joseph Smith knelt in humble prayer and later declared: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>5</sup>

### Purpose of mortal life

*Second:* Knowing the identity of the Father and the Son helps us know that all of us are placed on earth to acquire a

physical body, gain experience, and prove ourselves worthy to return to our Heavenly Father. Laws govern our mortal life on earth. When we transgress the law, we sin. When we sin, we break eternal laws; the law of justice requires a penalty or a punishment.

Sin and the need to repent might be represented by a man who takes a journey. On his back is a large empty bag. From time to time, he picks up a rock, representing the transgression of a law. He places the rock in the bag on his back. Over time, the bag becomes full. It is heavy. The man cannot continue on his journey. He must have a way to empty the bag and remove the rocks. This can be done only by the Savior through the Atonement.

This is possible when we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, forsake sin, and make covenants through the ordinances of the gospel. As we faithfully endure to the end, we can then return to live with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

### **The eternal law of mercy**

*Third:* Through the infinite Atonement, God has provided a means whereby we can both overcome our sins and become completely clean again. This is made possible by the eternal law of mercy. Mercy satisfies the claims of justice through our repentance and the power of the Atonement. Without the power of the Atonement and our complete repentance, we are subject to the law of justice.

Alma taught that “mercy claimeth the penitent”<sup>6</sup> and that “the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance.”<sup>7</sup>

The great prophet Amulek taught, “And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repen-

tance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”<sup>8</sup>

Adam and Eve, our first parents, transgressed law and were cast out of the beautiful Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were taught the great plan of salvation that they might find happiness in this life.<sup>9</sup>

Adam said, “For because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.”<sup>10</sup>

Eve uttered a similar acclamation of happiness: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Overcoming physical and spiritual death**

*Fourth:* The Fall of Adam and Eve brought about two deaths. We are subject to those deaths.

Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the physical body. Because of the Fall of Adam, all mankind will suffer physical death.

The second death is spiritual. It is separation from God’s presence. Adam and Eve freely conversed with God in the Garden of Eden. After their transgression, they lost that privilege. Thereafter, communication from God came only through faith and sacrifice, combined with heartfelt petitioning.

Currently we are all in the state of spiritual death. We are separated from God. He dwells in heaven; we live on earth. We would like to return to Him. He is clean and perfect. We are unclean and imperfect.

The power of Christ’s Atonement overcame both deaths.

Following His Crucifixion and burial in a borrowed tomb, Christ was resurrected on the third day. This Resurrection reunited Christ’s physical body with His spirit.



The Resurrection from the dead is a most beautiful aspect of the Atonement and truly a part of the plan of happiness; the Resurrection is universal and applies to the entire human family. We will all be resurrected. I bear testimony of that fact and truth. This is an unconditional gift from God.

But to be resurrected does not overcome the second death. To gain eternal life and live in the presence of the Father and the Son, we must repent and become eligible for mercy, which will satisfy justice.

The revelations teach:

“This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God.”<sup>12</sup>

“Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.”<sup>13</sup>

“That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>14</sup>

### Condescension of Christ

*Fifth:* Jesus Christ was born of an earthly mother, Mary. From her, He inherited mortality and became subject to death.

Joseph was His earthly mentor. God in heaven was His Father. From Him, He inherited immortality, the power to overcome physical death.

As the one who was chosen to fulfill the requirements of the Atonement, Jesus Christ condescended to come to earth and be born as a helpless babe to Mary. He condescended to be tempted, tried, mocked, judged, and crucified, even though He had power and authority to prevent such actions.

President John Taylor described the condescension of Christ in these beautiful words: “It was further necessary that He should descend below all things, in order that He might raise others above all things; for if He could not raise Himself and be exalted through those principles

brought about by the atonement, He could not raise others; He could not do for others what He could not do for Himself.”<sup>15</sup>

Christ’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane epitomizes the most magnificent of all the attributes of Christ, His perfect love. Here we see that He truly loved all of us.

An English theologian, writing in the 19th century, said of this event: “All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body. . . . Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of . . . sin . . . —this was what He must now face.”<sup>16</sup>

Describing His suffering, the Lord said in modern revelation, “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

The Atonement is an event that enables us to be reconciled to God. The word *atonement*, or “at-one-ment,” means to restore or to come back. In terms of family, it means to be reunited with one another and with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. It means sadness through separation will become happiness through reuniting.

In conclusion, I share the words of President Boyd K. Packer:

“If you understand the great plan of happiness and follow it, what goes on in the world will not determine your happiness.”<sup>18</sup>

I bear testimony of that truth and of the love that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has shown for us by providing the Atonement, the great plan of happiness, for all of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Jacob 4:12.
2. Alma 42:8; see also 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 12:32; 34:9, 16; 41:2; 42:15; Moses 6:62.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 48.

4. 2 Nephi 9:8, 17.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
6. Alma 42:23.
7. Alma 42:13.
8. Alma 34:16.
9. See Alma 12:32.
10. Moses 5:10.
11. Moses 5:11.
12. Alma 34:32.
13. Alma 34:33.
14. Alma 34:34.

15. *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 144.
16. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 575.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Redeemer of Israel.”

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## Sister Anne C. Pingree

### Growing up unto the Lord

Some months ago I rode in a car with two courageous senior sister missionaries. They were determined to find a ward member’s apartment in the heart of an inner-city neighborhood in the eastern United States. As I sat in the backseat holding my breath, the car’s guidance system regularly blared, “Wrong turn, wrong turn!” Undaunted, the missionary reading the map just kept suggesting way after way through the maze of city streets until finally we found the home of the sister whom they had promised to teach how to read and write.

In their actions and attitudes, these remarkable sisters embodied something that is much more than a reflection of their mortal years. They demonstrated true spiritual maturity.

Helaman, the great Book of Mormon prophet, named his sons Nephi and Lehi after their forebears, and “they began to grow up unto the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Young or older, all of us must do the same.

This idea of growing up unto the Lord is a compelling one. Unlike the process of growing up physically, we will not mature spiritually until we *choose*, as the Apostle Paul phrased it, to “put away childish things.”<sup>2</sup>

Daily prayer and scripture study, adherence to commandments and to cov-

enants made at baptism and in the temple are at the core of growing up unto the Lord. We learn to walk in His ways as we do what draws us closer to Heavenly Father and as we teach our children and others to do the same. We “put away childish things” as we choose to become Christlike and serve others as He would have us do.

### Determined service to others

When the Church was organized in this dispensation, the Lord explained that those who “shall be received by baptism into his church” would be, in part, those “willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.”<sup>3</sup> That means remaining “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works”<sup>4</sup> each day of our lives. Today, as the Church grows in 170 nations throughout the earth, *determined service to others*, even in difficult circumstances, is required of those who truly desire “to grow up unto the Lord.” This expansion of the Church means many of us will have opportunities to serve those who are new converts.

I participated in a memorable example of such determined service to those who are new to the gospel when I accompanied those dedicated sister missionaries—one a widow close to 80 years and the other a single parent in her 60s—who

would not be deterred by wrong turns. I also witnessed another example of it in that same ward.

### **Service of a visiting teaching mentor**

This ward is composed of members of many ages, from a variety of countries, all with varying economic circumstances and Church experience. A number of those with the most Church experience are busy graduate-student couples with demanding schedules and young families.

What I saw was a young mother serving as a visiting teaching mentor to newer converts in the ward. While her husband cared for their baby, she enthusiastically modeled loving watchcare to two African sisters. This watchcare involved teaching these sisters not only how to function in a new country but also how to adapt to their new religion.

Through her example she taught these African sisters how the Lord would have us serve each other. The words of the Apostle Paul tenderly describe what I saw in this visiting teaching mentor's actions toward these new converts: "We were gentle among you, . . . being affectionately desirous of you, . . . willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were *dear* unto us."<sup>5</sup> With each visit, the young mentor brought good cheer, a gentle helping hand, and the visiting teaching message.

In time, together the sisters prepared the visiting teaching message to share in other sisters' homes. Assessing needs, giving on-the-spot service as they went, they became true Relief Society sisters committed to lifting, comforting, and encouraging one another. I doubt I will ever hear the phrase "hearts knit together in unity and in love"<sup>6</sup> that I won't think of those three happy, loving women demonstrating through their determined service to others what it means "to grow up unto the Lord."

### **Willingness to press forward in faith**

Besides steadfast, determined service, another way we choose to grow up unto the Lord is through *our willingness to "press forward" in faith*—even when we don't quite know what to do. Consider Nephi's account of being commanded to build a ship. He recounted the circumstance:

"And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee. . . .

"And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools?"<sup>8</sup>

Nephi did not question the task to be done. Rather, in this situation, he evidenced, as he had in others, this mature spiritual insight: "And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them."<sup>9</sup> In short, Nephi looked for a resolution rather than at the roadblocks, because he knew—he *knew*—that in this process of growing up unto the Lord, God could and would help him fulfill every commandment he received.

### **Faith of a bishop**

In that same inner-city ward I observed a similar type of faith in the gentle, loving care of a bishop who wasted no time despairing over the vast needs of an ever-growing number of new converts. Rather, he pressed forward by rallying the more experienced members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to help prepare new converts from Africa and Latin America for their priesthood responsibilities. The newer brethren were taught how to hold the trays while passing the sacrament, how to kneel and rever-

ently bless the bread and water. Their more seasoned, often younger brethren practiced along with them the words of the sacramental prayers so they would feel confident in giving them. Then, together, all the brethren discussed the sacred nature of this important priesthood ordinance.

We've all had experiences where we've had to demonstrate our determination to serve others and our willingness to press forward in faith. When my husband telephoned to tell me that our mission call had been changed to a challenging assignment in Africa, I responded, "I can do that. I think I can do that." I demonstrated by my words my commitment to move forward in faith—trusting once again that the Lord would help me. I was showing my willingness "to grow up unto the Lord."

As that faithful bishop, those dedicated sisters, and I might attest, in this ongoing process of growing up unto the Lord, we will be asked to do all we can, in some cases even more than we know how to do. The challenges may be formidable

and the route sometimes unknown. But inevitable wrong turns notwithstanding, those who strive to be truly Christlike—with steadfast determination to serve others and a willingness to press forward in faith—can come to echo this grand spiritual truth shared by Nephi as he continued his shipbuilding: "And I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things."<sup>10</sup> To be shown "great things"—what a gift, what a blessing to those who have chosen "to grow up unto the Lord." May ours be lives of gentle, loving, steadfast spiritual maturity, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Helaman 3:21.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
4. Mosiah 5:15.
5. 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8; italics added.
6. Mosiah 18:21.
7. 2 Nephi 31:20; italics added.
8. 1 Nephi 17:8–9.
9. 1 Nephi 17:3.
10. 1 Nephi 18:3.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Benefits of reading the Book of Mormon

Last year, at the invitation of a prophet, millions read the Book of Mormon. Millions benefited. For each of us there were blessings of obedience, and most of us also grew in knowledge and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom this book is a witness.

Many other things were learned, but what was learned depended on the reader. What we get from a book, especially a sacred text, is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.

### All men everywhere

One of the things I learned in this most recent reading of the Book of Mormon was how much God loves all of His children in every nation. In the first chapter Father Lehi praises the Lord, whose "power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth" (1 Nephi 1:14). Again and again the Book of Mormon teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is universal in its promise and effect, reaching out to all who ever live on the earth. Here are some examples, quoted directly from that book:

- “The atonement . . . was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, . . . or who ever shall be” (Mosiah 4:7).

- “And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, . . . all men are redeemed” (Mormon 9:13).

- “He suffereth the pains of all . . . , both men, women, and children. . . . And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men” (2 Nephi 9:21–22).

- “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? . . . Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and . . . all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:27–28).

We also read that “his blood atoneth for the sins of those . . . who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). Similarly, “the blood of Christ atoneth for [little children]” (Mosiah 3:16). These teachings that the resurrecting and cleansing power of the Atonement is for all contradict the assertion that the grace of God saves only a chosen few. His grace is for all. These teachings of the Book of Mormon expand our vision and enlarge our understanding of the all-encompassing love of God and the universal effect of His Atonement for all men everywhere.

### “Bond and free”

The Book of Mormon teaches that our Savior “inviteth [all the children of men] to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33; see also Alma 5:49).

“He inviteth them all.” We understand “male and female.” We also understand “black and white,” which means all races.

But what about “bond and free”? *Bond*—the opposite of free—means more than slavery. It means being bound (in bondage) to anything from which it is difficult to escape. *Bond* includes those whose freedom is restricted by physical or emotional afflictions. *Bond* includes those who are addicted to some substance or practice. *Bond* surely refers to those who are imprisoned by sin—“encircled about” by what another teaching of the Book of Mormon calls “the chains of hell” (Alma 5:7). *Bond* includes those who are held down by traditions or customs contrary to the commandments of God (see Matthew 15:3–6; Mark 7:7–9; D&C 74:4–7; 93:39). Finally, *bond* also includes those who are confined within the boundaries of other erroneous ideas. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we preach to “liberate the captives.”<sup>1</sup> Our Savior “inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; . . . he denieth none that come unto him . . . ; and all are alike unto God.”

### Promised manifestations of the Lord

The children of God in all nations have His promise that He will manifest Himself to them. The Book of Mormon tells us:

“He manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith” (2 Nephi 26:13).

Note that these promised manifestations of the Lord are to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” Today we are seeing the fulfillment of that promise in every nation where our missionaries are permitted to labor, even among peoples we have not previously associated with Christianity.

For example, we know of many cases where the Lord has been manifesting Himself to men and women in the nation of

Russia, so recently released from the long grip of godless communism. While reading critical or mocking articles about Mormons, two different Russian men felt a strong impression to search out our meeting places. Both met missionaries and joined the Church.<sup>2</sup>

A medical doctor in a village in Nigeria had a dream in which he saw his good friend speaking to a congregation. Intrigued, he traveled to his friend's village on a Sunday and was astonished to find exactly what he had seen in his dream—a congregation called a ward being taught by his friend, who was their bishop. Impressed with what he heard in repeated visits, he and his wife were taught and baptized. Two months later over 30 others in their village had also joined the Church, and their clinic had become the meeting place.

A man I met from northern India had never even heard the name of Jesus Christ until he saw it on a calendar in the shop of a shoemaker. The Spirit led him to conversion in a Protestant church. Later, during a visit to a distant college town, he saw an advertisement for an American group called “The BYU Young Ambassadors.” During their performance, an inner voice told him to go into the lobby after the program and a man in a blue blazer would tell him what to do. In this way he obtained a Book of Mormon, read it, and was converted to the restored gospel. He has since served as a missionary and as a bishop.

A little girl in Thailand felt a memory of a loving Father in Heaven. As she grew older, she would often pray and counsel with Him in her heart. In her early 20s she met our missionaries. Their teachings confirmed the loving personal feelings for God she remembered from her childhood. She was baptized and served a full-time mission in Thailand.

Only 5 percent of the people in Cambodia are Christians. A family in that country was searching for the truth. While

their 11-year-old son was riding his bicycle he saw some men in white shirts and ties showing someone a picture and asking who it was. He felt he should stop. As he watched, he was prompted to say, “That is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and He came to save man.” Then he rode away. It took the missionaries a month to find him and his family. Today, the father is a counselor in the mission presidency.

Last June, a family of five visited the open house for a new chapel in Mongolia. As the father walked through the door a powerful force went through his body, a feeling of peace he had never experienced before. Tears flowed. He asked the missionaries what that amazing feeling was and how he could feel it again. Soon, the entire family was baptized.<sup>3</sup>

These are only a few examples. There are thousands more.

### **Being subject to the Savior**

The Book of Mormon also teaches that the great Creator died “for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (2 Nephi 9:5). Being subject to our Savior means that if our sins are to be forgiven through His Atonement, we must comply with the conditions He has prescribed, including faith, repentance, and baptism. The fulfillment of these conditions depends on our desires, our choices, and our actions. “He cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice” (2 Nephi 9:21).

The Lord provides a way for all His children, and He desires that each of us come unto Him. In the closing chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni pleads, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

### The Abrahamic covenant

The Bible tells us how God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him that through him all “families” or “nations” of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18). What we call the Abrahamic covenant opens the door for God’s choicest blessings to all of His children everywhere. The Bible teaches that “if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29; see also Abraham 2:10). The Book of Mormon promises that all who receive and act upon the Lord’s invitation to “repent and believe in his Son” become “the covenant people of the Lord” (2 Nephi 30:2). This is a potent reminder that neither riches nor lineage nor any other privileges of birth should cause us to believe that we are “better one than another” (Alma 5:54; see also Jacob 3:9). Indeed, the Book of Mormon commands, “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7).

The Bible teaches that some of Abraham’s descendants would be scattered “into all the kingdoms of the earth,” “among all nations,” and from “one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:25, 37, 64). The Book of Mormon affirms this teaching, declaring that the descendants of Abraham would be “scattered upon all the face of the earth, and . . . among all nations” (1 Nephi 22:3).

The Book of Mormon adds to our knowledge of how our Savior’s earthly ministry reached out to all of His scattered flock. In addition to His ministry in what we now call the Middle East, the Book of Mormon records His appearance and teachings to the Nephites on the American continent (see 3 Nephi 11–28). There He repeated that the Father had commanded Him to visit the other sheep which were not of the land of Jerusalem (see 3 Nephi 16:1; John 10:16). He also said that He would visit others “who [had] not as yet

heard [His] voice” (see 3 Nephi 16:2–3). As prophesied centuries earlier (see 2 Nephi 29:12), the Savior told His followers in the Americas that He was going “to show [Himself]” to these “lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” (3 Nephi 17:4).

The Book of Mormon is a great witness that the Lord loves all people everywhere. It declares that “he shall manifest himself unto all nations” (1 Nephi 13:42).

“Know ye not that there are more nations than one?” the Lord said through the prophet Nephi. “Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?” (2 Nephi 29:7).

Similarly, the prophet Alma taught that “the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8).

### Nations commanded to write Lord’s words

The Lord not only manifests Himself to all nations; He also commands that they write His words:

“Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. . . .

“For I command all men . . . that they shall write the words which I speak unto them. . . .

“For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of

the earth and they shall write it” (2 Nephi 29:8, 11–12; see also 1 Nephi 13:38–39).

Furthermore, the Book of Mormon teaches that all of these groups will have the writings of the others (see 2 Nephi 29:13).

We conclude from this that the Lord will eventually cause the inspired teachings He has given to His children in various nations to be brought forth for the benefit of all people. This will include accounts of the visit of the resurrected Lord to what we call the lost tribes of Israel and His revelations to all the seed of Abraham. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows one way this can occur.

When new writings come forth—and according to prophecy they will—we hope they will not be treated with the rejection some applied to the Book of Mormon because they already had a Bible (see 2 Nephi 29:3–10). As the Lord said through a prophet in that book, “And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man” (2 Nephi 29:9).

Truly, the gospel is for all men everywhere—every nation, every people. All are invited.

We live in the day foretold when righteousness is sent down out of heaven and truth out of the earth “to sweep the earth as with a flood,” and to gather out the elect “from the four quarters of the earth” (Moses 7:62). The Book of Mormon has

come forth to remind us of the covenants of the Lord, to the convincing of all “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon title page). I add this, my testimony of Him and His mission, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 2:229.
2. See Gary Browning, *Russia and the Restored Gospel* (1997), 200–201, 220–21.
3. Examples from Nigeria, Thailand, Cambodia, and Mongolia as related by mission presidents who have served in those countries.

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The choir sang “O Lord Most Holy.”

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#### President Monson

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to all who have participated in any way.

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, who will be the concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “My Redeemer Lives.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

#### Gratitude for the Lord’s blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters, I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. I now pray for your sustaining faith.

When a man reaches my age, he pauses now and again to reflect on what has led him to his present status in life.

I feel to indulge upon your time in what might be regarded as a selfish manner. I do so because the life of the President of the Church really belongs to the entire Church. He has very little privacy and no secrets. My talk this morning will be different from any, I think, previously



heard in the general conferences of the Church.

I now face the sunset of my life. We are all totally in the hands of the Lord. As many of you know, I recently underwent major surgery. It is the first time in my 95 years that I have been a patient in a hospital. I do not recommend it to anyone. My doctors say that I still have some residual problems.

I am now approaching my 96th birthday. I take this opportunity to express appreciation and gratitude for the remarkable blessings the Lord has showered upon me.

### **Choices guided by the Lord**

We all face choices in the course of our lives, some of them with a siren song of wealth and prosperity; others appear less promising. Somehow the Lord has watched over and guided my choices, although it was not always evident at the time.

There come to mind the words of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," which concludes with these lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.  
[*The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (1969), 105]

I think of the words of the Lord: "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:31).

It was 48 years ago at this April conference that I was first sustained as a General Authority. Since that time I have spoken in every general conference of the Church. I have given well over 200 such talks. I have dealt with a great variety of subjects. But running through all has been a dominant thread of testimony of this great latter-day work.

### **Blessings a result of Church activity**

But things have changed and are changing. My beloved companion of 67 years left me two years ago. I miss her more than I can say. She was really a remarkable woman, one with whom I walked side by side in perfect companionship for more than two-thirds of a century. As I look back upon my life, I do so with a measure of wonder and awe. Everything good that has happened, including my marriage, I owe to my activity in the Church.

I had occasion the other evening to review an incomplete list of societies and organizations that have honored me, all because of my activity in the Church. Presidents of the United States, a substantial number of them, have come to the Office of the Presidency of the Church. I have on my office wall a photograph of my presenting a Book of Mormon to President Ronald Reagan. In my bookcase is the Presidential Medal of Freedom given to me by President Bush. I have been to the White House on a number of occasions. I have hosted and mingled with prime ministers and ambassadors of many nations, including Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Harold Macmillan of the United Kingdom.

I have known and worked with every President of the Church from President Grant down to Howard W. Hunter. I have known and loved all of the General Authorities through these many, many years.

### **Opportunities to know Church leaders**

I am now trying to deal with the many books and artifacts that I have accumulated over the years. In the course of this process I found an old journal with sporadic entries from the years 1951 to 1954. At that time I was a counselor in my stake presidency and had not yet been called as a General Authority.

As I read through this old journal, I recalled with appreciation how, through the kindness of the Lord, I came to know very intimately and well all of the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Such an opportunity could not now be had by anyone because the Church is much larger.

The journal contains entries such as the following:

“March 11, 1953—President McKay discussed with me the April conference program for mission presidents.

“Thursday, March 19—Joseph Fielding Smith asked that I get one of the Brethren to illustrate handling of Saturday night missionary conferences. . . . I believe that Spencer W. Kimball or Mark E. Petersen should take care of it.

“Thursday, March 26—President McKay told an interesting story. He said, ‘A farmer had a large tract of land. When he grew old it became too much for him. He had a family of boys. He called the boys around him and told them they would have to carry the load. The father rested. But one day he walked out into the field. The boys told him to go back, they did not need his help. He said, “My shadow on this farm is worth more than the labor of all of you.”’ President McKay said that the father in the story represented President Stephen L. Richards, who was ill, but whose contribution and friendship President McKay valued so highly.

“Friday, April 3, 1953—Attended temple meeting with General Authorities and mission presidents from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. More than 30 mission presidents spoke. All want more missionaries. All making good progress.

“Tuesday, April 14—President Richards at office, had a pleasant visit with him. He appears tired and weak. I feel he has been preserved by the Lord for a great purpose.

“Monday, April 20, 1953—Had an interesting visit with Henry D. Moyle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

“July 15, 1953—Albert E. Bowen, member of the Council of the Twelve, died after more than a year of serious illness. Another of my friends has gone. . . . I got to know him well. He was a wise and steady man. Could never be rushed, and was never in a rush. Extremely deliberate—a man of uncommon wisdom, a man of great and simple faith. The old, wise heads are passing on. They were my friends. In my brief time I have seen many of the great men of the Church come and go. Most of them I have worked with and known intimately. Time has a way of erasing their memory. Another five years and such names as Merrill, Widtsoe, Bowen—all powerful figures—will be forgotten by all but a few. A man must get his satisfaction from his work each day, must recognize that his family may remember him, that he may count with the Lord, but beyond that, small will be his monument among the coming generations.”

And so it goes. I read it only to illustrate the remarkable relationship I had as a young man with members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

### **Testimony borne on every continent**

During my years I have also walked among the impoverished and poor of the earth and shared with them my love, my concern, and my faith. I have associated with men and women of privilege and stature from many parts of the earth. Through these opportunities I hope I have made at least a small difference.

When I was a young man, a mere boy of 11, I received a patriarchal blessing from a man I had never seen before and never saw thereafter. It is a remarkable document, a prophetic document. It is personal, and I will not read extensively from it. However, it contains this statement: “The nations of the earth shall hear thy voice and be brought to a knowledge of the truth by the wonderful testimony which thou shalt bear.”

When I was released from my mission in England, I took a short trip on the Continent. I had borne my testimony in London; I did so in Berlin and again in Paris and later in Washington, D.C. I said to myself that I had borne my testimony in these great capitals of the world and had fulfilled that part of my blessing.

That proved to be a mere scratching of the surface. Since then I have lifted my voice on every continent, in cities large and small, all up and down from north to south and east to west across this broad world—from Cape Town to Stockholm, from Moscow to Tokyo to Montreal, in every great capital of the world. It is all a miracle.

### **Challenge to read the Book of Mormon**

Last year I asked members of the Church throughout the world to again read the Book of Mormon. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands, responded to that challenge. The Prophet Joseph said in 1841, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

Accepting the truth of this statement, I think something remarkable must have happened to the people of this Church. They were observed reading the Book of Mormon while riding the bus, while eating lunch, while in the doctor’s office waiting room, and in scores of other situations. I trust and hope that we have drawn closer to God because of the reading of this book.

### **200th anniversary of Prophet’s birth**

Last December it was my privilege, together with many of you, to honor the Prophet Joseph on the 200th anniversary of his birth. With Elder Ballard, I was at

his birthplace in Vermont while this great Conference Center was filled with Latter-day Saints and the word was carried by satellite transmission across the world in tribute to the beloved Prophet of this great latter-day work.

### **Appreciation for Church**

And so I might go on. I apologize again for speaking in a personal vein. However, I do so only as an expression of appreciation and gratitude for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of this coming to pass because of the place in which the Lord has put me. My heart is overwhelmed with gratitude and love.

To repeat:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

I trust that you will not regard what I have said as an obituary. Rather, I look forward to the opportunity of speaking to you again in October.

### **Testimony**

Now, in conclusion, I hope that all of you will remember that on this Sabbath day you heard me bear my witness that this is God’s holy work. The vision given the Prophet Joseph in the grove of Palmyra was not an imaginary thing. It was real. It occurred in the broad light of day. Both the Father and the Son spoke to the boy. He saw Them standing in the air above him. He heard Their voices. He gave heed to Their instruction.

It was the resurrected Lord who was introduced by His Father, the great God of the universe. For the first time in recorded history, both the Father and the Son appeared together to part the curtains and open this, the last and final dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

The Book of Mormon is all that it purports to be—a work recorded by prophets who lived anciently and whose words have come forth “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon title page).

The priesthood has been restored under the hands of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. All the keys and authority pertaining to eternal life are exercised in this Church.

Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, the great Prophet of this dispensation. This Church, which carries the name of the Redeemer, is true.

I leave you my testimony, my witness, and my love for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “My Redeemer Lives.” Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 2, 2006. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wil-

berg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Sing Praise to Him.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” Elders M. Russell Ballard and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us, and they will be followed by Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “How Firm a Foundation.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Robert S. Wood and H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we will be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him.” Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### **Appreciation for the Restoration**

My brothers and sisters, not many weeks ago I had both of my knees surgically replaced. So when I say that I am grateful to be able to stand before you today, it is no idle statement. During this recuperative period I have been reminded of how blessed we are to know of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am overwhelmed when I think about the pain and the suffering He went through for us in Gethsemane and on the cross. How He endured it I cannot comprehend. But I thank Him, and I love Him more profoundly than words can express.

I also thank President Hinckley for the privilege of being with him at the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph. Because of Joseph Smith, we have been given much. Were it not for the Restoration we would not know the true nature of God, our Heavenly Father, or our own divine nature as His children. We would not understand the eternal nature of our existence or know that the family can be together forever.

We would not be aware that God continues to speak to His prophets in our day, beginning with the marvelous First Vision wherein the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph. We would not have the comforting assurance that we are led by a prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Without the Restoration we would likely be under the assumption that the entirety of God's word is found in the Bible. As precious and wonderful as that book of scripture is, we would not know of the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures that teach eternal truths which help us draw nearer to our Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Without the Restoration we would not have the blessings of priesthood ordi-

nances that are valid in time and eternity. We would not know the conditions of repentance, nor would we understand the reality of the Resurrection. We would not have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

### **Motivation to share the gospel**

When we truly understand how great a blessing the gospel of Jesus Christ is in our lives, when we accept and embrace these eternal truths and allow them to sink deep into our hearts and souls, we experience a "mighty change" (Alma 5:14) in our hearts. We are filled with love and gratitude. As the prophet Alma wrote, we feel "to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26) to all who will hear it.

"O that I were an angel," Alma said, "and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

"Yea, I would declare unto every soul . . . the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:1-2).

So it should be with us, my brothers and sisters. Our love for the Lord and appreciation for the Restoration of the gospel are all the motivation we need to share what gives us much joy and happiness. It is the most natural thing in the world for us to do, and yet far too many of us are hesitant to share our testimonies with others.

### **Missionaries need more people to teach**

All around the world, missionaries are responding to this testimony-driven joy in sharing the gospel. Many of them are entering the MTC with their own marked and well-studied copies of the missionary

guide *Preach My Gospel*. I am pleased to report that with the use of *Preach My Gospel*, they are increasingly able to teach in their own words by the power of the Spirit and are better able to adjust their lessons to the needs of those whom they are teaching. As a result they are having meaningful impact on many lives.

But quite frankly, what they need now is more people to teach. Experience has shown that the best teaching situations develop when our members participate in the finding and teaching process. This is nothing new—you've heard it before. Some of you may even feel guilty that you are not giving much help to the missionaries.

Today I invite you to relax and set aside your concerns and focus instead on your love for the Lord, your testimony of His eternal reality, and your gratitude for all He has done for you. If you are truly motivated by love and testimony and gratitude, you will quite naturally do all that you can to assist the Lord in “[bringing] to pass the immortality and eternal life” (Moses 1:39) of our Father's children. In fact, it would be impossible to keep you from doing it.

### **Creating a gospel-sharing home**

The Savior Himself showed us the way when He invited His disciples to “come and see . . . where he dwelt, and [they] abode with him that day” (John 1:39). Why do you suppose He did that? The scriptural record does not explain His reasoning, but I am confident that it had nothing to do with comfort or convenience. As always, He was teaching. And what better way to teach His followers than to invite them to visit with Him so they could see and experience His magnificent message firsthand?

Similarly, our homes can be gospel-sharing homes as people we know and love come into our homes and experience the gospel firsthand in both word and action. We can share the gospel without holding a

formal discussion. Our families can be our lesson, and the spirit that emanates from our homes can be our message.

Having a gospel-sharing home will not only be a blessing for those we bring into our homes but for those who live within it. As we live in a gospel-sharing home, our testimonies become stronger and our understanding of the gospel improves. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that we can be forgiven of our sins when we help someone else repent (see D&C 62:3). We find joy in helping others come unto Christ and feel the redemptive power of His love (see D&C 18:14–16). Our families are blessed as the testimonies and faith of both parents and children increase.

In gospel-sharing homes we pray for guidance for ourselves, and we pray for the physical and spiritual well-being of others. We pray for the people the missionaries are teaching, for our acquaintances, and for those not of our faith. In the gospel-sharing homes of Alma's time, the people would “join in fasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God” (Alma 6:6).

Creating a gospel-sharing home is the easiest and most effective way that we can share the gospel with others. And we're not just talking about traditional homes with families consisting of two parents living with their children. College students can create a gospel-sharing home when they adorn the walls of their apartments with pictures that reflect spiritual pursuits instead of the things of the world. Older couples and single members exemplify a gospel-sharing home when they welcome new neighbors and invite them to attend church and visit them in their homes.

A gospel-sharing home is one in which neighborhood children love to play, making it natural to invite them and their family to attend church, a family home evening, or some other activity. Teenagers visiting a gospel-sharing home feel comfortable

asking questions or participating with the family in prayer.

Gospel-sharing homes are very ordinary. They may not always be spotlessly clean nor the children perfectly behaved. But they are a place in which family members clearly love each other, and the Spirit of the Lord is felt by those who visit.

### **What a gospel-sharing home is not**

As we talk about what a gospel-sharing home is, perhaps it would also be helpful to identify some things that a gospel-sharing home is not.

A gospel-sharing home is not a program. It is a way of life. Creating a gospel-sharing home means inviting our friends and neighbors into the ongoing flow of family and Church activities. As we invite our friends to join us for these activities, they will also feel the Spirit.

Creating a gospel-sharing home does not mean that we are going to have to dedicate large amounts of time to meeting and cultivating friends with whom to share the gospel. These friends will come naturally into our lives, and if we are open about our membership in the Church from the very beginning, we can easily bring gospel discussions into the relationship with very little risk of being misunderstood. Friends and acquaintances will accept that this is part of who we are, and they will feel free to ask questions.

A gospel-sharing home is not defined by whether or not people join the Church as a result of our contact with them. Our opportunity and responsibility are to care, to share, to testify, to invite, and then to allow individuals to decide for themselves. We are blessed when we have invited them to consider the Restoration, regardless of the outcome. At the very least, we have a rewarding relationship with someone from another faith, and we can continue to enjoy their friendship.

In a gospel-sharing home we do not just pray for the health, safety, and success

of our missionaries throughout the world. We also pray for our own missionary experiences and opportunities and to be prepared to act on those impressions as they come our way. And I promise you, they *will* come.

### **Ways to share the gospel**

More than 20 years ago I suggested that the key to successful member missionary work is the exercise of faith. One way to show your faith in the Lord and His promises is to prayerfully set a date to have someone prepared to meet with the missionaries. I have received hundreds of letters from members who have exercised their faith in this simple way. Even though families had no one in mind with whom they could share the gospel, they set a date, prayed, and then talked to many more people. The Lord is the Good Shepherd, and He knows His sheep who have been prepared to hear His voice. He will guide us as we seek His divine help in sharing His gospel.

A sister in France was asked about the secret of her success. She said, "I simply share my joy. I treat everyone as if they were already a member of the Church. If I'm standing by someone in line and strike up a conversation, I share with them how much I enjoyed my Church meetings on Sunday. When co-workers ask, 'What did you do this weekend?' I do not skip from Saturday night to Monday morning. I share with them that I went to church, what was said, and my experiences with the Saints. I talk about how I live, think, and feel."

In a gospel-sharing home, our personal missionary effort is a topic of family councils and discussions. One faithful family counseled together on the need for each family member to be an example. Later, the son's high school coach, who was not a member, sent a donation to the Church. Why? Because this young man had impressed him with his courage in

speaking up and telling his teammates to clean up their language. There are thousands of experiences that could be shared where people have joined the Church because of the spirit and attitude they observe in the lives of those who come from gospel-sharing homes.

Church literature or DVDs can introduce new friends to the Church. Invitations to hear a family member speak in sacrament meeting or to attend the baptismal service of a family member or to tour a meetinghouse have also been appreciated by those who are not members. From every indicator we have, there is nothing more effective than that any of us can do for our friends than to say “come and see” by joining with us in sacrament meeting. Far too many do not know they are welcome to worship with us.

#### **Assisting leaders and missionaries**

Of course, all of us support the ward leaders and assist in making the ward mission plan effective. Whatever our Church

calling may be, we help priesthood and auxiliary leaders assist missionaries, welcome and involve visitors, and fellowship new members. You can ask the missionaries to show you their daily planners so you can see how you can best help them accomplish their goals. As we work together, the spirit of our gospel-sharing homes will overflow in our chapels, our classrooms, and our cultural halls.

I bear testimony that if we will just do some of these simple things, the Lord will lead us to find tens of thousands of Heavenly Father’s children who are ready to be taught the gospel. Our love for the Lord, our appreciation for His atoning sacrifice, and His mission to have all come unto Him should provide all the motivation we need to be successful in sharing the gospel.

May the Lord bless you, my brothers and sisters, with greater faith and trust in Him as you reach out now to introduce the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

#### **Recent developments in missionary work**

It would be difficult to imagine anything more exciting to do as a young man, woman, or couple in the world today than to be a full-time missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The message of the restored gospel we share is absolutely vital. It is from God, our Eternal Father, for every one of His children on earth and is centered in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. When that message is understood and lived, it can replace turmoil with peace, sorrow with happiness, and provide solutions to life’s persistent challenges.

We now have very clear direction for success in missionary service. It is provided by the guide *Preach My Gospel* and the resources developed to accompany it. The

highly effective new missionary lessons are based upon teaching by the Spirit rather than rote memorization. They have greatly improved sharing the gospel worldwide. Each mission president has been carefully taught how to implement the new materials. The result is a corps of highly capable, devoted, enthusiastic mission presidents with the capacity to inspire and powerfully motivate their missionaries.

The worldwide study and application of the concepts in *Preach My Gospel* by every missionary has strengthened our capacity to proclaim the message of the Restoration and to teach the plan of salvation and other gospel principles. Raising the bar of worthiness has had far-reaching consequences. There is more devoted ser-



vice in the field, stronger companion relationships, much more effective teaching, and improved retention of converts.

The overall guidance given to supervise missionary work is unequaled. It supports all missionary effort worldwide through Area Presidencies, the seven Presidents of Seventy, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the personal, concentrated interest of the First Presidency.

Exciting fields of labor the world over allow the inspiration of the Lord to call young men and women and devoted couples to challenging assignments conditioned to each personal need and capacity. I rejoice in the opportunity to participate in this captivating effort that potently blesses so many around the globe.

### **Preparing for full-time missionary service**

Elder M. Russell Ballard has spoken about creating a gospel-sharing home. I will discuss how to prepare to be a full-time missionary as an elder, a sister, or a couple.

#### *Teachings in the home*

The process begins in the home long before missionary age when parents instill in the minds and hearts of every young boy the concept of “when I go on a mission,” not “if I go on a mission.” Children are best taught gospel truths in the home where instruction can be adapted to the age and capacity of each child. In the home the whole armor of truth is tailor fit to the individual characteristics of each child. Parental teaching qualifies children for life and prepares worthy young men for the joy of missionary service. In the home a young girl can understand that her primary role is to be a wife and mother. Yet as that preparation unfolds there may be an opportunity to serve a full-time mission, provided recent counsel of the First Presidency is followed:

“Worthy single women ages twenty-one and older . . . may be recommended to serve full-time missions. . . . These sisters can make a valuable contribution . . . , but they should not be pressured to serve. Bishops should not recommend them for missionary service if it will interfere with imminent marriage prospects.”<sup>1</sup>

#### *Use of Preach My Gospel*

Many parents are using parts of the guide *Preach My Gospel* to stress the concepts that will bear fruit as their children’s testimonies mature while they are nurtured in the home. As a young boy you can learn how to fulfill your duty as a future priesthood bearer. You will be helped to understand and apply important teachings of the Lord. You will be strengthened to live worthily to be able to receive sacred temple ordinances and to serve a full-time mission. Such experiences will develop a foundation for the later blessing of your being a strong husband and father.

Portions of *Preach My Gospel* will prepare you as a young woman to understand and apply doctrine for your role as wife and mother. Should you choose to serve a full-time mission, you will have a foundation for it. The seminary programs will help you as a young man or woman to lay a foundation for happiness and success in life. There is a special course in the institute program and at the three Brigham Young Universities that can prepare you for missionary service. It is founded in the principles contained in *Preach My Gospel* and goes hand-in-hand with that powerful resource. It will give you a head start for when you are called to serve.

The power and effectiveness of the guide *Preach My Gospel* for missionaries, leaders, members, and parents is manifest in the fact that just under one million copies have been distributed thus far. Are you benefiting from your own personal copy?

*Motivating interviews by leaders*

As a bishop or branch president, through motivating interviews you can bless the life of every young man in your ward as well as appropriate couples by encouraging them to prepare for full-time missions. Not only will you bless those potential missionaries but you may answer the prayers of parents who have a maturing son not yet committed to a mission despite their efforts to encourage that desire.

For example, from childhood through maturing years, our daughter Mary Lee heard her parents speak of our treasured missionary experiences. We had explained how challenging missionary opportunities had enriched our lives and laid the foundation for all that we treasure in life. Yet we taught that it was her decision whether she would serve or not.

Through her growing years, it was clear that she intended to be a missionary. However, as missionary age approached, her exciting experiences in the university began to present attractive alternatives. Once when she mentioned wrestling with that uncertainty, she was counseled to talk to her bishop. An appointment was arranged. As she sat down before a choice bishop, she asked, "What do you think of my serving a full-time mission?" The bishop jumped from his chair, clapped his hands on the desk, and said, "That is the greatest thing I could imagine for you." That comment tipped the scales.

Mary Lee served a most effective mission in Spain that unveiled hidden capacities, matured her spiritual development, and caused to flower capabilities that have blessed her as a wife and mother. The bishop that had such a profound influence in my daughter's life is J. Willard Marriott Jr., currently an Area Seventy. But we remember him most for what he did for our daughter Mary Lee. Now in her own family, with the strong examples of a returned missionary father and mother, a son and a

daughter have fulfilled exemplary missions. The remaining son will clearly be a missionary, and the last daughter will in time make the proper choice. Another grandchild, following in the footsteps of his father, was recently called to serve in the Mexico Cuernavaca Mission.

*Use of resources by leaders*

Bishops and branch presidents, you can have that powerful impact in the lives of the missionaries you encourage and prepare as well as in lives of their posterity. Use your Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders and the advisers, as well as the high priests, elders, and women leaders, to help you prepare to call as many worthy missionaries as you can. From the use of the new missionary resources, many more missionaries you recommend arrive in the field better prepared and highly motivated to serve. While most potential candidates can with little effort be ready, a few need substantial adjustments in their life to qualify. With the support of parents, help them meet the standards.

Pray about which couples can be encouraged to submit papers for a call to full-time missionary service. There is an urgent need for them.

I am constantly amazed at how the Holy Ghost matches the characteristics and needs of each missionary and couple to the widely varying circumstances of missionary service throughout the world. I have observed how some of the strongest, most capable elders and sisters are called to the United States and Canada to keep the roots of the Church strong there. I have seen how missionaries who return from unusual assignments, such as adapting to the native culture of a Pacific Island, Mongolia, or the highlands of Guatemala or otherwise serving with minimal personal contact with the mission president, develop previously unknown personal capacities extremely well.

### **Elder Scott's full-time mission experience**

Now may I speak from my heart of what an honorable full-time mission has meant to me personally. I grew up in a home with very good parents, but my father was not a member and my mother was less active. After my mission, that changed. They became strong members and served devotedly in the temple—he a sealer, she an ordinance worker. But as a young man, like many of you today, I had no way to judge personally the importance of a mission. I fell in love with an exceptional young woman. At a critical point in our courtship, she made it very clear that she would only be married in the temple to a returned missionary. Duly motivated, I served a mission in Uruguay.

It was not easy. The Lord gave me many challenges that became stepping-stones to personal growth. There I gained my testimony that God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, did in fact visit Joseph Smith to begin a restoration of truth, priesthood authority, and the true Church on earth. I gained a witness that Joseph Smith is a singular prophet. I learned essential doctrines. I discovered what it meant to be led by the Spirit. Many a night I got up as my companion slept to pour my heart out to the Lord for guidance and direction. I pled for the ability to express effectively in Spanish my testimony and the truth I was learning to a people I had come to love. Those prayers were abundantly answered. At the same time, my future eternal companion, Jeanene, was being molded to become an exceptional wife and mother by her own mission.

Most important, all that I now hold dear in life began to mature in the mission field. Had I not been encouraged to be a missionary, I would not have the eternal companion or precious family I dearly love. I am confident that I would not have had the exceptional professional opportunities that stretched my every capacity.

I am certain that I would not have received the sacred callings with opportunities to serve for which I will be eternally grateful. My life has been richly blessed beyond measure because I served a mission.

Now can you understand why I am so anxious to motivate every one of you young men to be a worthy missionary? Can you comprehend why I encourage you as a mature couple to plan, if health permits, to serve the Lord as missionaries? Can you see why I suggest that some of you young women, where there is a desire and it will not affect an impending marriage, seriously consider serving the Lord as a missionary? Our home has been greatly blessed by a wife and mother who chose to serve a full-time mission during my period of service.

### **Young men, seek guidance**

If you are a young man wondering whether you ought to fulfill a full-time mission, don't approach that vital decision with your own wisdom alone. Seek the counsel of your parents, your bishop, or stake president. In your prayers ask to have the will of the Lord made known to you. I know that a mission will provide extraordinary blessings for you now and throughout your life. I urge you not to pray to know whether you should go; rather, ask the Lord to guide you in whatever may be necessary to become a worthy, empowered full-time missionary. You will never regret serving a mission, but you most probably will regret not serving if that is your choice.

I know that Jesus is the Christ, that His Church and the fulness of His gospel have been restored to earth through a singularly important prophet, Joseph Smith. I testify that devoted full-time missionary service is a source of great happiness and rich blessings, not only for those who hear the message but also for those who, under

the guidance of the Spirit, deliver it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTE

1. Communication from the First Presidency, unpublished.

## Elder David R. Stone

### Zion in the midst of Babylon

Last summer, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to San Diego, California, and there see Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at the Old Globe Theatre. We saw two performances, because our daughter Carolyn was playing the part of one of the three witches in that play. Of course, we were delighted to see her in the play and even more delighted when, at a dramatic moment, she said those famous lines: "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes" (act 4, scene 1, lines 40–41).

When I heard that, I thought how useful it would be to have an early-warning system which would tell us about the approach of evil and allow us to be prepared for it. Evil is coming toward us, whether or not we have an early-warning system.

On a later occasion, my wife and I were driving cross-country one night and were approaching a great city. As we came over the hills and saw the bright lights on the horizon, I nudged my wife awake and said, "Behold the city of Babylon!"

Of course, there is no particular city today which personifies Babylon. Babylon was, in the time of ancient Israel, a city which had become sensual, decadent, and corrupt. The principal building in the city was a temple to a false god, which we often refer to as Bel or Baal.

However, that sensuality, corruption, and decadence, and the worshipping of false gods are to be seen in many cities, great and small, scattered across the globe. As the Lord has said: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and af-

ter the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways and following a god "whose image is in the likeness of the world."

One of the greatest challenges we will face is to be able to live in that world but somehow not be of that world. We have to create Zion in the midst of Babylon.

"Zion in the midst of Babylon." What a luminous and incandescent phrase, as a light shining in the midst of spiritual darkness. What a concept to hold close to our hearts as we see Babylon becoming more widespread. We see Babylon in our cities; we see Babylon in our communities; we see Babylon everywhere.

### The culture of our place and time

And with the encroachment of Babylon, we have to create Zion in the midst of it. We should not allow ourselves to be engulfed by the culture which surrounds us. We seldom realize the extent to which we are a product of the culture of our place and time.

During the days of ancient Israel, the people of the Lord were an island of the one true God, surrounded by an ocean of idolatry. The waves of that ocean crashed incessantly upon the shores of Israel. Despite the commandment to make no graven image and bow down before it, Israel seemingly could not help itself, influenced by the culture of the place and time. Over and over again—despite the prohibition of the Lord, despite what prophet and priest

had said—Israel went seeking after strange gods and bowed down before them.

How could Israel have forgotten the Lord, who brought them out of Egypt? They were constantly pressured by what was popular in the ambience in which they lived.

What an insidious thing is this culture amidst which we live. It permeates our environment, and we think we are being reasonable and logical when, all too often, we have been molded by the ethos, what the Germans call the *zeitgeist*, or the culture of our place and time.

Because my wife and I have had the opportunity to live in 10 different countries, we have seen the effect of the ethos on behavior. Customs which are perfectly acceptable in one culture are viewed as unacceptable in another; language which is polite in some places is viewed as abhorrent in others. People in every culture move within a cocoon of self-satisfied self-deception, fully convinced that the way they see things is the way things really are.

Our culture tends to determine what foods we like, how we dress, what constitutes polite behavior, what sports we should follow, what our taste in music should be, the importance of education, and our attitudes toward honesty. It also influences men as to the importance of recreation or religion, influences women about the priority of career or childbearing, and has a powerful effect on how we approach procreation and moral issues. All too often, we are like puppets on a string, as our culture determines what is “cool.”

### **The culture of the people of God**

There is, of course, a *zeitgeist* to which we should pay attention, and that is the ethos of the Lord, the culture of the people of God. As Peter states it, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who

hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

It is the ethos of those who keep the Lord’s commandments, walk in His ways, and “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44). If that makes us peculiar, so be it.

My involvement with the building of the Manhattan Temple gave me the opportunity to be in the temple quite often prior to the dedication. It was wonderful to sit in the celestial room and be there in perfect silence, without a single sound to be heard coming from the busy New York streets outside. How was it possible that the temple could be so reverently silent when the hustle and bustle of the metropolis was just a few yards away?

The answer was in the construction of the temple. The temple was built within the walls of an existing building, and the inner walls of the temple were connected to the outer walls at only a very few junction points. That is how the temple (Zion) limited the effects of Babylon, or the world outside.

There may be a lesson here for us. We can create the real Zion among us by limiting the extent to which Babylon will influence our lives.

### **Four young men resist pressure**

When, about 600 years B.C., Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon and conquered Judah, he carried away the people of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar selected some of the young men for special education and training.

Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were to be the favored ones among the young people brought to Babylon. The king’s servant instructed them that they were to eat of the king’s meat and drink of the king’s wine.

Let us clearly understand the pressures that the four young men were under. They had been carried away as captives

by a conquering power and were in the household of a king who held the power of life or death over them. And yet Daniel and his brothers refused to do that which they believed to be wrong, however much the Babylonian culture believed it to be right. And for that fidelity and courage, the Lord blessed them and “gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” (Daniel 1:17).

### **“Love not the world”**

Seduced by our culture, we often hardly recognize our idolatry, as our strings are pulled by that which is popular in the Babylonian world. Indeed, as the poet Wordsworth said, “The world is too much with us” (“The World Is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* [1924], 353).

In his first epistle, John writes:

“I have written unto you . . . because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:14–15).

We do not need to adopt the standards, the mores, and the morals of Babylon. We can create Zion in the midst of Babylon. We can have our own standards for music and literature and dance and film and language. We can have our own standards for dress and deportment, for politeness and respect. We can live in accordance with the Lord’s moral laws. We can limit how much of Babylon we allow into our homes by the media of communication.

### **The need for courage**

We can live as a Zion people, if we wish to. Will it be hard? Of course it will, for the waves of Babylonian culture crash incessantly against our shores. Will it take courage? Of course it will.

We have always been entranced by tales of courage of those who faced fearsome odds and overcame. Courage is the basis and foundation for all of our other virtues; the lack of courage diminishes every other virtue that we have. If we are to have Zion in the midst of Babylon, we will need courage.

Have you ever imagined that, when it came to the test, you would perform some act of bravery? I know I did, as a boy. I imagined that someone was in peril and that, at the risk of my own life, I saved him. Or in some dangerous confrontation with a fearsome opponent, I had the courage to overcome. Such are our youthful imaginations!

Almost 70 years of life have taught me that those heroic opportunities are few and far between, if they come at all.

But the opportunities to stand for that which is right—when the pressures are subtle and when even our friends are encouraging us to give in to the idolatry of the times—those come along far more frequently. No photographer is there to record the heroism; no journalist will splash it across the newspaper’s front page. Just in the quiet contemplation of our conscience, we will know that we faced the test of courage: Zion or Babylon?

### **Building our own Zion**

Make no mistake about it: much of Babylon, if not most of it, is evil. And we will not have the pricking of our thumbs to warn us. But wave after wave is coming, crashing against our shores. Will it be Zion, or will it be Babylon?

If Babylon is the city of the world, Zion is the city of God. The Lord has said of Zion: “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom” (D&C 105:5) and, “For this is Zion—the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21).

Wherever we are, whatever city we may live in, we can build our own Zion by the principles of the celestial kingdom and

ever seek to become the pure in heart. Zion is the beautiful, and the Lord holds it in His own hands. Our homes can be places which are a refuge and protection, as Zion is.

We do not need to become as puppets in the hands of the culture of the place and time. We can be courageous and can walk in the Lord's paths and follow His footsteps. And if we do, we will be called Zion, and we will be the people of the Lord.

I pray that we will be strengthened to resist the onslaught of Babylon and that we can create Zion in our homes and our

communities—indeed, that we may have “Zion in the midst of Babylon.”

We seek Zion because it is the habitation of our Lord, who is Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. In Zion and from Zion, His luminous and incandescent light will shine forth, and He will rule forever. I bear witness that He lives and loves us and will watch over us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Elder Robert S. Wood

### Hearts stirred up to anger

I have a friend who is a member of a political panel that is seen each week on national television. Explaining her role, she said, “We are encouraged to speak before thinking!” We appear to be living in an era in which many are speaking without thinking, encouraging emotional reactions rather than thoughtful responses. Whether it be on the national or international stage, in personal relations or in politics, at home or in the public forum, voices grow ever more strident, and giving and taking offense appear to be chosen rather than inadvertent.

The Lord has warned that from the beginning and throughout history, Satan would stir up people's hearts to anger.<sup>1</sup> In the Book of Mormon, Laman set a pattern of so murmuring as to stir anger, to stoke rage, and to incite murder.<sup>2</sup> Time and again in the Book of Mormon, we find deluded and wicked men inciting rage and provoking conflict. In the days of Captain Moroni, the apostate Amalickiah inspired “the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi.”<sup>3</sup> Amulon and the wicked priests of Noah; Nehor; Korihor; and Zoram the apostate (the dishonor roll goes

on throughout the Book of Mormon) were agitators who inspired distrust, fueled controversy, and deepened hatreds.

In speaking to Enoch, the Lord indicated that both the time of His birth and the time preceding His Second Coming would be “days of wickedness and vengeance.”<sup>4</sup> And the Lord has said that in the last days, wrath shall be poured out upon the earth without mixture.<sup>5</sup> *Wrath* is defined both as the righteous indignation of God and as the very human instances of impetuous ardor and deep or violent anger. The former arises from the concern of a loving Father whose children are often “without affection, and they hate their own blood,”<sup>6</sup> whereas the latter wrath arises from a people “without order and without mercy, . . . strong in their perversion.”<sup>7</sup> I fear the earth is experiencing both wraths, and I suspect the divine wrath is very much provoked by those who are stirring up the hearts of men to wickedness, slander, and violent hatreds.

### Patterns of slander and stereotyping

The first casualties of human wrath are truth and understanding. James counseled that we be “swift to hear, slow to

speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”<sup>8</sup> As Enoch observed, God’s throne is one of peace, justice, and truth.<sup>9</sup> Whether they be false friends or unrighteous teachers, artists or entertainers, commentators or letter writers to local newspapers, seekers of power or wealth, beware of those who stir us up to such anger that calm reflection and charitable feelings are suppressed.

Alma at the waters of Mormon invited those who would enter into a covenant relationship with God to stand as witnesses of God and to bear one another’s burdens.<sup>10</sup> As those who have indeed entered into a sacred covenant, we must remain true to the way, the truth, and the life, who is Jesus Christ.

Have we who have taken upon us the name of Christ slipped unknowingly into patterns of slander, evil speaking, and bitter stereotyping? Have personal or partisan or business or religious differences been translated into a kind of demonizing of those of different views? Do we pause to understand the seemingly different positions of others and seek, where possible, common ground?

I recall that as a graduate student I wrote a critique of an important political philosopher. It was clear that I disagreed with him. My professor told me that my paper was good, but not good enough. Before you launch into your criticism, she said, you must first present the strongest case for the position you are opposing, one that the philosopher himself could accept. I redid the paper. I still had important differences with the philosopher, but I understood him better, and I saw the strengths and virtues, as well as limitations, of his belief. I learned a lesson that I’ve applied across the spectrum of my life.

General Andrew Jackson, as he walked along the line at the Battle of New Orleans, said to his men, “Gentlemen, elevate your guns a little lower!” I think many

of us need to elevate our “guns” a little lower. On the other hand, we need to raise the level of private and public discourse. We should avoid caricaturing the positions of others, constructing “straw men,” if you will, and casting unwarranted aspersions on their motivations and character. We need, as the Lord counseled, to uphold honest, wise, and good men and women wherever they are found and to recognize that there are “among all sects, parties, and denominations” those who are “kept from the truth [of the gospel] because they know not where to find it.”<sup>11</sup> Would we hide that light because we have entered into the culture of slander, of stereotyping, of giving and seeking offense?

### **Mockery and cynicism**

It is far too easy sometimes to fall into a spirit of mockery and cynicism in dealing with those of contrary views. We demoralize or demean so as to bring others or their ideas in contempt. It is a primary tool of those who occupy the large and spacious building that Father Lehi saw in vision.<sup>12</sup> Jude, the brother of Christ, warned that “there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”<sup>13</sup>

Closely related to mockery is a spirit of cynicism. Cynics are disposed to find and to catch at fault. Implicitly or explicitly, they display a sneering disbelief in sincerity and rectitude. Isaiah spoke of those who “watch for iniquity” and “make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the Lord has counseled in latter days that we “cease to find fault one with another” and “above all things, clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.”<sup>15</sup>



## Instruments of the Lord's peace

President George Albert Smith observed, "There is nothing in the world more deleterious or harmful to the human family than hatred, prejudice, suspicion, and the attitude that some people have toward their fellows, of unkindness."<sup>16</sup> In matters of politics, he warned, "Whenever your politics cause you to speak unkindly of your brethren, know this, that you are upon dangerous ground."<sup>17</sup> Speaking of the great mission of the latter-day kingdom, he counseled: "This is not a militant church to which we belong. This is a church that holds out peace to the world. It is not our duty to go into the world and find fault with others, neither to criticize men because they do not understand. But it is our privilege, in kindness and love, to go among them and divide with them the truth that the Lord has revealed in this latter day."<sup>18</sup>

The Lord has constituted us as a people for a special mission. As He told Enoch in ancient times, the day in which we live would be one of darkness, but it would also be a time when righteousness would come down from heaven, and truth would be sent forth out of the earth to bear, once more, testimony of Christ and His atoning mission. As with a flood, that message would sweep the world, and the Lord's elect would be gathered out from the four quarters of the earth.<sup>19</sup> Wherever we live in the world, we have been molded as a people to be the instruments of the Lord's peace. In the words of Peter, we have been claimed by God for His own, to proclaim the triumph of Him "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."<sup>20</sup> We cannot afford to be caught up in a world prone to give and to take offense. Rather, as the Lord revealed to both Paul and Mormon, we must neither envy nor be puffed up in pride. We are not easily provoked, nor do we behave unseemly.

We rejoice not in iniquity but in the truth. Surely this is the pure love of Christ, which we represent.<sup>21</sup>

In a world beset by wrath, the prophet of our day, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has counseled: "Now, there is much that we can and must do in these perilous times. We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but never let us become a party to words or works of evil concerning our brothers and sisters in various nations on one side or the other. Political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord's people may be at peace one with another during times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties."<sup>22</sup>

## Let us not fall into darkness

As true witnesses of Christ in the latter days, let us not fall into the darkness so that, in the words of Peter, we "cannot see afar off," but let us be fruitful in the testimony of Christ and His restored gospel, in thought, in speech, in deed.<sup>23</sup> God lives. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the Restoration, was the instrument by which we have been constituted as a people, led even today by a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Let us daily renew in our hearts the pure love of Christ and overcome with our Master the darkness of the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 28:20; Doctrine and Covenants 10:24.
2. See 1 Nephi 16:37–38.
3. Alma 48:1.
4. Moses 7:46, 60.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
6. Moses 7:33.
7. Moroni 9:18–19.
8. James 1:19–20.
9. See Moses 7:31.
10. See Mosiah 18:8–10.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12; see also 98:10.
12. See 1 Nephi 8:26–33; 11:36.
13. Jude 1:18–19.
14. Isaiah 29:20–21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:124–25.
16. *Sayings of a Saint*, sel. Alice K. Chase (1952), 30.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1914, 12.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 44.
19. See Moses 7:62.
20. 1 Peter 2:9–10.
21. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–6; Moroni 7:45–47.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 80.
23. See 2 Peter 1:8–9.

## Elder H. Bruce Stucki

### Help in finding a lost arrow

It was the day after Christmas, 1946, in Santa Clara, Utah. As a young nine-year-old boy, I asked my mother if I could take my Christmas gift, a new bow and arrow set, and go up on the hill behind our home to hunt for rabbits. It was late in the afternoon, and Mother was reluctant, but with my coaxing she agreed to let me go, but only if I was back home before dark.

As I reached the top of the hill, I put an arrow on the bow and started walking quietly through the sage and chaparral bushes, hoping to see a rabbit feeding at the base of the brush where the tender grass was still green.

I was startled by a large jackrabbit that jumped out from a sage bush right in front of me. I pulled back on the bow, taking a quick aim, and let the arrow fly at the fleeing, darting rabbit. The arrow missed, and the rabbit disappeared through the brush ahead.

I went to where I thought the arrow had hit the ground to retrieve it. Only three arrows came with the bow, and I didn't want to lose this one. I looked where the arrow was supposed to be, but it wasn't there. I looked all around the area where I was sure it landed, but I couldn't find it.

The sun was setting in the west; I knew that it would be dark in about 30 minutes, and I didn't want to be late getting home. I searched again the area where the arrow should have been, look-

ing carefully under every bush, but it was not to be found.

Time was running out, and I needed to start for home to get there before dark. I decided to pray and ask Heavenly Father to help me find the arrow. I dropped to my knees, closed my eyes, and prayed to my Father in Heaven. I told Him I didn't want to lose my new arrow, and I asked Him to show me where to find it.

While still on my knees, I opened my eyes, and there in the sagebrush immediately in front of me, at eye level, I saw the colored feathers of the arrow partly hidden by the branches. I grabbed the arrow and began to run for home, arriving there just before dark.

I will never forget that special experience. Our Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. That was the first time I had prayed for Him to help me, and He did! That evening I learned to have faith and trust in my Heavenly Father.

### The stepping-stone of prayer

When we need help, even as a naive little boy with an important concern, our Heavenly Father hears our prayer, and with love He gives us the guidance we seek.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, said to us, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."<sup>1</sup>

From the scriptures, James instructed us:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."<sup>2</sup>

President James E. Faust taught us, "A fervent, sincere prayer is a two-way communication which will do much to bring His Spirit flowing like healing water to help with the trials, hardships, aches, and pains we all face."<sup>3</sup>

Prayer is one of the stepping-stones on the path that leads us to eternal life with our Father in Heaven.

### **The stepping-stone of faith**

Faith is another stepping-stone that is critical to our eternal salvation.

The Savior also said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you."<sup>4</sup>

#### *Young doctor performs a brain operation*

Thirty years ago a true story unfolded in the most remote part of New Zealand. The windswept Chatham Islands are located in the South Pacific Ocean about 500 miles east of Christchurch. A hardy and resourceful 650 people lived there, isolated in the lonely, harsh environment of those days; and a young, inexperienced, and newly qualified doctor was responsible for their medical care.

An eight-year-old boy, Shane, had sustained a serious head injury 40 miles away on the far side of the island. He was being rushed in across the swamps and along the beaches on the backseat of an old, rusty car to the four-bed cottage hospital. He was unconscious.

The young doctor was unprepared to handle such a case, with little experience and having only the most basic of surgical instruments. Shane was in a critical condition. There was obvious bleeding inside

his fractured skull—and blood clotting could fatally compress his brain. The doctor had never even seen a brain operation, but he knew he had to perform the delicate surgery immediately—or watch a little boy die.

There were blood donors to be called in, blood to be cross matched, an anesthetic to be prepared. The antique X-ray machine had broken down, so no helpful X-rays could be taken.

There was the first of many phone calls to Wellington, where a neurosurgeon tried to imagine the scene and guide the nervous young doctor through the process of a very delicate surgical procedure.

Shane's mother prayed. The doctor prayed; the nurses prayed; the doctor's wife prayed.

Responsibilities had to be delegated in this busy scene. The policeman administered the anesthetic, a nurse became the surgical assistant, and the work began under an Anglepoise light as darkness fell.

The first surgical incision, nervously performed, did not reveal any bleeding, so other incisions needed to be performed through Shane's small skull to find the source of the bleeding. More calls to the neurosurgeon for direction and reassurance were made, and his advice was followed in every exact detail. After six hours of anxiety and pressure, the surgery was completed, the hemorrhage of blood into the brain cavity ceased, and a successful outcome was achieved. Serenity replaced chaos. It was around midnight.

The doctor was a young father. He thought about his family and the blessings they enjoyed. He was grateful for the many tender mercies of the Lord in his life and especially for the presence of the Comforter during the last 12 hours. He was grateful for the presence of an unseen expert who imparted of His far-greater knowledge freely in his time of need.

At the critical time in a desperate situation, the Lord provided the guidance

and the ability for a young, inexperienced doctor to perform a miracle and preserve the life of a small boy, who was precious before the Lord.

Neil Hutchison was the young doctor who prayed for help and had the faith to rely on the Lord and the neurosurgeon, enabling him to perform a miracle under the most difficult of conditions. He now serves as the bishop in the East Coast Bays Ward in Auckland, New Zealand.

Bishop Hutchison advised me, “I had the privilege of meeting Shane and his father a couple of years ago in Christchurch for the first time since that day in 1976. He is an electrician with his own business and is aware of no defects from his long operation. He is such a nice chap, and I can’t help pondering on how thin the veil is between this life and the next.”

“And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”<sup>5</sup>

### *Fruits of faith*

Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “You will gather the fruits of faith as you follow the principles God has established for its use.” One of those principles is to “trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed no matter how challenging the circumstance.”<sup>6</sup>

Elder Robert D. Hales testified that Joseph Smith, “as a 14-year-old boy, . . . exercised unwavering faith and followed the prophet James’s direction to ‘ask of God.’ Because of Joseph’s prophetic calling, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him and gave him instructions.”<sup>7</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson has encouraged us: “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in him. . . . If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now.”<sup>8</sup>

It doesn’t matter whether it is a little boy with a simple request, or a medical

doctor with a critical, life-threatening challenge before him: Heavenly Father will hear our humble prayer and will give us the comfort and guidance we seek.

### **The stepping-stone of family**

A third stepping-stone and an essential part of the path that leads us safely home to our Father in Heaven is the family.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us: “The family is divine. It was instituted by our Heavenly Father. It encompasses the most sacred of all relationships. Only through its organization can the purposes of the Lord be fulfilled.”<sup>9</sup>

President Hinckley continued: “I believe in the family where there is a husband who regards his companion as his greatest asset and treats her accordingly; where there is a wife who looks upon her husband as her anchor and strength, her comfort and security; where there are children who look to mother and father with respect and gratitude; where there are parents who look upon those children as blessings and find a great and serious and wonderful challenge in their nurture and rearing.”<sup>10</sup>

I sincerely believe that in the sanctity of the family our love, loyalty, respect, and support for each other can become the *sacred shield* that will protect us from the fiery darts of the devil. In the family circle, filled with the love of Christ, we will be able to find peace, happiness, and protection from the wickedness of the world that surrounds us.

I testify that the family is the unit and the vehicle through which we can be sealed together and return, as a family, into the presence of our heavenly parents, there to experience eternal joy and happiness.

I sincerely pray that we will use the stepping-stones of prayer, faith, and our family to prepare and help us to return to our Father in Heaven and gain life eternal,

that our very purpose for being upon this earth will be successfully accomplished, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
2. James 1:5–6.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 83; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 58.
4. 3 Nephi 18:20.

5. Moroni 7:33.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 79; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 76.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 73.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 509.
9. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 206.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 205.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### The story of a horse called Snowman

Harry de Leyer was late to the auction on that snowy day in 1956, and all of the good horses had already been sold. The few that remained were old and spent and had been bought by a company that would salvage them.

Harry, the riding master at a girls' school in New York, was about to leave when one of these horses—an uncared-for gray gelding with ugly-looking wounds on its legs—caught his eye. The animal still bore the marks that had been made by a heavy work harness, evidence to the hard life he had led. But something about him captured Harry's attention, so he offered \$80 for him.

It was snowing when Harry's children saw the horse for the first time, and because of the coat of snow on the horse's back, the children named him "Snowman."

Harry took good care of the horse, which turned out to be a gentle and reliable friend—a horse the girls liked to ride because he was steady and didn't startle like some of the others. In fact, Snowman made such rapid improvement that a neighbor purchased him for twice what Harry had originally paid.

But Snowman kept disappearing from the neighbor's pasture—sometimes ending up in adjoining potato fields, other times back at Harry's. It appeared that the horse

must have jumped over the fences between the properties, but that seemed impossible—Harry had never seen Snowman jump over anything much higher than a fallen log.

But eventually, the neighbor's patience came to an end, and he insisted Harry take back the horse.

For years, Harry's great dream had been to produce a champion jumping horse. He'd had moderate success in the past, but in order to compete at the highest levels, he knew he would have to buy a pedigreed horse that had been specifically bred to jump. And that kind of pedigree would cost far more than he could afford.

Snowman was already getting old—he was eight when Harry had purchased him—and he had been badly treated. But, apparently, Snowman wanted to jump, so Harry decided to see what the horse could do.

What Harry saw made him think that maybe his horse had a chance to compete.

In 1958, Harry entered Snowman in his first competition. Snowman stood among the beautifully bred champion horses, looking very much out of place. Other horse breeders called Snowman a "flea-bitten gray."

But a wonderful, unbelievable thing happened that day.

Snowman won!

Harry continued to enter Snowman in other competitions, and Snowman continued to win.

Audiences cheered every time Snowman won an event. He became a symbol of how extraordinary an ordinary horse could be. He appeared on television. Stories and books were written about him.

As Snowman continued to win, one buyer offered \$100,000 for the old plow horse, but Harry would not sell. In 1958 and 1959, Snowman was named “Horse of the Year.” Eventually, the gray gelding—who had once been marked for sale to a low bidder—was inducted into the show jumping Hall of Fame.<sup>1</sup>

For many, Snowman was much more than a horse. He became an example of the hidden, untapped potential that lies within each of us.

### **Qualities of those who live abundant lives**

I have had the opportunity to become acquainted with many wonderful people from many walks of life. I have known rich and poor, famous and modest, wise and otherwise.

Some were burdened with heavy sorrows; others radiated a confident inner peace. Some smoldered with unquenchable bitterness, while others glowed with irrepressible joy. Some appeared defeated, while others—in spite of adversity—overcame discouragement and despair.

I have heard some claim, perhaps only partly in jest, that the only happy people are those who simply don’t have a firm grasp of what is happening around them.

But I believe otherwise.

I have known many who walk in joy and radiate happiness.

I have known many who live lives of abundance.

And I believe I know why.

Today, I want to list a few of the characteristics that the happiest people I know have in common. They are qualities that

can transform ordinary existence into a life of excitement and abundance.

### *They drink deeply of living waters*

First, they drink deeply of living waters.

The Savior taught that “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give . . . shall never thirst; [for it] shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”<sup>2</sup>

Fully understood and embraced, the gospel of Jesus Christ heals broken hearts, infuses meaning into lives, binds loved ones together with ties that transcend mortality, and brings to life a sublime joy.

President Lorenzo Snow said, “The Lord has not given us the gospel that we may go around mourning all the days of our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a religion of mourning and gloom. The faith of our fathers is one of hope and joy. It is not a gospel of chains but a gospel of wings.

To embrace it fully is to be filled with wonder and to walk with an inner fire. Our Savior proclaimed, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”<sup>4</sup>

Do you seek peace of mind?

Drink deeply of living waters.

Do you seek forgiveness? peace? understanding? joy?

Drink deeply of living waters.

The abundant life is a spiritual life. Too many sit at the banquet table of the gospel of Jesus Christ and merely nibble at the feast placed before them. They go through the motions—attending their meetings perhaps, glancing at scriptures, repeating familiar prayers—but their hearts are far away. If they are honest, they would admit to being more interested in the latest neighborhood rumors, stock market trends, and their favorite TV show than they are in the supernal wonders and sweet ministrings of the Holy Spirit.

Do you wish to partake of this living water and experience that divine well springing up within you to everlasting life?

Then be not afraid. Believe with all your hearts. Develop an unshakable faith in the Son of God. Let your hearts reach out in earnest prayer. Fill your minds with knowledge of Him. Forsake your weaknesses. Walk in holiness and harmony with the commandments.

Drink deeply of the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*They fill their hearts with love*

The second quality of those who live abundant lives is that they fill their hearts with love.

Love is the essence of the gospel and the greatest of all the commandments. The Savior taught that every other commandment and prophetic teaching hangs upon it.<sup>5</sup> The Apostle Paul wrote that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>6</sup>

We often don't know the reach of a simple act of kindness. The Prophet Joseph Smith was a model of compassion and love. One day, a group of eight African Americans arrived at the Prophet's home in Nauvoo. They had traveled from their home in Buffalo, New York, some 800 miles away, so they could be with the prophet of God and with the Saints. Although they were free, they were forced to hide from those who might mistake them for runaway slaves. They endured cold and hardship, wearing out shoes and then socks until they walked on bare feet all the way to the City of Joseph. When they arrived in Nauvoo, the Prophet welcomed them into his home and helped each of them find a place to stay.

But there was one, a girl named Jane, who did not have a place to go, and she wept, not knowing what to do.

"We won't have tears here," Joseph said to her. He turned to Emma and said,

"Here's a girl who says she [doesn't have a] home. Don't you think she has a home here?"

Emma agreed. From that day on, Jane lived as a member of the family.

Years after the Prophet's martyrdom and after she had joined the pioneers and made the long trek to Utah, Jane said that sometimes she would still "wake up in the middle of the night, and just think about Brother Joseph and Sister Emma and how good they [were] to me. Joseph Smith," she said, "was the finest man I ever saw on Earth."<sup>7</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that those who reach out to lift and serve others "will come to know a happiness . . . never known before. . . . Heaven knows there are so very, very, very many people in this world who need help. Oh, so very . . . many. Let's get the cankering, selfish attitude out of our lives, my brothers and sisters, and stand a little taller and reach a little higher in the service of others."<sup>8</sup>

We are all busy. It's easy to find excuses for not reaching out to others, but I imagine they will sound as hollow to our Heavenly Father as the elementary school boy who gave his teacher a note asking that he be excused from school March 30th through the 34th.

Those who devote their lives in pursuit of their own selfish desires at the exclusion of others will discover that, in the end, their joy is shallow and their lives have little meaning.

On a tombstone of one such person was carved the following epitaph:

Here lies a miser who lived for himself,  
And cared for nothing but gathering pelf,  
Now, where he is, or how he fares,  
Nobody knows and nobody cares.<sup>9</sup>

We are happiest when our lives are connected to others through unselfish love

and service. President J. Reuben Clark taught that “there is no greater blessing, no greater joy and happiness than comes to us from relieving the distress of others.”<sup>10</sup>

*They create a masterpiece of their lives*

The third quality of those who live abundant lives is that they, with the help of their Heavenly Father, create a masterpiece of their lives.

No matter our age, circumstances, or abilities, each one of us can create something remarkable of his life.

David saw himself as a shepherd, but the Lord saw him as a king of Israel. Joseph of Egypt served as a slave, but the Lord saw him as a seer. Mormon wore the armor of a soldier, but the Lord saw him as a prophet.

We are sons and daughters of an immortal, loving, and all-powerful Father in Heaven. We are created as much from the dust of eternity as we are from the dust of the earth. Every one of us has potential we can scarcely imagine.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>11</sup>

How is it possible, then, that so many see themselves merely as an old gray horse that isn’t good for much? There is a spark of greatness within every one of us—a gift from our loving and eternal Heavenly Father. What we do with that gift is up to us.

Love the Lord with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. Enlist in great and noble causes. Create of your homes sanctuaries of holiness and strength. Magnify your callings in the Church. Fill your minds with learning. Strengthen your testimonies. Reach out to others.

Create of your life a masterpiece.

**The abundant life is a journey**

Brothers and sisters, the abundant life does not come to us packaged and ready-made. It’s not something we can order and expect to find delivered with the afternoon mail. It does not come without hardship or sorrow.

It comes through faith, hope, and charity. And it comes to those who, in spite of hardship and sorrow, understand the words of one writer who said, “In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.”<sup>12</sup>

The abundant life isn’t something we arrive at. Rather, it is a magnificent journey that began long, long ages ago and will never, never end.

One of the great comforts of the gospel of Jesus Christ is our knowledge that this earthly existence is merely a twinkle in the eye of eternity. Whether we are at the beginning of our mortal journey or at the end, this life is merely one step—one small step.

Our search for the abundant life is cloaked not only in the robes of this mortal clay; its true end can only be comprehended from the perspective of the eternities that stretch infinitely before us.

Brothers and sisters, it is in the quest of the abundant life that we find our destiny.

As illustrated in the story of an old, discarded horse that had within him the soul of a champion, there is within each of us a divine spark of greatness. Who knows of what we are capable if we only try? The abundant life is within our reach if only we will drink deeply of living water, fill our hearts with love, and create of our lives a masterpiece.

That we may do so is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Rutherford George Montgomery, *Snowman* (1962).



2. John 4:14.
3. *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 61.
4. John 10:10.
5. See Matthew 22:40.
6. Galatians 5:14.
7. Neil K. Newell, "Joseph Smith Moments: Stranger in Nauvoo," *Church News*, Dec. 31, 2005, 16.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 597.
9. In Obert C. Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living* (Sunday School manual, 1955), 266.
10. "Fundamentals of the Church Welfare Plan," *Church News*, Mar. 2, 1946, 9.
11. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
12. Albert Camus, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 16th ed. (1980), 732.

## President Faust

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." After the choir has sung, the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Until again we meet

Just a word in conclusion, my brothers and sisters, bringing to a close this great conference. The music has been magnificent, the prayers have been inspired, and the talks and testimonies have touched our hearts, lifted our spirits, and confirmed our faith.

Now, as we return to our homes and our vocational labors, may we remember and constantly express in our lives the counsel we have received. May we remain fortified against the wiles of the adversary. May our labors in our many Church responsibilities be not burdensome, but rather may they bring joy and satisfaction. May we live together as husbands and

wives, as parents and children, with love and kindness and respect for one another.

God bless you, my beloved brothers and sisters. I leave my love and my testimony and my blessing with you and pray that the Lord will be with us each and every one until again we meet. May heaven's blessings rest upon you, I humbly pray in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes provided music for

the priesthood session. Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-sixth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**September 30 and October 1, 2006**





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# Report of the 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 2006, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, September 30 and October 1, 2006. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, September 30, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles

Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koeliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 30, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Arise, O God, and Shine.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you to the first general session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many parts of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church’s official Internet site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Arise, O God, and Shine” and will now favor us with “We Ever Pray for Thee.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Elder Merrill J. Bateman offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

We shall now hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Each Life That Touches Ours for Good.”

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **Continued growth of the Church**

My brothers and sisters, as we gather in another general conference, I am pleased to report that the Church continues to grow in strength and influence. In 1982, some 24 years ago, I noted this in

my journal: “There will be in place for the October general conference more than 300 downlinks in our satellite service. This means that we will have more than 300 stake centers where our people may gather across the nation and participate in the conference.”

I am now advised that there are 6,066 Church-owned satellite receiving sites in 83 countries. How grateful I am that with our growth in numbers there is also an increased ability to reach out and communicate with the Latter-day Saints throughout the world.

Now, we could wish for more baptisms in the United States and Canada, but that could be said of everywhere throughout the world. Nevertheless, the harvest is great, with members in some 160 nations. Where not long ago there were very few Latter-day Saints, today there are strong wards and stakes, with faithful and capable men and women in leadership.

Though there are limitations on our ability to travel where we might, there is compensation in the ability of the First Presidency, members of the Twelve, and the Seventy to speak by satellite to large numbers of stakes throughout the world.

Circumstances change, but our message does not change. We bear testimony to the world that the heavens have been opened, that God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, the risen Lord, have appeared and spoken. We offer our solemn witness that the priesthood has been restored with the keys and authority of eternal blessings.

### **New temples and other building projects**

We recently dedicated the new Sacramento California Temple, the 7th in that state and the 123rd in the world. We also broke ground for another temple in the Salt Lake area.

We are pleased to announce that the renovation of the Salt Lake Tabernacle is proceeding on schedule and that this unique and wonderful facility will next spring again accommodate the Tabernacle Choir in its weekly broadcasts.

The Church is undertaking a huge development project in the interest of protecting the environment of Temple Square. While the costs will be great, it will not involve the expenditure of tithing funds.

However, the faithfulness of our people continues to be demonstrated in the payment of tithes and offerings.

Altogether, I can only report that the Lord is richly blessing His Church, and our duty is to do all we can to move it forward.

Now, brothers and sisters, after the singing of the choir, we shall hear the remarks of our brethren and sisters. And as we proceed with this great conference, may the Spirit of the Lord dictate all that is done and said, and may our hearts and minds be filled to overflowing is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

---

The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

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### **President Monson**

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elders Richard H. Winkel and Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy. Following their remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Redeemer of Israel."

At the conclusion of the singing, Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "Love at Home."

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Many are heavy laden

The Savior said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Many carry heavy burdens. Some have lost a loved one to death or care for one who is disabled. Some have been wounded by divorce. Others yearn for an eternal marriage. Some are caught in the grip of addictive substances or practices like alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or pornography. Others have crippling physical or mental impairments. Some are challenged by same-gender attraction. Some have terrible feelings of depression or inadequacy. In one way or another, many are heavy laden.

To each of us our Savior gives this loving invitation:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

### Jesus healed every kind of affliction

The scriptures contain many accounts of the Savior’s healing the heavy laden. He caused the blind to see; the deaf to hear; the palsied, withered, or maimed to be restored; lepers to be cleansed; and unclean spirits to be cast out. Often we read that the person healed of these physical ailments was “made whole” (see Matthew 14:36; 15:28; Mark 6:56; 10:52; Luke 17:19; John 5:9).

Jesus healed many from physical diseases, but He did not withhold healing from those who sought to be “made whole” from other ailments. Matthew writes that He healed every sickness and every disease among the people (see

Matthew 4:23; 9:35). Great multitudes followed Him, and He “healed them all” (Matthew 12:15). Surely these healings included those whose sicknesses were emotional, mental, or spiritual. He healed them all.

In His early sermon in the synagogue, Jesus read aloud from this prophecy of Isaiah: “He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). As Jesus declared that He was come to fulfill that prophecy, He expressly affirmed that He would heal those with physical ailments and He would also deliver the captive, liberate the bruised, and heal the brokenhearted.

The Gospel of Luke contains many examples of that ministry. It tells of the time when “great multitudes came together to hear [Jesus], and to be healed by him of their infirmities” (Luke 5:15). On other occasions it records that Jesus “cured many of their infirmities” (Luke 7:21) and that He “healed them that had need of healing” (Luke 9:11). It also describes how a great multitude of people out of Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Sidon came down to the plain “to hear him, and to be healed” (Luke 6:17).

When the Savior appeared to the righteous in the New World, He called for persons to come forward who were lame or blind or had other physical ailments. He extended the same invitation to those “that are afflicted in any manner” (3 Nephi 17:7). “Bring them hither,” He said, “and I will heal them” (v. 7). The Book of Mormon tells how the multitude brought forward “all them that were afflicted in any manner” (v. 9). This must have included persons with every kind of physical or emotional or mental affliction,

and the scripture testifies that Jesus “did heal them every one” (v. 9).

### Healing power of the Atonement

The Savior teaches that we will have tribulation in the world, but we should “be of good cheer” because He has “overcome the world” (John 16:33). His Atonement reaches and is powerful enough not only to pay the price for sin but also to heal every mortal affliction. The Book of Mormon teaches that “he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the world might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11; see also 2 Nephi 9:21).

He knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. Like the good Samaritan in His parable, when He finds us wounded at the wayside, He binds up our wounds and cares for us (see Luke 10:34). Brothers and sisters, the healing power of His Atonement is for you, for us, for all.

His all-encompassing healing power is sought in the prayerful words of our hymn “Master, the Tempest Is Raging”:

Master, with anguish of spirit  
I bow in my grief today.  
The depths of my sad heart are  
troubled.  
Oh, waken and save, I pray!  
Torrents of sin and of anguish  
Sweep o’er my sinking soul,  
And I perish! I perish! dear Master.  
Oh, hasten and take control!  
[Hymns, no. 105]

### Healings through priesthood authority

We can be healed through the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Jesus gave His Apostles power “to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matthew 10:1; see also Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1–2), and they went forth “preaching the gospel, and healing every where”

(Luke 9:6; see also Mark 6:13; Acts 5:16). The Seventy were also sent forth with power and direction to heal the sick (see Luke 10:9; Acts 8:6–7).

Although the Savior could heal all whom He would heal, this is not true of those who hold His priesthood authority. Mortal exercises of that authority are limited by the will of Him whose priesthood it is. Consequently, we are told that some whom the elders bless are not healed because they are “appointed unto death” (D&C 42:48). Similarly, when the Apostle Paul sought to be healed from the “thorn in the flesh” that buffeted him (2 Corinthians 12:7), the Lord declined to heal him. Paul later wrote that the Lord explained, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). Paul obediently responded that he would “rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong” (vv. 9–10).

### Blessings suited to individual needs

Healing blessings come in many ways, each suited to our individual needs, as known to Him who loves us best. Sometimes a “healing” cures our illness or lifts our burden. But sometimes we are “healed” by being given strength or understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.

The people who followed Alma were in bondage to wicked oppressors. When they prayed for relief, the Lord told them He would deliver them eventually, but in the meantime He would ease their burdens “that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses . . . that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions” (Mosiah 24:14). In that case the people did not have their burdens removed, but the Lord strengthened them so that “they could bear up their burdens

with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord" (v. 15).

This same promise and effect applies to you mothers who are widowed or divorced, to you singles who are lonely, to you caregivers who are burdened, to you persons who are addicted, and to all of us whatever our burden. "Come unto Christ," the prophet says, "and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

At times we may despair that our burdens are too great. When it seems that a tempest is raging in our lives, we may feel abandoned and cry out like the disciples in the storm, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38). At such times we should remember His reply: "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (v. 40).

The healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ—whether it removes our burdens or strengthens us to endure and live with them like the Apostle Paul—is available for every affliction in mortality.

### Overcoming pornography

After I gave a general conference talk on the evils of pornography (see Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 91–95; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 87–90), I received many letters from persons burdened with this addiction. Some of these letters were from men who had overcome pornography. One man wrote:

"There are several lessons I've gleaned from my experience coming out of the darkness of a sin that so thoroughly dominates the lives of the people it ensnares: (1) This is a major problem that is unbelievably difficult to overcome. . . . (2) The most important source of support and strength in the repentance process is the Savior. . . . (3) Intense, daily scripture study, regular temple worship, and serious, contemplative participation in the ordinance of the sacrament are all indispensable parts of a true repentance process. This, I assume, is

because all of these activities serve to deepen and strengthen one's relationship with the Savior, one's understanding of His atoning sacrifice, and one's faith in His healing power" (letter dated Oct. 24, 2005).

"Come unto me," the Savior said, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29). That heavy-laden man turned to the Savior, and so can each of us.

A woman whose marriage was threatened by her husband's addiction to pornography wrote how she stood beside him for five pain-filled years until, as she said, "through the gift of our precious Savior's glorious Atonement and what He taught me about forgiveness, [my husband] finally is free—and so am I." As one who needed no cleansing from sin, but only sought a loved one's deliverance from captivity, she wrote this advice:

"Commune with the Lord. . . . He is your best friend! He knows your pain because He has felt it for you already. He is ready to carry that burden. Trust Him enough to place it at His feet and allow Him to carry it for you. Then you can have your anguish replaced with His peace, in the very depths of your soul" (letter dated Apr. 18, 2005).

### Man dealing with same-gender attraction

A man wrote a General Authority about how the power of the Atonement helped him with his problem of same-gender attraction. He had been excommunicated for serious transgressions that violated his temple covenants and his responsibilities to his children. He had to choose whether to attempt to live the gospel or whether to continue a course contrary to its teachings.

"I knew it would be difficult," he wrote, "but I didn't realize what I would have to go through." His letter describes the emptiness and loneliness and the incredible pain he experienced from deep



within his soul as he sought to return. He prayed mightily for forgiveness, sometimes for hours at a time. He was sustained by reading the scriptures, by the companionship of a loving bishop, and by priesthood blessings. But what finally made the difference was the help of the Savior. He explained:

“It [was] only through Him and His Atonement. . . . I now feel an overwhelming gratitude. My pains have been almost more than I could bear at times, and yet they were so small compared to what He suffered. Where there once was darkness in my life, there is now love and gratitude.”

He continues: “Some profess that change is possible and therapy is the only answer. They are very learned on the subject and have so much to offer those who struggle . . . , but I worry that they forget to involve Heavenly Father in the process. If change is to happen, it will happen according to the will of God. I also worry that many people focus on the causes of [same-gender attraction]. . . . There is no need to determine why I have [this challenge]. I don’t know if I was born with it, or if environmental factors contributed to it. The fact of the matter is that I have this struggle in my life and what I do with it from this point forward is what matters” (letter dated Mar. 25, 2006).

### **Atonement gives strength to endure**

The persons who wrote these letters know that the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the healing it offers do much more than provide the opportunity for repentance from sins. The Atonement also gives us the strength to endure “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind,” because our Savior also took upon Him “the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11). Brothers and sisters, if your faith and prayers and the power of the priesthood do not heal you from an affliction, the power of the Atonement will surely give you the strength to bear the burden.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” the Savior said, “and I will give you rest . . . unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

As we struggle with the challenges of mortality, I pray for each of us, as the prophet Mormon prayed for his son, Moroni: “May Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, . . . and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever” (Moroni 9:25).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who invites us all to come unto Him and be perfected in Him. He will bind up our wounds and He will heal the heavy laden. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard H. Winkel**

### **Temples are about families**

As President Hinckley just mentioned, the 123rd temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was recently dedicated by President Hinckley in Sacramento, California. This beautiful temple serves more than 80,000 wonderful and excited members of the Church in Sacramento and surrounding areas. Over

168,000 visitors toured the temple during the open house. They were told that members can draw closer to the Savior Jesus Christ in these magnificent edifices than anywhere else in the world. Our members know that through Him they can find the peace and hope that will sustain them and their families in today’s troubled world.

When you come to the temple you will love your family with a deeper love

than you have ever felt before. The temple is about families. As my wife, Karen, and I have increased our temple service, our love for each other and for our children has increased. And it doesn't stop there. It extends to parents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, forebears, and especially our grandchildren! This is the Spirit of Elijah, which is the spirit of family history work; and when inspired by the Holy Ghost, it prompts the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. Because of the priesthood, husbands and wives are sealed together and children are sealed to their parents for eternity, so the family is eternal and will not be separated at death.

#### **A father-and-son bowling activity**

When my wife and I were young parents with little children at home, we challenged our children to memorize the Articles of Faith. The prize, or reward, for completing them was a night out with Dad. We were pleased that our three oldest completed the challenge. When our seven-year-old son first memorized all 13 Articles of Faith, we sat down to pick out a night and activity that we could do together. I was so busy with work, social activities, and Church responsibilities that I couldn't give my son a night out for about two weeks. He was sorely disappointed. However, I found that in the city where we lived there was an all-night bowling alley. We immediately picked a date and chose to start our activity at 5:00 in the morning. Our plan was to get up at 4:00, have breakfast, and then go downtown.

When that day arrived, I felt someone shaking my shoulder very early in the morning. As I tried to open my eyes I heard my son say, "Is it time, Dad?" I looked at my alarm clock; it was only 2:00 a.m.!

"Go to sleep, Son," I said. "It's not time yet."

An hour later the same thing happened. "Dad, Dad, is it time to go?" After sending him to bed for a second time, I couldn't help but feel his excitement.

Then at 4:00 a.m. we got up, had something to eat, and left for the bowling alley. We had a wonderful time.

I wish I could say I had *regular* and memorable activities like that with all my children, but I can't. I'm one of those parents who oftentimes wishes he could go back and do some things over.

#### **Blessings of temple sealings**

Like you, I don't want to lose any of my children. I want to be together forever with all of my family. The temple gives all of us extra hope of continuing and improving these relationships, even after this life. Sealings bestowed in the temple promise additional blessings.

"The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain."<sup>1</sup>

Isn't this statement encouraging news for parents whose children are sealed to them?

### Additional blessings of the temple

Let's look at a few other blessings the temple brings. The house of the Lord is a refuge from the world. The Sacramento members shared the following comment with their open house guests: "Sometimes our minds are so beset with problems, and there are so many things clamoring for [our] attention at once that we just cannot think clearly. . . . At the temple the dust of distraction seems to settle out, the fog and the haze seem to lift, and we can 'see' things that we were not able to see before."<sup>2</sup>

The celestial room in the temple is especially a place of peace, tranquillity, and beauty. It is a quiet haven where one can reflect, ponder, pray, meditate, and feel the love of Heavenly Father and the Savior. As we ponder and meditate in the temple, our thoughts naturally focus on members of our family.

In 2 Samuel 22:7 we read the words of David: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears." The temple is a place of personal revelation that will bless us in our stewardships.

President Hinckley has told us that "just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as saviors to

those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth."<sup>3</sup>

This is such meaningful service we give because our departed brothers and sisters literally become more connected to us.

The temple is a place to know the Father and the Son. It is a place where we experience the divine presence. The Prophet Joseph Smith made this plea: "I advise all to . . . search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness."<sup>4</sup> And where shall we search? In the house of God.

Let's become a temple-attending and temple-loving people. I bear testimony that the temple is about families. I also testify that everything in the temple testifies of Jesus Christ. His example of love and service is felt there. The temple is His holy house. I know that He is the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Mediator, and our Advocate with the Father. He loves us and wants our families to be happy and to be together forever. He wants all of us to be active in His temple.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
2. Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36.
3. *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Volume 2: 2000–2004* (2005), 265.
4. *History of the Church*, 6:363.

## Elder Paul B. Pieper

Several days ago, we were discussing talks during a family meal. Clarissa, our 13-year-old daughter, was preparing a sacrament meeting talk for our branch in Moscow and felt some anxiety. I reassured her that all would be well and released a little anxiety of my own by saying that at

least she didn't have to speak in front of thousands of people in general conference. Clarissa gave me some advice of her own: "It will be OK, Dad. Just pretend it's a big branch." Brothers and sisters, you are indeed a very large branch.

### **A message for first-generation members**

I have chosen to address my remarks this morning to first-generation members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are those who are the first in your family to hear and embrace the message that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth in our day with living prophets, seers, and revelators. You humbled yourselves, exercised faith, and repented of all your sins, taking upon you the name of Jesus Christ through baptism by immersion, and received the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> By being the first in your family to accept the gospel, you become the first generation, a chosen generation through which generations past, present, and future may be blessed.<sup>2</sup>

Being a first-generation member of the Church is not always easy. You will walk where no one in your family has walked before. Conditions around you may be challenging. You may have few, or no, friends or relatives to understand and support you. At times you may become discouraged, wondering if it is all worth it. My purpose this morning is to assure you that it is.

### **Serving in the Church**

First-generation members occupy a special and important place in the Church and their families. Did you know that first-generation members constitute more than half of the membership of the Church?<sup>3</sup> Perhaps not since the early days of the Church has the first generation constituted such a large percentage of total Church membership as it does today. Your faith and testimonies are a great strength and blessing to others. Through you, we gain a deeper understanding of gospel principles and our testimonies are strengthened.

You add great strength to the Church when you use your testimony, talents,

abilities, and energy to build the kingdom in your wards and branches. You are great examples of sharing the gospel, serving missions, sending children on missions, and welcoming new members. You reach out in kindness to those around you, lifting and blessing them through inspired service. So much of what is done in the Church today could not be done without your efforts.

### **Influencing and serving family members**

More importantly, as a first-generation member, you occupy an important place in your family. You are an example to your family of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Whether they are members of the Church or not, as you live the gospel at home, those around you will feel the Savior's love through you. They know that you are engaged in something good, even if they do not understand it or have enough faith to accept it. Be patient and kind, pray each day to know how you can serve them, and the Lord will help you and bless you to influence your family for good. By being consistently good and upright, you will establish patterns of faithfulness and righteousness. Those patterns will shape your life, but more importantly, they will become a standard for your family and posterity.

As the first generation, you are also the key to opening the Lord's blessings to family members who died without hearing the gospel and receiving saving ordinances. Yours is the unique opportunity and privilege to begin this work on their behalf. They are anxious for you to identify them and will help you in your search for their records. Once they are identified, your worthy life will permit you to attend the temple and perform essential ordinances for them. These ordinances will bind you to your ancestors and bring great spiritual power into your life.

### Importance of small decisions

Because you are a first-generation member, each choice you make is important. Seemingly small, insignificant decisions will impact past and future generations, as well as your own life. One young first-generation member, Chris, was offered a drink of alcohol at work the day after his baptism. His friends were all there and were drinking. There was considerable pressure. No one else knew that the day before, he had been baptized and made promises to the Lord. He made the decision not to drink and was treated poorly. Reflecting on that event later, he wrote: "It is now forty years since I made those [baptismal] promises and I can truthfully say that I have . . . kept the Word of Wisdom. . . . I believe if I had accepted [that] drink that I would, perhaps, never have been able to keep the Word of Wisdom."<sup>4</sup>

But Chris kept his baptismal promises. Later he met and married a faithful member. Together they raised eight children in the gospel. Now in the sixth generation, his faithful descendants number in the hundreds. Dozens have served missions and introduced the gospel to others. His efforts in family history opened the blessings of the gospel to hundreds more. One small decision by a first-generation member made a difference for thousands.

Can you see now why the first generation is so important? Can you understand the position you occupy and the influence you can have for good? Please never underestimate who you are and the power that you have to affect others. Satan understands who you are and will do all possible to entice you to make wrong choices. At times, despite our best efforts, we all make mistakes. Fortunately, Heavenly Father has prepared a way for us to overcome them through repentance and reliance on the Atonement of His Son. Do

not be discouraged if you make a mistake. Repenting and continuing to press forward are perhaps the most important patterns to develop in the first generation. Be patient and move forward in obedience.

### Pioneer legacy

In the Church we read and speak much about pioneers in early Church history. They were first-generation members just like you. They lived each day meeting the challenges of family, work, and faith. They lived good, ordinary lives and were faithful, serving in the Church and blessing their families. When they fell down, they got back up and moved on. Now those of us who are their descendants look back with reverence and gratitude for their faithfulness.

Their legacy can be yours as fellow members of the first generation. Be faithful, serve your fellowman, bless your family, and make proper choices. You are the first generation, a chosen generation to bless past, present, and future generations. We honor you. Past and future generations will honor you. But most importantly, God will honor you for being faithful in the first generation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Articles of Faith 1:4; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
2. See 1 Peter 2:9.
3. According to the Church's Member and Statistical Records Division, first-generation members made up 64 percent of total Church membership as of July 2006.
4. *History of Heinrich Friedrich Christian Pieper and Emma Frieda Alber and Their Family* (1987), 29.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Redeemer of Israel."

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## Elder David S. Baxter

### Gospel journey

Thirty-nine years ago two of the Lord's missionaries knocked on my family's door in Glasgow, Scotland. We were deeply touched by their brightness, their humility, and their faith. Whenever they were in our home, we felt love and peace. It was a feeling of sheer goodness.

Their teaching was personal, sincere, familiar. We simply felt that it was true. A few weeks later we were baptized and confirmed and were immediately embraced with friendship and kindness from members and leaders in our new Church family.

So began a gospel journey which has enriched and blessed every aspect of our lives, bringing a deep, abiding, calming sense of purpose and direction. In the hope that it may prove helpful to those new to Church membership, I will share today just three gospel fundamentals learned along the way.

### Faith in Jesus Christ

First is the motivating, transforming power of faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is like spiritual oxygen. As we allow faith to freely flow within us, it awakens and enlivens our spiritual senses. It breathes life into our very souls.

As faith flows, we become sensitively attuned to the whisperings of the Spirit. Our minds are enlightened, our spiritual pulse quickens, our hearts are touched.

Faith fuels hope. Our perspective changes; our vision becomes clearer. We begin to look for the best, not the worst, in life and in others. We gain a deeper sense of life's purpose and meaning. Despair gives way to joy.

Faith such as this is a heavenly gift, but it can be sought and cultivated. As our Bible Dictionary suggests, often "faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those

who have faith."<sup>1</sup> Faith is then nurtured as we allow ourselves to believe. Like all other virtues, faith is strengthened as we practice it, as we live and act as if our faith were already deep. Faith is the product of righteous desire, belief, and obedience.

Thus the Book of Mormon example of the father of King Lamoni, who heard the testimony of Aaron and was willing to believe and to act so that he was led to say in humble prayer, "If there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee."<sup>2</sup>

So it can be for us as we allow ourselves to be touched by the spirit of testimony, as we exercise belief, as we desire, ponder, seek—as we cultivate our faith.

### Growth through service

Second, as we serve we grow. President George Albert Smith taught, "It is not what we receive that enriches our lives, it is what we give."<sup>3</sup>

Selfless service is a wonderful antidote to the ills that flow from the worldwide epidemic of self-indulgence. Some grow bitter or anxious when it seems that not enough attention is being paid to them, when their lives would be so enriched if only they paid more attention to the needs of others.

The answer lies in helping to solve the problems of those around us rather than worrying about our own, living to lift burdens even when we ourselves feel weighed down, putting our shoulder to the wheel instead of complaining that the wagons of life seem to be passing us by.

Stretching our souls in service helps us to rise above our cares, concerns, and challenges. As we focus our energies on lifting the burdens of others, something miraculous happens. Our own burdens diminish. We become happier. There is more substance to our lives.

### Staying steadfast, constant, and true

Third, discipleship does not guarantee freedom from the storms of life. Even as we are wending our way carefully and faithfully along the strait and narrow path, we encounter obstacle and challenge. There are days, perhaps even months and years, when life is just hard. We experience our fair share of adversity, heartache, loneliness, pain, grief—sometimes, it seems, more than our fair share.

What to do when adversity strikes? There is only one thing to do. Stand steady and see it through. Stay steadfast, constant, and true. The real tragedy in the whirlwinds of life comes only when we allow them to blow us off our true course.

At these moments of crisis and challenge, some choose to abandon faith just at the time when it most needs to be embraced. Prayer is ignored at the very hour when it needs to be intensified. Virtue is carelessly tossed aside when it needs to be cherished. God is forsaken in the all-too-human yet mistaken fear that He has forsaken us.

The truth is that our only safety, our only security, our only hope is to hold fast to that which is good. As the mists of darkness gather around us, we are only lost if we choose to let go of the iron rod, which is the word of God.

The Savior's parable of the wise man who built his house upon a rock has power precisely because it illustrates that life's challenges befell the wise man too. The rains fell, the winds blew, the floods rose up. Yet he survived it all because he had built upon a sure foundation and, crucially, he stayed there when the storm came.

In his description of a pilgrim's, or disciple's, progress, John Bunyan wrote:

Who would true valour see,  
Let him come hither!

One here will constant be,  
Come wind, come weather;  
There's no discouragement  
Shall make him once relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a pilgrim.<sup>4</sup>

The Apostle Paul urged the Colossians to "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard."<sup>5</sup>

To the people of Corinth came this powerful testimony:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."<sup>6</sup>

What made such a perspective possible? Paul gave the reason: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup>

It is my witness that as we cultivate our faith, grow through service, and stay constant and true come what may, so we feel the Savior's love. We place ourselves in the position where we can access the breadth and depth of the blessings of the Atonement. Our membership is transformed into discipleship. We are strengthened, cleansed, refreshed, spiritually and emotionally healed.

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, "Faith," 669.
2. Alma 22:18.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 46.
4. *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1997), 295.
5. Colossians 1:23.
6. 2 Corinthians 4:8–9.
7. 2 Corinthians 4:6.

## Elder Robert C. Oaks

### Patience and charity

How thankful I am for latter-day scriptures regarding core Christian virtues.

The Book of Mormon provides insight into the relationship between patience and charity. Mormon, after pointing out that if a man “have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity,” goes on to name the 13 elements of charity, or the pure love of Christ. I find it most interesting that 4 of the 13 elements of this must-have virtue relate to patience (see Moroni 7:44–45).

First, “charity suffereth long.” That is what patience is all about. Charity “is not easily provoked” is another aspect of this quality, as is charity “beareth all things.” And finally, charity “endureth all things” is certainly an expression of patience (Moroni 7:45). From these defining elements it is evident that without patience gracing our soul, we would be seriously lacking with respect to a Christlike character.

### Scriptural examples of patience

In the Bible, Job offers the classic portrait of patience. In the face of losing his vast empire, including his children, Job was able, because of his unfailing faith, to proclaim, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Through all of his tribulation and pain, “Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:21–22).

How often do we hear oppressed souls ask foolishly, “How could God do this to me?” when really they should be praying for strength to bear and endure all things?

The greatest scriptural examples of patience are found in the life of Jesus Christ. His long-suffering and endurance are best demonstrated on that excruciating night in Gethsemane as He uttered, in

His atoning agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). He truly suffered and bore and endured all things.

While nailed to the cross on Calvary, Christ continued in His perfect example of patience as He uttered the singular words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

These examples of patience have greater meaning for us when we consider the admonition found in 3 Nephi: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

### Importance of patience

Several scriptures highlight the importance of patience. Let me mention a few:

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

“Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

In Mosiah, King Benjamin instructs us that we will be a natural-man enemy of God until we yield to the enticings of the Holy Ghost through our patience, plus other virtues (see Mosiah 3:19).

Joseph Smith stated, “Patience is heavenly” (*History of the Church*, 6:427).

Is patience important and worthy of our pondering and pursuit? It certainly is if we would avoid the demeaning classification of “nothing” used to label those without charity. It is if we desire to be less a natural-man enemy of God. It is if we would be heavenly. It is if we would seek to become after the manner of Christ.

The impatient, natural man is all about us. We see it manifest in news reports of parents, in a fit of rage, abusing a child, even unto death. On our highways, incidents of mobile impatience, or road



rage, result in violent accidents and sometimes fatalities.

On a less dramatic but much more common level are flared tempers and harsh words uttered in response to slow-moving customer lines, never-ending telephone solicitation calls, or children reluctant to respond to our instructions. Do any of these sound familiar?

### **A father's patience with his son**

Fortunately, there are seldom-reported but marvelous-to-consider stories of great patience. Recently I attended the funeral of a lifelong friend. His son told a beautiful story of parental patience. When the son was in his youth, his dad owned a motorcycle dealership. One day they received a shipment of shiny new motorcycles, and they lined them all up in the store. The boy did what every boy would like to do, and he climbed up on the closest one. He even started it up. Then, when he figured he had pushed his luck far enough, he jumped off. To his dismay, his dismount knocked the first bike down. Then, like a string of dominoes, they all went down, one after another. His dad heard the commotion and looked out from behind the partition where he was working. Slowly, smiling, he said, "Well, Son, we had better fix one up and sell it, so we can pay for the rest of them."

I think my friend's response personifies parental patience.

### **Patience as a gateway virtue**

Patience may well be thought of as a gateway virtue, contributing to the growth and strength of its fellow virtues of forgiveness, tolerance, and faith. When Peter asked Christ how many times he should forgive his brother, Christ replied, "Seventy times seven," rather than the mere seven times that Peter had offered (see Matthew 18:21–22). To forgive seventy times seven certainly takes a large measure of patience.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell linked patience and faith together when he taught: "Patience is tied very closely to faith in our Heavenly Father. Actually, when we are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we know what is best—better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than his" ("Patience," *Ensign*, Oct. 1980, 28).

We can grow in faith only if we are willing to wait patiently for God's purposes and patterns to unfold in our lives, on His timetable.

### **Developing the virtue of patience**

Since impatience is so natural, how do we develop the divine virtue of patience? How do we move our behavior from that of the natural man to that of our patient, perfect example, Jesus Christ?

First, we must understand that to do so is necessary, if we desire to fully enjoy the blessings of the restored gospel. Such an understanding might motivate us to:

1. Read each of the scriptures in the Topical Guide listed under the topic "patience" and then ponder Christ's patient examples.

2. Evaluate ourselves to determine where we stand on the patience continuum. How much more patience do we need to become more Christlike? This self-assessment is difficult. We might ask our spouse or another family member to help us.

3. Become sensitive to the examples of patience and of impatience that occur around us every day. We should strive to emulate those individuals we consider to be patient.

4. Recommit each day to become more patient, and be certain to keep our selected family member involved in our patience project.

This sounds like a great deal of work, but to achieve any worthwhile goal requires hard work. And overcoming the natural man and working to become more

Christlike in our patience is a most appropriate objective. I pray that we will pursue this path with diligence and dedication.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ and that He stands at the head of this Church,

guiding us through a living prophet and blessing our every effort to become more Christlike. And I so testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### **“O be wise”**

Brothers and sisters, while I was studying the Book of Mormon recently, one of the teachings of the prophet Jacob caught my attention. As you remember, Jacob was one of Father Lehi’s two sons born in the wilderness after the family left Jerusalem. He was an eyewitness to miracles, and he also watched as his family was torn apart by disobedience and rebellion. Jacob knew and loved Laman and Lemuel as he knew and loved Nephi, and the dissension between them was intimate and personal. As far as Jacob was concerned, it wasn’t about ideology, philosophy, or even theology. It was about family.

The tender anguish of Jacob’s soul is evident as he expresses grave concern that his people will “reject the words of the prophets” concerning Christ and “deny . . . the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, . . . and make a mock of the great plan of redemption” (Jacob 6:8).

And then, just before he bids farewell, he speaks eight simple words that are the basic text of my message this morning. Jacob’s plea was “O be wise; what can I say more?” (Jacob 6:12).

Those of you who are parents and grandparents have a sense of what Jacob must have been feeling at the time. He loved his people, partly because they were also his family. He had taught them as clearly as he could and with all the energy of his soul. He warned them in no uncertain terms what would happen if they chose not to “enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow”

(Jacob 6:11). He couldn’t think of anything else to say to warn, to urge, to inspire, to motivate. And so he simply and profoundly said, “O be wise; what can I say more?”

### **The need for wisdom in Church service**

I have met with members of the Church in many nations of the world. I’m impressed with the spirit and energy of so many of our members. Hearts are being touched and lives are being blessed. The work is moving forward in dynamic ways, and for that I am profoundly grateful. But I see many ways that Church members must be so very wise in all that we do.

The Lord in His infinite wisdom has designed His Church to operate with a lay ministry. That means we have been charged to watch over one another and to serve one another. We are to love one another as our Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ love us. Our callings and circumstances change from time to time, providing us with different and unique opportunities to serve and to grow. Most of the leaders and teachers in the Church are anxiously engaged in fulfilling their responsibilities. Some are less effective than others—it is true; but almost always there is sincere effort to provide meaningful gospel service.

Occasionally we find some who become so energetic in their Church service that their lives become unbalanced. They start believing that the programs they administer are more important than the people they serve. They complicate their

service with needless frills and embellishments that occupy too much time, cost too much money, and sap too much energy. They refuse to delegate or to allow others to grow in their respective responsibilities.

As a result of their focusing too much time and energy on their Church service, eternal family relationships can deteriorate. Employment performance can suffer. This is not healthy, spiritually or otherwise. While there may be times when our Church callings require more intense effort and unusual focus, we need to strive to keep things in proper balance. We should never allow our service to replace the attention needed by other important priorities in our lives. Remember King Benjamin's counsel: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

May I suggest six ways in which we can serve both wisely and well?

### **Focus on people, not programs**

*First*, focus on people and principles—not on programs. One of the most important things we do through the gospel of Jesus Christ is to build people. Properly serving others requires effort to understand them as individuals—their personalities, their strengths, their concerns, their hopes and dreams—so that the correct help and support can be provided. Frankly, it's much easier to just manage programs than it is to understand and truly serve people. The primary purpose of Church leadership meetings should be to discuss how to minister to people. Most routine information and coordination can now be handled through phone calls, e-mails, or regular mail so that agendas for council meetings and presidency meetings can focus on needs of the people.

Our goal should always be to use the programs of the Church as a means to lift,

encourage, assist, teach, love, and perfect people. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). Programs are tools. Their management and staffing must not take priority over the needs of the people they are designed to bless and to serve.

### **Be innovative**

*Second*, be innovative. As we work to magnify our callings, we should seek the inspiration of the Spirit to solve problems in ways that will best help the people we serve. We have handbooks of instruction, and their guidelines should be followed. But within that framework are substantial opportunities to think, to be creative, and to make use of individual talents. The instruction to magnify our callings is not a command to embellish and complicate them. To innovate does not necessarily mean to expand; very often it means to simplify.

Because the eternal principle of agency gives us the freedom to choose and think for ourselves, we should become increasingly able to solve problems. We may make the occasional mistake, but as long as we are following gospel principles and guidelines, we can learn from those mistakes and become more understanding of others and more effective in serving them.

Being innovative also means that we do not have to be told everything we should do. The Lord said, "It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26). We trust you, brothers and sisters, to use inspiration. We trust that you will do so within the framework of Church policies and principles. We trust that you will be wise in counseling together to help build faith and testimony in the lives of those whom you serve.

## Delegate responsibility

*Third*, divide the work and delegate responsibility. There is a difference between being responsible for getting the work done and doing the work yourself. For example, gone should be the days when the elders quorum president feels he needs to personally finish the home teaching visits that others have missed. The same is true for Relief Society presidents with respect to visiting teaching. Not only is this unwise; it isn't home or visiting teaching. Home teaching isn't about numbers or reporting visits to a home; visits and numbers are just a measuring stick. Home teaching is about love of people and service to and watchcare over our Heavenly Father's children.

Assignments should be made, responsibilities should be delegated, and members should be allowed to fulfill their stewardship as best they can. Counsel, advise, persuade, motivate—but don't do the work for them. Allow others to progress and grow, even if it means sometimes getting less-than-perfect results on the reports.

## Motivate through love, not guilt

*Fourth*, eliminate guilt. I hope it goes without saying that guilt is not a proper motivational technique for leaders and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must always motivate through love and sincere appreciation, not by creating guilt. I like the thought "Catch others doing something right."

Still there are those who experience some feelings of guilt as a consequence of their service in the Church. These feelings can come when our time and attention are being torn between competing demands and priorities. As mortals, we simply cannot do everything at once. Therefore we must do all things "in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27). Often that will mean temporarily postponing attention to one prior-

ity in order to take care of another. Sometimes family demands will require your full attention. Other times professional responsibilities will come first. And there will be times when Church callings will come first. Good balance comes in doing things in a timely way and in not procrastinating our preparation or waiting to fulfill our responsibilities until the last minute.

Beyond that we need to remember that Christ came to remove guilt by forgiving those who repent (see Alma 24:10). He came to bring peace to the troubled soul. "Peace I leave with you," He said. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Through the miraculous Atonement He urges us to "take my yoke upon you, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

As the power of the Atonement begins to work in our lives, we come to understand that the Savior has already borne the burden of our guilt. O that we may be wise enough to understand, to repent as necessary, and to let go of our guilt.

## Thoughtfully allocate resources

*Fifth*, we need to thoughtfully allocate our resources of time, income, and energy. I would like to let you in on a little secret. Some of you have already learned it. If you haven't, it's time you knew. No matter what your family needs are or your responsibilities in the Church, there is no such thing as "done." There will always be more we can do. There is always another family matter that needs attention, another lesson to prepare, another interview to conduct, another meeting to attend. We just need to be wise in protecting our health and in following the counsel that President Hinckley has given often to just do the best that we can.

The key, it seems to me, is to know and understand your own capabilities and limitations and then to pace yourself, allo-

cating and prioritizing your time, your attention, and your resources to wisely help others, including your family, in their quest for eternal life.

### **Extend appropriate responsibilities**

*Sixth*, a word to you leaders about extending responsibilities to members and especially to recent converts. President Hinckley said that every new member of the Church needs a responsibility. Whatever responsibility may be extended should not overwhelm new members but should give them ample opportunity to become comfortable in the Church by learning its doctrine and by rubbing shoulders with friendly members. It should anchor them to the restored gospel through increasing their testimony and giving meaningful service.

### **Helping others find joy in the gospel**

Brothers and sisters, may we focus on the simple ways we can serve in the kingdom of God, always striving to change lives, including our own. What is most important in our Church responsibilities is not the statistics that are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed. Our task is to help others find the peace and the joy that only the gospel can give them. In seven words, Jesus summarized how we can accomplish this. He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Today is in many ways like Jacob’s day. My counsel is like unto his: “Repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you” (Jacob 6:5). Brothers and sisters, be wise with your families. Be wise in fulfilling your Church callings. Be wise with your time. Be wise in balancing all of your responsibilities. O be wise, my beloved brothers and sisters. What can I say more?

May God bless us with wisdom to love His Son, Jesus Christ, and wisely help accomplish His work. I bear my witness and testimony that He lives. This is His Church. We are about His work. May the peace of the Lord be with us. And may we wisely carry on our responsibilities, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Love at Home.”

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### **President Monson**

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this morning, and likewise express appreciation to all who have participated. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir will sing “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President James E. Faust**

### **The meaning of discipleship**

A large crowd followed the Savior as He ministered by the shore of the Sea of

Galilee. So that more could hear Him, He got into Peter’s fishing boat and asked to be taken a little way out from the shore. After He had finished speaking, He told

Peter, who had fished all night without success, to go out in the lake and let down his nets in the deep water. Peter obeyed, and he caught so many fish that the nets broke. Peter called to his partners, James and John, to come and help. All were amazed at the number of fish that were caught. Jesus said to Peter, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Luke then tells us, "When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."<sup>1</sup> They became the Lord's disciples.

The word for *disciple* and the word for *discipline* both come from the same Latin root—*discipulus*, which means pupil. It emphasizes practice or exercise. Self-discipline and self-control are consistent and permanent characteristics of the followers of Jesus, as exemplified by Peter, James, and John, who indeed "forsook all, and followed him."

What is discipleship? It is primarily obedience to the Savior. Discipleship includes many things. It is chastity. It is tithing. It is family home evening. It is keeping all the commandments. It is forsaking anything that is not good for us. Everything in life has a price. Considering the Savior's great promise for peace in this life and eternal life in the life to come, discipleship is a price worth paying. It is a price we cannot afford *not* to pay. By measure, the requirements of discipleship are much, much less than the promised blessings.

The disciples of Christ receive a call to not only forsake the pursuit of worldly things but to carry the cross daily. To carry the cross means to follow His commandments and to build up His Church on the earth. It also means self-mastery.<sup>2</sup> As Jesus of Nazareth instructed us, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."<sup>3</sup> "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."<sup>4</sup>

The words of a beloved Primary song resonate with all who follow the Master:

I'm trying to be like Jesus; I'm following in his ways.

I'm trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.<sup>5</sup>

### Emulating the Savior

Let us consider some of the things Jesus did that we can all emulate.

1. Jesus "went about doing good."<sup>6</sup> We can all do something good every day—for a family member, a friend, or even a stranger—if we will look for those opportunities.

2. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who watched over His sheep and had concern for those that were lost.<sup>7</sup> We can seek out the lonely or those who are less active and befriend them.

3. Jesus had compassion on many, including a poor leper.<sup>8</sup> We too can have compassion. We are reminded in the Book of Mormon that we are "to mourn with those that mourn."<sup>9</sup>

4. Jesus bore witness of His divine mission and of His Father's great work. For our part, we can all "stand as witnesses of God at all times."<sup>10</sup>

5. Jesus invited "the little children to come unto [Him]."<sup>11</sup> Our children need our attention and love as well as our care.

### Willingness to lay down one's life

True followers of the Savior should be prepared to lay down their lives, and some have been privileged to do so. The Doctrine and Covenants counsels us:

"Let no man be afraid to lay down his life for my sake; for whoso layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again.

"And whoso is not willing to lay down his life for my sake is not my disciple."<sup>12</sup>

We read in the book of Acts the account of the disciple Stephen, who was "full of faith and power, [and] did great

wonders and miracles among the people.”<sup>13</sup> Stephen encountered a hostile audience in Jerusalem who falsely accused him of blasphemy even though he was transfigured before them. Stephen testified of the divinity of the Savior, and when he called them to repentance, several in the crowd turned on him. “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>14</sup> Even as he was stoned to death, the last words on Stephen’s lips were “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Martyrs in Mexico**

In the early days of the Church in Mexico, two faithful leaders who were disciples of Christ became martyrs because of their belief. The two whose lives were taken were Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales.

During the Mexican Revolution, Rafael Monroy was the president of the small San Marcos Mexico Branch, and Vicente Morales was his first counselor. On July 17, 1915, they were apprehended by the Zapatistas. They were told they would be spared if they would give up their weapons and renounce their strange religion. Brother Monroy told his captors that he did not have any weapons and simply drew from his pocket his Bible and Book of Mormon. He said, “Gentlemen, these are the only arms I ever carry; they are the arms of truth against error.”

When no arms were found, the brethren were cruelly tortured to make them divulge where arms were hidden. But there were no arms. They were then taken under guard to the outskirts of the little town, where their captors stood them up by a large ash tree in front of a firing squad. The officer in charge offered them freedom if they would forsake their religion and join the Zapatistas, but

Brother Monroy replied, “My religion is dearer to me than my life, and I cannot forsake it.”

They were then told that they were to be shot and asked if they had any request to make. Brother Rafael requested that he be permitted to pray before he was executed. There, in the presence of his executioners, he kneeled down and, in a voice that all could hear, prayed that God would bless and protect his loved ones and care for the little struggling branch that would be left without a leader. As he finished his prayer, he used the words of the Savior when He hung upon the cross and prayed for his executioners: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>16</sup> With that the firing squad shot both Brother Monroy and Brother Morales.<sup>17</sup>

Some years ago I went to Mexico to reorganize a stake presidency. As I conducted the interviews, I was privileged to become acquainted with one of the descendants of Rafael Monroy. I was very impressed with the depth of this man’s testimony and his commitment to the gospel. When I asked him what had happened to the rest of Brother Monroy’s descendants, he said that many of them have been on missions and continue faithful in the Church.

### **Faithfulness of Edward Partridge**

In the early days of the Church, other disciples in addition to Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith also laid down their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ. The faithfulness of Edward Partridge, the first bishop of the Church, is noted in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>18</sup> On July 20, 1833, Edward was sitting at home with his frail wife, who had just given birth. Three mobsters burst in and dragged him into the bedlam of the street and then into the square, where they had already taken Charles Allen. A mob of about 300 demanded through their spokesman that

Edward and Charles either renounce their faith in the Book of Mormon or leave the county. Edward Partridge responded: “If I must suffer for my religion, it is no more than others have done before me. I am not conscious of having injured anyone in the county and therefore will not consent to leave. I have done nothing to offend anyone. If you abuse me, you are injuring an innocent man.” The mob then daubed Edward and Charles from head to foot with hot tar containing pearl ash, a flesh-eating acid, and then they threw feathers that stuck to the burning tar.<sup>19</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith characterized Edward’s death a few years later at age 46 in these words: “He lost his life in consequence of the Missouri persecutions, and he is one of that number whose blood will be required at their hands.”<sup>20</sup> Edward Partridge left a legacy that lives on in a large and righteous posterity.

### **Living a Christlike life every day**

For most of us, however, what is required is not to *die* for the Church but to *live* for it. For many, living a Christlike life every day may be even more difficult than laying down one’s life. I learned during a time of war that many men were capable of great acts of selflessness, heroism, and nobility without regard to life. But when the war was over and they came home, they could not bear up under the ordinary daily burdens of living and became enslaved by tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and debauchery, which in the end caused them to forfeit their lives.

Some may say: “I am a simple person. I have no stature or position. I am new in the Church. My talents and abilities are limited. My contribution is little.” Or they may say: “I am too old to change. I have already lived my life. Why should I try?” It is never too late to change. Discipleship does not come from positions of prominence, wealth, or advanced learning. The

disciples of Jesus came from all walks of life. However, discipleship does require us to forsake evil transgression and enjoy what President Spencer W. Kimball has called “the miracle of forgiveness.”<sup>21</sup> This can come only through repentance, which means that we forsake sin and resolve each day to be followers of truth and righteousness. As Jesus taught: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”<sup>22</sup>

Many think that the price of discipleship is too costly and too burdensome. For some, it involves giving up too much. But the cross is not as heavy as it appears to be. Through obedience we acquire much greater strength to carry it.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>23</sup>

Our true claim as disciples comes when we can say with certainty that His ways have become our ways.

### **Blessings of discipleship**

The blessings of discipleship are readily available to all who are willing to pay the price. Discipleship brings purpose to our lives so that rather than wandering aimlessly, we walk steadily on that strait and narrow way that leads us back to our Heavenly Father. Discipleship brings us comfort in times of sorrow, peace of conscience, and joy in service—all of which help us to be more like Jesus.

Through discipleship of the Savior, we come to know and believe in our hearts and minds the saving principles and ordinances of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through our discipleship, we come to appreciate the profound mission of the Prophet Joseph



Smith in restoring those saving principles in our time. We rejoice that the keys of the priesthood and its authority have been passed down through the Presidents of the Church, from the Prophet Joseph Smith to our present prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

We are grateful that in our discipleship of the Savior we come to enjoy His promise of “peace in this world,”<sup>24</sup> with contentment, happiness, and fulfillment. Through our discipleship, we are able to receive the spiritual strength that we need to deal with the challenges of life.

One of the greatest blessings of life and eternity is to be counted as one of the devoted disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a profound testimony of this truth, to which I bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Luke 5:1–11.
2. See Alma 39:9, footnote *b*.
3. Luke 9:23.
4. Luke 14:27.
5. “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78–79.
6. Acts 10:38.

7. See Matthew 15:24; John 10:1–12.
8. See Mark 1:40–42.
9. Mosiah 18:9.
10. Mosiah 18:9.
11. Mark 10:14.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 103:27–28.
13. Acts 6:8.
14. Acts 7:55.
15. Acts 7:60.
16. Luke 23:34.
17. See Rey L. Pratt, “A Latter-day Martyr,” *Improvement Era*, June 1918, 720–26.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:19.
19. See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:333; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (1901–36), 1:220.
20. *History of the Church*, 4:132.
21. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 362.
22. 3 Nephi 27:27.
23. Matthew 11:28–30.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

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The choir sang “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.”

Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 176th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 30, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

#### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 176th Semi-annual General Conference of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas

Brenchley, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Faith in Every Footstep.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Faith in Every Footstep.”

Elder Dale E. Miller offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth.”

Following the singing, the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church will be presented for sustaining vote.

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The choir sang “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth.”

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## **The Sustaining of Church Officers**

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Such beautiful singing. I hope you noted the missionary badge on each one, soon to be departing the Missionary Training Center for their assignments all over the world.

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland,

Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

We extend a release to Elders Ronald T. Halverson, Dale E. Miller, H. Bryan Richards, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Robert J. Whetten, and Richard H. Winkel as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join with us in expressing appreciation to these Brethren, please manifest it.

With similar appreciation we also extend a release to César A. S. Milder, Hyae-Kee Min, and Masayuki Nakano as Area Seventies. Those who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Erich W. Kopischke as a new Area Seventy. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently

constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative, President Hinckley. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Robert D. Hales and Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and they will be followed by Sister Elaine S. Dalton, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### **The scriptures are for our salvation**

The holy scriptures are the word of God given to us for our salvation. The scriptures are essential in receiving a testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. The scriptures given to us by God in these latter days are the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These sacred records bear testimony of the Savior and lead us to Him. That is why great prophets like Enos cried unto the Lord in faith to preserve the scriptures.

Will you open with me the cover of the Book of Mormon? Look on the title page. We read that it is “written by way of commandment, . . . by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation.” It has “come forth by the gift and power of God,” and its interpretation is “by the gift of God”—by the Holy Ghost. It shows “what great things the Lord [has] done” and has given to us “that [we] may know the covenants of the Lord,” that we might not be “cast off forever.” Most importantly, it has been written to convince us “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.”

Turn the page again, to the introduction. Here we learn that this prophetic record is “holy scripture comparable to the Bible.” It contains “the fulness of the everlasting gospel . . . , outlines the plan of salvation, and tells [us] what [we] must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.” It promises each

of us that “all who will come unto [the Savior] and obey the laws and ordinances of his gospel may be saved.”

What is the vital role of this sacred book in our day? What is its message regarding the purpose of all scripture?

### **Book of Mormon teachings on scriptures**

On page one of the book of 1 Nephi—the very first book in the Book of Mormon—we learn that Lehi, in about 600 B.C., was directed by God to take his family and flee into the wilderness. But Lehi didn’t get very far before the Lord commanded him to send his sons back. Why? To retrieve the scriptures, the brass plates, which were so important that Lehi’s sons risked their lives and lost all their worldly possessions to recover them! Ultimately, it was the Lord’s help and Nephi’s faith that miraculously delivered the plates into his hands. When Nephi and his brothers returned, Lehi, their father, rejoiced. He began to search the holy scriptures “from the beginning” and “found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth . . . insomuch that [Lehi and his posterity] could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto [their] children.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the brass plates were a record of Lehi’s fathers, including their language, genealogy, and, more importantly, the gospel taught by God’s holy prophets. As Lehi searched the plates, he learned what all of us learn by studying the scriptures:

- Who we are.
- What we can become.
- Prophecies for us and for our posterity.
- The commandments, laws, ordinances, and covenants we must live by to obtain eternal life.
- And how we must live in order to endure to the end and return to our Heavenly Father with honor.

So essential are these truths that Heavenly Father gave both Lehi and Nephi visions vividly representing the word of God as a rod of iron. Both father and son learned that holding to this strong, unbending, utterly reliable guide is the *only* way to stay on that strait and narrow path that leads to our Savior.

Several chapters of the Book of Mormon are devoted to Lehi and Nephi applying this lesson—searching the scriptures and quoting from them. Clearly they wanted their families and us to understand the importance of the scriptures, especially Isaiah’s prophecies about the Restoration of the gospel and the coming forth of *their* record—the Book of Mormon—in our day.

### Consequences of disregarding scriptures

The Book of Mormon records how a number of civilizations regarded or *disregarded* the scriptures, beginning with Lehi’s own family. The Lord had commanded Lehi to flee Jerusalem because it was going to be captured by the Babylonians and to journey across the sea to the promised land in a divinely designed ship. But Lehi’s children were bitterly divided into two factions. Those who followed righteous Nephi—the Nephites—retained the scriptures when they departed the Lamanites, and “their souls were illuminated by the light of [God’s] everlasting word.”<sup>2</sup>

But Laman and Lemuel—and their descendants, the Lamanites—rejected the

scriptures and walked in the darkness of ignorance, contention, and destruction. In about A.D. 400, the Nephites also rejected the word of God, dwindled in unbelief, and were destroyed, thus ending approximately 1,000 years of Nephite civilization.

The book of Ether gives a history of a civilization, the Jaredites, who left the Old World at the time of the Tower of Babel, approximately 2200 B.C. The Lord directed them to journey across the sea to the promised land in divinely designed barges. When the Jaredites were righteous, they were blessed; and when they rejected the word of the Lord and refused to repent, the Spirit of the Lord ceased striving with them. Eventually they departed from the Lord’s ways and destroyed one another in about 600 B.C., thus ending approximately 1,600 years of Jaredite civilization.

Lehi arrived in the promised land about the time of the destruction of the Jaredites. A few years later, still another civilization, Mulek and his followers, also came to the promised land. They discovered the last recorded survivor of the Jaredites, a king named Coriantumr. The Mulekites brought no scriptures with them; so about 400 years later, when Mosiah and the Nephites found them, the Mulekites’ language was corrupted, and they had lost their belief in their Creator. They did not know who they were. When the Mulekites learned that the Lord had sent the Nephites with the plates of brass, which contained the scriptural record of the Jews, they rejoiced and joined themselves to the Nephite civilization.

The fate of these civilizations, as recorded in scripture, is a testimony to all the world: if we don’t have the word of God or don’t cling to and heed the word of God, we will wander off in strange paths and be lost as individuals, as families, and as nations.

As with voices from the dust, the prophets of the Lord cry out to us on

earth today: take hold of the scriptures! Cling to them, walk by them, live by them, rejoice in them, feast on them. Don't nibble. They are "the power of God unto salvation"<sup>3</sup> that lead us back to our Savior Jesus Christ.

### **The Savior taught from the scriptures**

If the Savior were among us in the flesh today, He would teach us from the scriptures as He taught when He walked upon the earth. In the synagogue at Nazareth, "there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. . . . And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."<sup>4</sup> Later when the Sadducees and Pharisees posed a difficult question, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."<sup>5</sup> And after His Resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, His disciples "said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"<sup>6</sup> To His disciples then and now, His words ring out: "Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me"<sup>7</sup>—a testimony borne by the Holy Ghost, for "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."<sup>8</sup>

### **Hearing the Lord's voice**

Brothers and sisters, I testify that the scriptures have been "kept and preserved [for us] by the hand of the Lord . . . for a wise purpose in him."<sup>9</sup> Lehi prophesied, "These plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time."<sup>10</sup> The Lord covenanted with Enos to preserve and bring forth the scriptures "in his . . . due time."<sup>11</sup> Of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni recorded, it was "written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed."<sup>12</sup> The scriptures which

we have give prophecies and promises, and they have been fulfilled in *our* day.

What a glorious blessing! For when we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

If you have not heard His voice speaking to you lately, return with new eyes and new ears to the scriptures. They are our spiritual lifeline. Behind the darkness of the Iron Curtain, the Saints survived because they heard His voice through the scriptures. In other parts of the world, when members couldn't attend church for a time, they continued to worship God because they heard His voice through the scriptures. Throughout all the wars of the past century and the conflicts that rage today, Latter-day Saints survive because they hear His voice through the scriptures. For the Lord has said, "The scriptures shall be given . . . to the salvation of mine own elect; for they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure."<sup>13</sup>

### **The need for the scriptures today**

Over two millennia ago, Isaiah wrote of the word of God, "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever."<sup>14</sup> That time is now. This world needs the scriptures today. Before the coming of the Savior, it was necessary that all God's children be tutored in the preparatory law of Moses, which allowed "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."<sup>15</sup> Many in this world still live by that fearsome code, and the evidence of it is around us.

We boldly declare that the answer to the terror, destruction, and even genocide

of these last days is found in the scriptures. The gospel in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. The prophecies in the Bible came to pass in the Book of Mormon. The Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price bear witness of the fulness of the gospel which is now upon the earth.

From Genesis to Malachi and from Moses to Abraham, it was prophesied the Savior would come. From the books of Matthew to Revelation, from Nephi to Moroni, and from Joseph Smith to our beloved living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophets all testify that Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, has come and will come again. In Him “old things are done away, and all things have become new.”<sup>16</sup> Through the holy scriptures, His new and everlasting gospel proclaims: “Love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>17</sup> “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.”<sup>18</sup> “Of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>19</sup> For this is the gospel of our Savior, who is anointed “to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised.”<sup>20</sup>

### Moroni’s plea

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni figuratively looks out over the last remnant of his people. He knew their extinction could have been avoided if they had not forgotten God’s holy word and lost the Spirit of the Lord. Is it any wonder that Moroni writes personally to us, to you and to me, pleading for us to claim the blessings of the scriptures?

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name

of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, *by the power of the Holy Ghost.*

“And *by the power of the Holy Ghost* ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>21</sup>

We are living in the latter days, brothers and sisters, in the fulness of times. We must remember that we have control over who we are no matter how difficult the world becomes. Like those in 1 Nephi, the true and faithful will be able to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary when he is loosed upon this earth.<sup>22</sup> Despite all the turmoil in the world, when the Savior comes to His temple, as He did in the Book of Mormon, those who are true and faithful will be there. May we be among them, I so pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 5:10, 21.
2. Alma 5:7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
4. Luke 4:17, 21.
5. Matthew 22:29.
6. Luke 24:32.
7. John 5:39.
8. Moroni 10:5.
9. Alma 37:4, 14; see also 1 Nephi 9:5; Words of Mormon 1:7.
10. 1 Nephi 5:19.
11. Enos 1:16.
12. Book of Mormon title page.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 35:20–21.
14. Isaiah 30:8.
15. Matthew 5:38; see also 3 Nephi 12:38.
16. 3 Nephi 12:47.
17. Matthew 22:39.
18. Matthew 5:44; see also 3 Nephi 12:44.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
20. Luke 4:18.
21. Moroni 10:4–5; italics added.
22. See 1 Nephi 15:24.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I am grateful to be with you today and to draw strength from your testimonies. More than words can express, I am grateful for your kind words of support, your expressions of love, and your prayers.

Today I would like to indulge in a few personal memories.

### Elder Wirthlin's parents and sister

I was born of goodly parents. From my father, Joseph L. Wirthlin, I learned the values of hard work and compassion. He was bishop of our ward during the Great Depression. He possessed a genuine concern for those in distress. He reached out to those in need not because it was his duty but because it was his sincere desire.

He tirelessly cared for and blessed the lives of many who suffered. In my mind, he was an ideal bishop.

Those who knew my father knew how active he was. Someone once told me that he could do the work of three men. He rarely slowed down. In 1938 he was operating a successful business when he received a call from the President of the Church, Heber J. Grant.

President Grant told him they were reorganizing the Presiding Bishopric that day and wanted my father to serve as counselor to LeGrand Richards. This caught my father by surprise, and he asked if he could pray about it first.

President Grant said, "Brother Wirthlin, there are only 30 minutes before the next session of conference, and I want to have some rest. What do you say?"

Of course my father said yes. He served 23 years, 9 of them as Presiding Bishop of the Church.

My father was 69 years old when he passed away. I happened to be with him when he suddenly collapsed. Soon after, he was gone.

I often think about my father. I miss him.

My mother, Madeline Bitner, was another great influence in my life. In her youth she was a fine athlete and a champion sprinter. She was always kind and loving, but her pace was exhausting. Often she would say, "Hurry up." And when she did, we picked up the pace. Perhaps that was one of the reasons I had quick acceleration when I played football.

My mother had great expectations for her children and expected the best from them. I can still remember her saying, "Don't be a scrub. You must do better." *Scrub* was her word for someone who was lazy and not living up to his potential.

My mother passed away when she was 87 years old, and I think about her often and miss her more than I can say.

My younger sister Judith was an author, composer, and educator. She loved many things, including the gospel, music, and archaeology. Judith's birthday was a few days before mine. Every year I would give her a crisp one-dollar bill as my birthday present to her. Three days later she would give me 50 cents as her birthday present to me.

Judith passed away a few years ago. I miss her and think of her often.

### Elder Wirthlin's wife

And that brings me to my wife, Elisa. I remember the first time I met her. As a favor to a friend, I had gone to her home to pick up her sister, Frances. Elisa opened the door, and at least for me, it was love at first sight.

I think she must have felt something too, for the first words I ever remember her saying were, "I knew who you was."

Elisa was an English major.

To this day I still cherish those five words as some of the most beautiful in human language.

She loved to play tennis and had a lightning serve. I tried to play tennis with her, but I finally quit after coming to the realization that I couldn't hit what I couldn't see.

She was my strength and my joy. Because of her, I am a better man, husband, and father. We married, had eight children, and walked together through 65 years of life.

I owe more to my wife than I can possibly express. I don't know if there ever was a perfect marriage, but, from my perspective, I think ours was.

When President Hinckley spoke at Sister Wirthlin's funeral, he said that it is a devastating, consuming thing to lose someone you love. It gnaws at your soul.

He was right. As Elisa was my greatest joy, now her passing is my greatest sorrow.

In the lonely hours I have spent a great deal of time thinking about eternal things. I have contemplated the comforting doctrines of eternal life.

### **The gift of the Resurrection**

During my life I have heard many sermons on the Resurrection. Like you, I can recite the events of that first Easter Sunday. I have marked in my scriptures passages regarding the Resurrection and have close at hand many of the key statements uttered by latter-day prophets on this subject.

We know what the Resurrection is—the reuniting of the spirit and body in its perfect form.<sup>1</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith said “that those from whom we have to part here, we will meet again and see as they are. We will meet the same identical being that we associated with here in the flesh.”<sup>2</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball amplified this when he said, “I am sure that if we can imagine ourselves at our very best, physically, mentally, spiritually, that is the way we will come back.”<sup>3</sup>

When we are resurrected, “this mortal body is raised to an immortal body. . . . [We] can die no more.”<sup>4</sup>

Can you imagine that? Life at our prime? Never sick, never in pain, never burdened by the ills that so often beset us in mortality?

The Resurrection is at the core of our beliefs as Christians. Without it, our faith is meaningless. The Apostle Paul said, “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and [our] faith is also vain.”<sup>5</sup>

In all the history of the world there have been many great and wise souls, many of whom claimed special knowledge of God. But when the Savior rose from the tomb, He did something no one had ever done. He did something no one else could do. He broke the bonds of death, not only for Himself but for all who have ever lived—the just and the unjust.<sup>6</sup>

When Christ rose from the grave, becoming the firstfruits of the Resurrection, He made that gift available to all. And with that sublime act, He softened the devastating, consuming sorrow that gnaws at the souls of those who have lost precious loved ones.

### **The dark Friday of the Crucifixion**

I think of how dark that Friday was when Christ was lifted up on the cross.

On that terrible Friday the earth shook and grew dark. Frightful storms lashed at the earth.

Those evil men who sought His life rejoiced. Now that Jesus was no more, surely those who followed Him would disperse. On that day they stood triumphant.

On that day the veil of the temple was rent in twain.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were both overcome with grief and despair. The superb man they had loved and honored hung lifeless upon the cross.

On that Friday the Apostles were devastated. Jesus, their Savior—the man who



had walked on water and raised the dead—was Himself at the mercy of wicked men. They watched helplessly as He was overcome by His enemies.

On that Friday the Savior of mankind was humiliated and bruised, abused and reviled.

It was a Friday filled with devastating, consuming sorrow that gnawed at the souls of those who loved and honored the Son of God.

I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world's history, that Friday was the darkest.

### **Sunday will come**

But the doom of that day did not endure.

The despair did not linger, because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

And in an instant the eyes that had been filled with ever-flowing tears dried. The lips that had whispered prayers of distress and grief now filled the air with wondrous praise, for Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, stood before them as the firstfruits of the Resurrection, the proof that death is merely the beginning of a new and wondrous existence.

Each of us will have our own Fridays—those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. We will all have our Fridays.

But I testify to you in the name of the One who conquered death—Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, Sunday will come.

No matter our desperation, no matter our grief, Sunday will come. In this life or the next, Sunday will come.

### **Testimonies of the Resurrection**

I testify to you that the Resurrection is not a fable. We have the personal testimonies of those who saw Him. Thousands in the Old and New Worlds witnessed the risen Savior. They felt the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. They shed tears of unrestrained joy as they embraced Him.

After the Resurrection, the disciples became renewed. They traveled throughout the world proclaiming the glorious news of the gospel.

Had they chosen, they could have disappeared and returned to their former lives and occupations. In time, their association with Him would have been forgotten.

They could have denied the divinity of Christ. Yet they did not. In the face of danger, ridicule, and threat of death, they entered palaces, temples, and synagogues boldly proclaiming Jesus the Christ, the resurrected Son of the living God.

Many of them offered as a final testimony their own precious lives. They died as martyrs, the testimony of the risen Christ on their lips as they perished.

The Resurrection transformed the lives of those who witnessed it. Should it not transform ours?

### **Blessings of the Resurrection**

We will all rise from the grave. And on that day my father will embrace my mother. On that day I will once again hold in my arms my beloved Elisa.

Because of the life and eternal sacrifice of the Savior of the world, we will be reunited with those we have cherished.

On that day we will know the love of our Heavenly Father. On that day we will rejoice that the Messiah overcame all, that we could live forever.

Because of the sacred ordinances we receive in holy temples, our departure from this brief mortality cannot long sepa-

rate relationships that have been fastened together with cords made of eternal ties.

It is my solemn testimony that death is not the end of existence. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”<sup>7</sup> Because of the risen Christ, “death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>8</sup>

Because of our beloved Redeemer, we can lift up our voices, even in the midst of our darkest Fridays, and proclaim: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”<sup>9</sup>

When President Hinckley spoke of the terrible loneliness that comes to those who lose the ones they love, he also promised that in the quiet of the night a still, unheard voice whispers peace to our soul: “All is well.”

I am grateful beyond measure for the sublime, true doctrines of the gospel and for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which has whispered to my soul the comforting and peaceful words promised by our beloved prophet.

From the depths of my sorrow, I have rejoiced in the glory of the gospel. I rejoice that the Prophet Joseph Smith was

chosen to restore the gospel to the earth in this last dispensation. I rejoice that we have a prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who directs the Lord’s Church in our day.

May we understand and live in thanksgiving for the priceless gifts that come to us as sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and for the promise of that bright day when we shall all rise triumphant from the grave.

That we may always know that no matter how dark our Friday, Sunday will come is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Alma 11:43.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 91.
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 45.
4. Alma 11:45.
5. 1 Corinthians 15:14.
6. See John 5:28–29.
7. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
8. 1 Corinthians 15:54.
9. 1 Corinthians 15:55.

## Elaine S. Dalton

### Importance of living a worthy life

When our first grandson was born, the entire family rushed to the hospital. It was an amazing experience for me to see our oldest son, Matthew, holding this precious new baby boy. While standing at the nursery window with our youngest son, Chad, we gazed into the eyes of this new little spirit—so clean, so pure, so recently from heaven. It seemed that all time stood still, and for an instant, we could see the great eternal plan. The sacredness of life was crystal clear, and I whispered to Chad, “Do you understand why it is so important to remain clean and pure?” He

responded reverently, “Oh yes, Mom, I get it.”

That moment was so powerful that I desire for every young man and woman, every young adult, and indeed each one of us to feel and know the importance of living a worthy and pure life. It is our personal worthiness that will qualify us to fulfill our individual earthly missions.

Our personal mission began long before we arrived on the earth. In the pre-mortal life, we were “called and prepared” to live on the earth at a time when temptations and challenges would be the greatest. This was “on account of [our] exceeding faith and good works” and because of our

“having chosen good.”<sup>1</sup> We understood our Father’s plan and knew that it was good. We not only chose it, but we defended it. We knew that our earthly missions would be fraught with temptation, challenges, and hardship, but we also knew that we would be blessed by the fulness of the gospel, living prophets, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. We knew and understood that our success on this earth would be determined by our worthiness and purity.

### **What it means to be worthy**

What does it mean to be worthy? In the Book of Mormon, Lamoni’s father implored, “What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken?”<sup>2</sup> Then the king made a commitment to the Lord by saying, “I will give away all my sins to know thee.”<sup>3</sup> Once Lamoni’s father understood who he was and the great plan of which he was a part, worthiness became his heart’s desire.

To become worthy, we make choices that will enable us to return to our Heavenly Father’s presence. We do those things which will qualify us to claim all the blessings that He has in store for us. This is the reason we are here on the earth—“to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord . . . shall command.”<sup>4</sup> It is through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we can resist temptation.<sup>5</sup> Our faith will enable us to shun evil. It will be repulsive to us because “light cleaveth unto light” and “virtue loveth virtue.”<sup>6</sup>

To become unspotted from the world requires not only faith but repentance and obedience. We must live the standards and do those things which will entitle us to the constant companionship and guidance of the Holy Ghost—for the Spirit cannot dwell in unholy temples.<sup>7</sup>

One young man I know said: “It’s just too hard. Living the standards in my world is not realistic. It’s just too hard.” Yet knowing that we are sons and daughters

of God, we must strive for worthiness. Another group of youth adopted the motto “I Can Do Hard Things.” They understand their identity, their mission, their source of guidance, and they receive strength through keeping their covenants. They also understand that when they make a mistake, they can change! Satan wants all of us to think that repentance is not possible. This is absolutely not true. The Savior has promised forgiveness.<sup>8</sup> Each week, worthily partaking of the sacrament makes it possible for each of us to become clean and pure as we covenant to “always remember [the Savior], and keep his commandments.”<sup>9</sup> The gospel of Jesus Christ is one of simplicity, and we are given the tools that make the pathway straight and narrow. The way is clear: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Counsel received during temple wedding**

Thirty-eight years ago my husband and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple by President Gordon B. Hinckley. The counsel and direction he gave us that day have become a beacon for our lives. When we left the temple as husband and wife, we went to a park near the temple grounds and recorded in a journal the words of wisdom we had received. He counseled us to always remember our prayers night and morning, to pray as a couple and as a family. He counseled us to always pay a full and honest tithing. He counseled us to read the scriptures daily and to apply the principles in our lives. And he counseled us to remain worthy. He said, “Always live in such a way that when you need the Lord’s blessings, you can call upon Him and receive them because you are worthy.” He said: “There will come times in your life when you will need immediate blessings. You will need to live in such a way that they will be granted—not out of mercy but because you are worthy.” I didn’t comprehend then what that meant, but in the 38

years that have followed, we have called upon our Father in Heaven for many “immediate blessings.” Daily, these holy habits and righteous routines have helped steady us on the path that leads back into our Father’s presence. And today I say, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days.”<sup>11</sup>

### Worthiness for temple blessings

Personal worthiness is essential to enter His holy temples and to ultimately become heirs to “all [the] Father hath.”<sup>12</sup> The Lord has said, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”<sup>13</sup> When we do this, we can confidently enter the holy temples of God with a knowledge that we are worthy to go where the Lord Himself goes. When we are worthy, we can not only *enter* the temple, the temple can *enter* us. The Lord’s promises of salvation and happiness become *ours*—and our earthly mission becomes *His*.

Just last month our youngest son, Chad, went to the temple with a beautiful, worthy young woman to be married for time and all eternity. As he took her hand and knelt at the altar, I looked into the mirrors on either side, and again I wanted to whisper, “Do you understand why it is so important to be clean and pure?” But this time I didn’t have to remind him, because the Spirit did the whispering.

To the youth of the noble birthright, look into the windows of eternity! See yourselves in the Lord’s holy temples. See

yourselves living worthy and pure lives. Generations are depending on you! I testify that worthiness is possible because of the redeeming and enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I pray that it may be said of each one of us, “They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Alma 13:3.
2. Alma 22:15.
3. Alma 22:18.
4. Abraham 3:25.
5. See Alma 37:33; 3 Nephi 7:18.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.
7. See Helaman 4:24.
8. See *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), 30.
9. Moroni 4:3.
10. Matthew 11:30.
11. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38; see also vv. 35–37.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
14. Revelation 3:4; see also v. 5.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elders Shayne M. Bowen and Daniel L. Johnson of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## Elder Shayne M. Bowen

### Two beautiful places in Idaho

In Idaho Falls, Idaho, there is a beautiful airport. One of the largest in the region, this airport allows easy access to the

Upper Snake River Valley. I remember as a young man returning from Chile to this very airport and greeting my family after two years of missionary service. Similar scenes have taken place thousands of

times in this airport as the faithful Saints answer the call to serve. It is a very useful, integral part of the city and region.

Near the airport is another very useful and beautiful part of the city—Freeman Park. The Snake River runs along this park for about two miles. There is a walking path that goes through the park and follows on around the river for miles.

Freeman Park has acres and acres of green grass filled with baseball and softball diamonds, swing sets for children, picnic shelters for family reunions, beautiful lanes filled with trees and bushes for strolling sweethearts. Looking down the river from the park, one can see the majestic Idaho Falls Temple, white and clean, standing on high ground. The sound of the rushing waters of the Snake River as it works its way through natural lava outcroppings makes this park very desirable. It is one of my favorite places to walk with my sweetheart, Lynette, relax, contemplate, and meditate. It is very peaceful and inspiring.

Why do I talk about the regional airport and Freeman Park in Idaho Falls? Because they are both built on the same kind of ground; both of these beautiful, useful places used to be sanitary landfills.

A sanitary landfill is where garbage is buried between layers of earth. Webster's dictionary defines a landfill as "a system of trash and garbage disposal in which the waste is buried between layers of earth to build up low-lying land" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], 699).

Another definition of a landfill is "a place where garbage is buried and the land is reclaimed." The definition of *reclaim* is "to recall from wrong or improper conduct . . . to rescue from an undesirable state" (1039).

### **Digging up old garbage**

I have lived in Idaho Falls nearly my whole life. I have contributed a lot of

garbage to those landfills over the course of more than 50 years.

What would the city fathers think if on a given day I showed up on one of the runways of the Idaho Falls airport or the middle of one of the grassy fields in Freeman Park with a backhoe and started digging large holes? When they asked me what I was doing, I would respond that I wanted to dig up the old garbage that I had made over the years.

I suspect they would tell me that there was no way to identify my personal garbage, that it had been reclaimed and buried long ago. I'm sure that they would tell me that I had no right to dig up the garbage and that I was destroying something very beautiful and useful that they had made out of my garbage. In short, I don't think they would be very pleased with me. I suppose that they would wonder why anyone would want to destroy something so beautiful and useful in an attempt to dig up old garbage.

### **The reclaiming power of the Atonement**

Is it possible to reclaim a life that through reckless abandon has become so strewn with garbage that it appears that the person is unforgivable? Or what about the one who is making an honest effort but has fallen back into sin so many times that he feels that there is no possible way to break the seemingly endless pattern? Or what about the person who has changed his life but just can't forgive himself?

Referring to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the prophet Alma taught the people in Gideon:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take

upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

“Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me” (Alma 7:11–13).

Also speaking of the Atonement, Jacob, the brother of Nephi, taught: “Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more” (2 Nephi 9:7).

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is available to each of us. His Atonement is infinite. It applies to everyone, even you. It can clean, reclaim, and sanctify even you. That is what infinite means—total, complete, all, forever. President Boyd K. Packer has taught: “There is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is

the promise of the atonement of Christ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 23; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 20).

### **Accepting and using gift of repentance**

Just as the landfill requires dedicated work and attention, laboriously applying layer after layer of fill to reclaim the low-lying ground, our lives also require the same vigilance, continually applying layer after layer of the healing gift of repentance.

Just as the city fathers in Idaho Falls would feel bad about a person trying to dig up his old garbage, our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, feel sorrow when we choose to remain in sin, when the gift of repentance made possible through the Atonement can clean, reclaim, and sanctify our lives.

When we gratefully accept and use this precious gift, we can enjoy the beauty and usefulness of our lives that God has reclaimed through His infinite love and the Atonement of His Son and our brother, Jesus Christ.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that His Atonement is real, and that through the miracle of forgiveness, He can make each of us clean again, even you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Daniel L. Johnson**

### **Our tithing obligation**

My remarks this afternoon are intended as an invitation to those who have not yet gained a personal testimony of the full payment of tithing. There are many reasons that are used to not pay tithing, such as medical emergencies, debts, car or home repairs, educational expenses, and

insurance. These reasons and others like them are very real and are lived and dealt with every day by many, if not most, of us. These tax our limited financial resources and, if we are not wise stewards of these resources, may result in the inability to meet our tithing obligation to the Lord. A lack of compliance with this eternal law is not to be taken lightly and can not only se-

riously impair our spiritual growth and development, but it can also limit the physical and temporal blessings that we could otherwise enjoy.

As President Spencer W. Kimball once said: “The Lord herein makes clear that tithing is his law and is required of all his followers. It is our honor and privilege, our safety and promise, our great blessing to live this law of God. To fail to meet this obligation in full is to deny ourselves the promises and is to omit a weighty matter. It is a transgression, not an inconsequential oversight.”<sup>1</sup>

### Definition of tithing

*So what is a tithing?* The Lord has given us His definition: “And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever.”<sup>2</sup> Please note that the tithe is not just any freewill offering, nor is it a 20th or some other fraction of our annual interest or income.

President Howard W. Hunter stated it this way: “The law is simply stated as ‘one-tenth of all their interest.’ Interest means profit, compensation, increase. It is the wage of one employed, the profit from the operation of a business, the increase of one who grows or produces, or the income to a person from any other source. The Lord said it is a standing law ‘forever’ as it has been in the past.”<sup>3</sup>

### Use of tithing funds

*How is tithing used?* Faithful members of the Church pay their tithing to a member of their branch presidency or ward bishopric. Under the direction of the Lord’s prophet, these funds are then gathered and used to fund the growth and development of the Church throughout the world. Examples of the use of tithing

funds are the construction of temples, the financing of the worldwide missionary effort, the building and maintenance of meetinghouses, and other worthy purposes.

### A key to temporal and spiritual blessings

*Why does the Lord require His people to pay tithing?* The Lord is our Father, and as our Father, He loves us. Because He loves us, He wants to bless us both temporally and spiritually. Listen to some of His statements as written in the scriptures: “Hearken and hear, O ye my people, saith the Lord and your God, ye whom I delight to bless with the greatest of all blessings.”<sup>4</sup> And another: “For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to bestow His blessings on His children in a just and equitable manner, the Lord has instituted laws that govern those blessings that He wants all of us to enjoy. He has revealed this principle of laws to His prophet of the Restoration: “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”<sup>6</sup> And again: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”<sup>7</sup>

The Lord knew from the beginning that we, His children, would be faced with temporal and spiritual adversities during this mortal life. Indeed, these adversities are a vital part of this mortal probation. He knew that we would stand in need of His blessings throughout our lives in order to not only survive our individual trials, but also to enjoy a degree of comfort and even prosperity.

Thus the law of tithing, which was instituted from the beginning. We know from the scriptures that Abraham was blessed through his obedience to this law, and we now have that same law as it was reiterated by the Savior during His visit to the inhabitants of the American continent almost 2,000 years ago:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the fields, saith the Lord of Hosts.

“And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.”<sup>8</sup>

What a marvelous law! He who has not only the power and the means to bless His children temporally and spiritually, but also the desire to do so, has provided to us the key to those blessings that we both need and desire. This key is the law of tithing. Indeed, as stated by President James E. Faust: “Some may feel that they cannot afford to pay tithing, but the Lord has promised that He would prepare a way for us to keep all of His commandments. To pay tithing takes a leap of faith in the beginning. . . . We learn about tithing by paying it. Indeed, I believe it is possible to break out of poverty by having the faith to give back to the Lord part of what little we have.”<sup>9</sup> My brothers and sisters, we have but to obey the law.

### Invitation to pay a full tithe

*Now the invitation:* To those who are not yet full-tithe payers, I invite you to begin today to pay your full tithing to the Lord through your local priesthood

leader. I invite you to pay your tithing to the Lord first, before you meet any other financial obligations. I invite you to put your trust in the Lord and, as He Himself said, “Prove me now herewith.”<sup>10</sup> As you do so and as you place your tithing obligation to the Lord as the first priority of all of your other financial obligations, you will indeed become a witness to the matchless power of the Lord as He opens the windows of heaven and pours out a blessing “that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>11</sup> You will then have gained your own personal testimony of this very sacred law of tithing, and as you continue your obedience to this law, it will draw you ever closer to the Lord.

To those of you who are already tithe payers, I commend you for your faithfulness. You are already witnesses and have your own personal testimonies as to the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to those who obey this commandment, and each time you pay your tithing, your personal commitment to the Lord increases.

I bear you my own personal witness of the law of tithing and of the reality of the promises that the Lord has given regarding this law. I know from personal experience that the blessings do indeed come, and for that I am most grateful. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “President Kimball Speaks Out on Tithing,” *New Era*, Apr. 1981, 6.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 35; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 476.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 41:1.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
8. 3 Nephi 24:10–12; see also Malachi 3:10–12.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 59.
10. 3 Nephi 24:10; see also Malachi 3:10.
11. 3 Nephi 24:10; see also Malachi 3:10.



## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### The power of Nephi's testimony

In the Book of Mormon, we read of young Nephi, who was commanded by the Lord to build a ship. He was quick to obey this commandment, but his brothers were skeptical. "When my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship," he wrote, "they began to murmur against me, saying: Our brother is a fool, for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters" (1 Nephi 17:17).

But Nephi was not discouraged. He had no experience building ships, but he had a strong personal testimony "that the Lord . . . [would] prepare a way . . . [to] accomplish the thing which he commandeth" (1 Nephi 3:7). With this powerful testimony and motivation in his heart, Nephi built a ship in which they crossed the great waters, despite the strong opposition expressed by his faithless brothers.

### A desire to become a pilot

Let me share with you a personal experience from my own youth about the power of righteous motives.

After the turmoil of the Second World War, my family ended up in Russian-occupied East Germany. When I attended fourth grade I had to learn Russian as my first foreign language in school. I found this quite difficult because of the Cyrillic alphabet, but as time went on I seemed to do all right.

When I turned 11 we had to leave East Germany overnight because of the political orientation of my father. Now I was going to school in West Germany, which was American-occupied at that time. There in school all children were required to learn English and not Russian. To learn Russian had been difficult, but

English was impossible for me. I thought my mouth was not made for speaking English. My teachers struggled. My parents suffered. And I knew English was definitely not my language.

But then something changed in my young life. Almost daily I rode my bicycle to the airport and watched airplanes take off and land. I read, studied, and learned everything I could find about aviation. It was my greatest desire to become a pilot. I could already picture myself in the cockpit of an airliner or in a military fighter plane. I felt deep in my heart this was my thing!

Then I learned that to become a pilot I needed to speak English. Overnight, to the total surprise of everybody, it appeared as if my mouth had changed. I was able to learn English. It still took a lot of work, persistence, and patience, but I was able to learn English!

Why? Because of a righteous and strong motive!

### A testimony of the restored gospel

Our motives and thoughts ultimately influence our actions. The testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the most powerful motivating force in our lives. Jesus repeatedly emphasized the power of good thoughts and proper motives: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36).

The testimony of Jesus Christ and the restored gospel will help us in our lives to learn of God's specific plan for us and then to act accordingly. It gives us assurance of the reality, truth, and goodness of God, of the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the divine calling of latter-day prophets. Our testimony motivates us to live righteously, and righteous living will cause our testimony to grow stronger.

## Explanation of the term *testimony*

*What is a testimony?* One definition of *testimony* is “a solemn attestation as to the truth of a matter,” originating from the Latin word *testimonium* and the word *testis*, meaning “witness” (“Testimony,” <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Testimony>; *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “testimony,” 1291).

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the term *testimony* is a warm and familiar word in our religious expressions. It is tender and sweet. It has always a certain sacredness about it. When we talk about testimony, we refer to feelings of our heart and mind rather than an accumulation of logical, sterile facts. It is a gift of the Spirit, a witness from the Holy Ghost that certain concepts are true.

A testimony is the sure knowledge or assurance from the Holy Ghost of the truth and divinity of the Lord’s work in these latter days. A testimony is the “abiding, living, [and] moving *conviction* of the truths revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Marion G. Romney, “How to Gain a Testimony,” *New Era*, May 1976, 8; italics added).

When we bear testimony, we declare the absolute truth of the gospel message. In a time when many perceive truth as relative, a declaration of absolute truth is not very popular, nor does it seem politically correct or opportune. Testimonies of things how “they really are” (Jacob 4:13) are bold, true, and vital because they have eternal consequences for mankind. Satan wouldn’t mind if we declared the message of our faith and gospel doctrine as negotiable according to circumstances. Our firm conviction of gospel truth is an anchor in our lives; it is steady and reliable as the North Star. A testimony is very personal and may be a little different for each of us, because everyone is a unique person. However, a testimony of the restored

gospel of Jesus Christ will always include these clear and simple truths:

- God lives. He is our loving Father in Heaven, and we are His children.
- Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world.
- Joseph Smith is the prophet of God through whom the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored in the latter days.
- The Book of Mormon is the word of God.

• President Gordon B. Hinckley, his counselors, and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are the prophets, seers, and revelators in our day.

As we acquire a deeper knowledge of these truths and of the plan of salvation by the power and the gift of the Holy Ghost, we can come to “know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

## Receiving a testimony

*How do we get a testimony?* We all know that it is easier to talk about a testimony than to acquire one. The process to receive one is based on the law of the harvest: “For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). No good thing comes without effort and sacrifice. If we have to work hard to obtain a testimony, it will make us and our testimony even stronger. And if we share our testimony, it will grow.

A testimony is a most precious possession because it is not acquired by logic or reason alone, it cannot be purchased with earthly possessions, and it cannot be given as a present or inherited from our ancestors. We cannot depend on the testimonies of other people. We need to know for ourselves. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “Every Latter-day Saint has the responsibility to know for himself or herself with a certainty beyond doubt that Jesus is the resurrected, living Son of the living God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 110; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 80).

The source of this sure knowledge and firm conviction is divine revelation, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

We receive this testimony when the Holy Spirit speaks to the spirit within us. We will receive a calm and unwavering certainty that will be the source of our testimony and conviction irrespective of our culture, race, language, or socioeconomic background. These promptings of the Spirit, rather than human logic alone, will be the true foundation upon which our testimony will be built.

The core of this testimony will always be the faith in and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His divine mission, who in the scriptures says of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

So how do we receive a personal testimony rooted in the witness of the Holy Ghost? The pattern is outlined in the scriptures:

*First: Desire to believe.* The Book of Mormon encourages us: “If [you] will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, . . . even if [you] can no more than desire to believe” (Alma 32:27).

Some may say, “I cannot believe; I am not a religious person.” Just consider, God promises us divine help even if we have only a desire to believe, but it has to be a true and not a pretended desire.

*Second: Search the scriptures.* Have questions; study them out; search in the scriptures for answers. Again, the Book of Mormon has good advice for us: “If [you] give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart” through diligent study of the word of God, the good seed “will begin to swell within your breasts” if you will not resist with unbelief. This good seed will “enlarge [your] soul” and “enlighten [your] understanding” (Alma 32:28).

*Third: Do the will of God; keep the commandments.* It is not enough to enter

into a scholarly debate if we want to know for ourselves that the kingdom of God has been restored upon the earth. Casual study is also not enough. We have to get in on the action ourselves, and that means learning and then doing God’s will.

We need to come to Christ and follow His teachings. The Savior taught: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man *will do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17; italics added). And He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

*Fourth: Ponder, fast, and pray.* To receive knowledge from the Holy Ghost, we must ask Heavenly Father for it. We must trust that God loves us and that He will help us to recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The Book of Mormon reminds us:

“When [you] . . . read these things, . . . remember how merciful the Lord [has] been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that [you] shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

“ . . . Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are . . . true; and if [you] . . . ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:3–4).

And the prophet Alma said:

“I testify unto you that I do know that these things . . . are true. And how do [you] suppose that I know of their surety?

“ . . . Behold, I have fasted and prayed . . . that I might know these things of myself. And . . . the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation” (Alma 5:45–46).

My dear brothers and sisters, Alma received his witness by fasting and prayer

more than 2,000 years ago, and we may have the same sacred experience today.

### **Blessings of having a testimony**

*What is a testimony good for?* A testimony provides proper perspective, motivation, and a solid foundation on which to build a life of purpose and personal growth. It is a constant source of confidence, a true and faithful companion during good times and bad. A testimony provides us with a reason for hope and gladness. It helps us cultivate a spirit of optimism and happiness and enables us to rejoice in the beauties of nature. A testimony motivates us to choose the right at all times and in all circumstances. It motivates us to draw nearer to God, allowing Him to draw nearer to us (see James 4:8).

Our personal testimony is a protective shield, and like an iron rod it is guiding us safely through darkness and confusion.

Nephi's testimony gave him the courage to stand up and be counted as one who obeys the Lord. He did not murmur, doubt, or fear, no matter what the circumstances. When times got tough he said, "I will go and do [what] the Lord [has] commanded, for I know that the Lord . . . shall prepare a way . . . [to] accomplish [it]" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Just as the Lord knew Nephi, God knows us and loves us. This is our time; these are our days. We are where the action is. Our firm personal testimony will motivate us to change ourselves and then bless the world. Of this I testify and leave you my blessing as an Apostle of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon and for the beautiful spirit they bring with them.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **Enjoying peace and happiness**

Our Father in Heaven wants each of us to enjoy peace and happiness in mortal life. Our Master, Jesus Christ, and His prophets have taught how to have that peace and happiness, even in a world that is ever more challenging, with increasing conflict and an intense concentration of alluring temptations.

### **Rock-climbing analogy**

I will illustrate the wrong way to find peace and happiness, and then the proper way, by using an analogy to rock climbing. There are those who attempt to scale a difficult rock cliff by a method called "soloing." They ascend alone, without equipment, companions, or any secure protection. They depend on their own

skill and capacity. They do it for the thrill of living on the edge with high risk. It is done despite the probability that, in time, they will fall and be seriously injured or lose their life. They are like many who face the challenges and temptations of life without the security of following the commandments of God, guided by the Holy Spirit. In today's difficult world they will almost surely violate critical laws, with painful, destructive consequences. Do not "solo" in life. You will almost certainly fall into transgression.

There is a safer way to rock climb. When a pair of climbers tackle a difficult ascent, the leader scales a wall, placing anchors a few feet apart. His or her rope is linked to the anchor by a carabiner. Safety is assured by a companion, called the second, stationed in a very solid position. The lead is protected as the second belays—that is, carefully controls how the rope is paid out. In this way the lead is assured protection while ascending. Should there be an inadvertent misstep, the anchor will safely limit the fall. The second not only secures the lead but gives encouragement with comments and signals as they communicate back and forth. Their goal is a safe, exhilarating experience by overcoming a significant challenge. They employ techniques and equipment that are tried and proven. The essential equipment includes a secure harness, a reliable rope, a variety of anchors to be fixed to the rock face, a chalk bag to improve grip, and proper boots or special shoes that a leader can use to grip the surface of the steep wall.

The companionship has studied the rules and techniques of rock climbing. They have received instruction from experienced climbers and have practiced to become comfortable with the proper moves and the use of equipment. They have planned a route and determined how they will work together. When the leader scales far enough and finds a convenient place that is very safe, he or she belays while tak-

ing up the rope as the second follows the "pitch," or length of rope that has been extended. When the leader is reached, the process is then repeated. One belays while the other climbs, inserting anchors every few feet as protection should there be an inadvertent fall. While technical rock climbing appears to be risky and dangerous, these precautions assure an exhilarating experience, safely accomplished by following correct principles.

### **The commandments are our anchors**

In real life, the anchors are the laws of God that provide protection under all of the challenges that you will face. The rope and carabiners that secure the rope to the anchors represent obedience to those commandments. When you learn those commandments, continue to practice them, and have a plan to avoid danger, you will have a secure means of obtaining protection against Satan's temptations. You will develop strength of character that will fortify you against transgression. Should you make a wrong move, there need be no enduring problem, because of the belaying, or help, that is available through your repentance.

### **Centering our lives in Jesus Christ**

Let the Savior be your "lead" in life. He has said, "I am . . . the Rock of Heaven . . . ; whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall."<sup>1</sup> The Redeemer will safely lead you over the most difficult obstacles of life. His laws are absolutely secure anchors of protection that dispel fear and assure success in an otherwise dangerous world. Such a life will certainly provide you peace and happiness.

True, enduring happiness, with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the greatest difficulties, will come as you center your life in Jesus Christ. Obedience to His teachings

provides a secure ascent in the journey of life. That takes effort. While there is no guarantee of overnight results, there is the assurance that, in the Lord's time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and happiness will be yours.

The challenges you face, the growth experiences you encounter, are intended to be temporary scenes played out on the stage of a life of continuing peace and happiness. Sadness, heartache, and disappointment are events in life. It is not intended that they be the substance of life. I do not minimize how hard some of these events can be. When the lesson you are to learn is very important, trials can extend over a long period of time, but they should not be allowed to become the confining focus of everything you do. Your life can and should be wondrously rewarding. It is your understanding and application of the laws of God that will give your life glorious purpose as you ascend and conquer the difficulties of life. That perspective keeps challenges confined to their proper place—stepping-stones to further growth and attainment.

The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. Your progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether you welcome the experience or not. Trust in the Lord. Ask to be led by the Spirit to know His will. Be willing to accept it. You will then qualify for the greatest happiness and the heights of attainment from this mortal experience.

### **Atonement makes happiness possible**

Peace and happiness are the precious fruits of a righteous life. They are only possible because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I will explain.

Each of us makes mistakes in life. They result in broken eternal laws. Justice is that part of Father in Heaven's plan of

happiness that maintains order. It is like gravity to a rock climber, ever present. It is a friend if eternal laws are observed. It responds to your detriment if they are ignored. Justice guarantees that you will receive the blessings you earn for obeying the laws of God. Justice also requires that every broken law be satisfied. When you obey the laws of God, you are blessed, but there is no additional credit earned that can be saved to satisfy the laws that you break. If not resolved, broken laws can cause your life to be miserable and would keep you from returning to God. Only the life, teachings, and particularly the Atonement of Jesus Christ can release you from this otherwise impossible predicament.

The demands of justice for broken law can be satisfied through mercy, earned by your continual repentance and obedience to the laws of God. Such repentance and obedience are absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life. The Redeemer can settle your individual account with justice and grant forgiveness through the merciful path of your repentance. Through the Atonement you can live in a world where justice assures that you will retain what you earn by obedience. Through His mercy you can resolve the consequences of broken laws.

### **Eternal significance of the Atonement**

The Atonement was a selfless act of infinite, eternal consequence, arduously earned alone, by the Son of God.<sup>2</sup> Through it the Savior broke the bonds of death. It justifies our finally being judged by the Redeemer. It can prevent an eternity under the dominion of Satan. It opens the gates to exaltation for all who qualify for forgiveness through repentance and obedience.

Pondering the grandeur of the Atonement evokes the most profound feelings of awe, immense gratitude, and deep humility. Those impressions can provide you powerful motivation to keep His com-

mandments and consistently repent of errors for greater peace and happiness.

I believe that no matter how diligently you try, you cannot with your human mind fully comprehend the eternal significance of the Atonement nor fully understand how it was accomplished. We can only appreciate in the smallest measure what it cost the Savior in pain, anguish, and suffering or how difficult it was for our Father in Heaven to see His Son experience the incomparable challenge of His Atonement. Even so, you should conscientiously study the Atonement to understand it as well as you can. You can learn what is needful to live His commandments, to enjoy peace and happiness in mortal life. You can qualify, with obedient family members, to live with Him and your Father in Heaven forever.

### Merits, mercy, and grace of the Savior

Lehi taught his son Jacob, “No flesh . . . can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the *merits*, and *mercy*, and *grace* of the Holy Messiah.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus Christ possessed *merits* that no other being could possibly have. He was a God, Jehovah, before His birth in Bethlehem. His beloved Father not only gave Him His spirit body, but Jesus was His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. Our Master lived a perfect, sinless life and therefore was free from the demands of justice.

He is perfect in every attribute, including love, compassion, patience, obedience, forgiveness, and humility. His *mercy* pays our debt to justice when we repent and obey Him. Since with even our best efforts to obey His teachings we will still fall short, because of His *grace* we will be “saved, after all we can do.”<sup>4</sup>

I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Redeemer, our Intermediary, our Final Judge. I know that He lives and that He loves you. Consistently make Him your “lead” in life. The secure anchors of His laws will assure safety and success as you scale the challenges you will face. You will not fall into serious transgression. Yours will be a life of peace and happiness crowned with exaltation in the celestial kingdom. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moses 7:53.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:50, 52–53.
3. 2 Nephi 2:8; italics added.
4. 2 Nephi 25:23.

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The choir sang “Hark, All Ye Nations!”

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 30, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Brigham City, Utah. N. Geoffrey Anderson directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

## President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 176th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Brigham City, under the direction of N. Geoffrey Anderson, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “See, the Mighty Angel Flying.” The invocation will then be

offered by Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “See, the Mighty Angel Flying.”

Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. offered the invocation.

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## President Monson

The choir will now sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elders Marcus B. Nash and Stanley G. Ellis of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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# Elder Henry B. Eyring

## Strength of priesthood quorums

I am grateful to be with you in this great priesthood meeting. All of us are members of a quorum in the priesthood. That may not seem remarkable to you, but it does to me. I was ordained a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood in a tiny branch of the Church. There was only one family in the branch. We had no chapel. We met in our house. I was the only deacon and my brother the only teacher.

So I know what it is like to exercise the priesthood alone, without serving with others in a quorum. I was content in that small branch without a quorum. I had no way to know what I was missing. And then my family moved across a continent to where there were many priesthood holders and strong quorums.

I have learned over the years that the strength in a quorum doesn’t come from the number of priesthood holders in it. Nor does it come automatically from the age and maturity of the members. Rather, the strength of a quorum comes in large measure from how completely its members are united in righteousness. That unity in a strong quorum of the priesthood is not like anything I have experienced in an athletic team or club or any other organization in the world.

The words of Alma, recorded in the book of Mosiah, come closest to describing the unity I have felt in the strongest priesthood quorums:

“And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism,



having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.”<sup>1</sup>

Alma even told his people how to qualify for that unity. He told them “that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people.”<sup>2</sup>

What Alma was teaching, and what is true in any unified priesthood quorum I have seen, is that the members’ hearts are being changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is how their hearts become knit together.

### **Taught according to the covenants**

You can see, then, why the Lord charges the presidents of quorums to lead in the way that He does. In the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, He uses almost the same words describing the duties of the president in each quorum. The deacons quorum president is to teach the quorum members their duty “as it is given according to the covenants.”<sup>3</sup> The president of the teachers quorum is to teach its members their duties “as given in the covenants.”<sup>4</sup> The president of the priests quorum, who is the bishop, is commanded “to preside over forty-eight priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office, as is given in the covenants.”<sup>5</sup>

The elders quorum president is charged this way:

“Again, the duty of the president over the office of elders is to preside over ninety-six elders, and to sit in council with them, and to teach them according to the covenants.”<sup>6</sup>

It is easy to understand why God wants His quorums taught “according to the covenants.” Covenants are solemn promises. Heavenly Father has promised us all eternal life if we will make and keep covenants. For instance, we receive the priesthood with a covenant to be faithful in helping Him in His work. The people we baptize into His Church promise to

have faith in Jesus Christ and to repent and to keep His commandments. Every covenant requires faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments to qualify for the forgiveness and purified hearts necessary to inherit eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God.

### **A desire to bring the Spirit to others**

You might ask, “Does that mean that every lesson in the quorum must only be about faith and repentance?” Of course not. But it does mean that the teacher and those who participate must always desire to bring the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of the members in the room to produce faith and a determination to repent and to be clean.

And that desire goes beyond the walls of the room where the quorum meets. In a truly united quorum, that desire extends to the members wherever they are.

I saw that a few years ago in a deacons quorum where I had been called to teach the lessons. A few of the deacons failed to come to the quorum meetings from time to time. I knew that the teaching in that quorum—and in every quorum—was the charge of the president, who had keys. He was to sit in council with all of them. And so I have made a habit of seeking the counsel of the one with the charge from God by asking him, “What do you think I should teach? What should I try to accomplish?”

I learned to follow his counsel because I knew God had given him responsibility for the teaching of his quorum members. I knew one Sunday that God had honored the charge to a young quorum president. I was teaching the deacons. I noticed an empty chair. There was a recording device sitting on the chair, and I could see that it was running. After the class, a boy sitting next to the empty chair picked up the recorder. As he started to leave the room, I asked him why he had recorded our discussion. He

smiled and said that another deacon had told him that he wouldn't be in the quorum that day. He was taking the recorder to his friend at home so that he could listen to our lesson.

I had trusted in the responsibility given to a young quorum president, so help from heaven came. The Spirit came to touch the members in that room and sent one of them to a friend to try to strengthen his faith and lead him to repentance. The deacon carrying the recorder had learned according to the covenants, and he reached out to help his friend and fellow member in the quorum.

### **Quorums are service units**

Priesthood quorum members are taught in more ways than by lessons in a class. The quorum is a service unit, and the members learn in their service. A quorum can give greater service than the members could give alone. And that power is multiplied by more than their numbers. Every quorum has a leader with authority and responsibility to direct priesthood service. I have seen the power that comes when quorums are called to move out to help in times of disaster. Time and again I have had people outside the Church express surprise and admiration for the effectiveness of the Church in organizing to give help. It seems to them like a miracle. In all priesthood service the miracle of power comes because leaders and members honor the authority of those who direct the service in priesthood quorums across the earth.

Miracles of power can come as quorums reach out to serve others. They come as well when the priesthood service is to members within the quorum. A deacons quorum president met early one Sunday, before the quorum meeting, with his counselors and with the quorum secretary. After prayerful consideration in council, he felt inspired to call a deacon to invite to the next quorum meeting another deacon who had never attended. He

knew that the deacon who had never attended had a father who was not a member of the Church and that his mother had little interest in the Church.

The designated deacon accepted the call from his president to contact the boy. He went. I watched him go. He went a little reluctantly, as if it might be a hard task. The boy he invited to come with him to quorum came only a few times before his family moved away. Many years later I was in a stake conference thousands of miles away from where that deacons quorum had met. Between conference meetings, a man I did not know came up to me and asked if I knew someone. He gave me a name. It was the boy who was called by his deacons quorum president to go after and care for one lost sheep. The man said to me, "Will you thank him for me? I am the grandfather of the boy he invited to a deacons quorum years ago. He is grown now. But he still talks with me about the deacon who invited him to go with him to church."

He had tears in his eyes, and so did I. A young quorum president had been inspired to reach out to a lost member of his quorum. He was inspired to send a boy on the errand to serve. That president had done what the Master would have done. And in the process a young president trained a new priesthood holder in his duty to serve others according to the covenants. Hearts were knit which were still connected after more than 20 years and across thousands of miles. Quorum unity lasts when it is forged in the Lord's service and in the Lord's way.

### **Building fellowship**

One of the hallmarks of a strong quorum is the feeling of fellowship among its members. They care for each other. They help each other. Quorum presidents can build that fellowship best if they remember the Lord's purpose for unity in the quorum. It is of course so that they will help each other. But it is more, much

more. It is so that they will lift and encourage each other to serve in righteousness with the Master in His work to offer eternal life to Heavenly Father's children.

Understanding that will change the way we try to build fellowship in the quorum. For instance, it might even change the way a teachers quorum plays basketball. The members might hope to build fellowship more than just to win a game. They could choose to invite a boy who is always left out because he doesn't play very well. If he accepts and comes, the members of the quorum are likely to pass the ball a little more, looking for the open man, especially the boy who isn't likely to score. Twenty years later they may not remember whether they won that night, but they will always remember how they played together and why—and whose team it was. It was the Lord who said, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>7</sup>

Understanding why the Lord wants fellowship can change the way an elders quorum party is planned. I've been to a party where the man who planned it was a convert to the Church. Finding the gospel was the sweetest thing that had ever happened to him. So neighbors and friends not yet members of the Church were invited to the party. I still remember the feeling of fellowship as we visited with them about what the Church meant to us. I felt in that party more than fellowship with brothers in the priesthood. The Master invited His disciples to His first Quorum of the Twelve in His mortal ministry this way: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."<sup>8</sup> And so that night at a party, I felt that I was in the fellowship of the Master and His disciples, becoming what He wants us to be.

I was blessed with that same feeling of fellowship by a priesthood leader when I was in the Aaronic Priesthood. He understood how to build priesthood fellowship that can last. He arranged with the owner of a woodlot for us to spend an afternoon chopping wood and putting it in bundles. The bundles were for widows so that they

could have a fire in the cold of winter. I still remember the warmth of fellowship I felt with my priesthood brethren. But even more I remember feeling that I was doing what the Savior would do. And so I felt fellowship with Him. We can build that precious fellowship in our quorums in this life, and then we can have it forever, in glory and in families, if we live according to the covenants.

### **Becoming united quorums**

My prayer is that you will accept the Lord's invitation to become united, as one, in our quorums of the priesthood. He has marked the way. And He has promised us that with His help good quorums can become great quorums. He wants that for us. And I know that He needs stronger quorums to bless the children of our Heavenly Father, according to the covenants. I have faith that He will.

I know that our Heavenly Father lives. I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, atoned for our sins and those of everyone we will ever meet. He was resurrected. He lives. He leads His Church. He holds the keys of the priesthood. Through inspiration to those who hold keys in the Church, He calls every president of every priesthood quorum. I testify that the priesthood was restored with all its keys to Joseph Smith. And I bear solemn witness that those keys have been passed to the present day to the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who is the president of the priesthood in all the earth.

I so testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Mosiah 18:21.
2. Mosiah 18:20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 107:85.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 107:86.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:87.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 107:89.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
8. Matthew 4:19.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### A father's sacrifice

Years ago, when my brothers and I were boys, our mother had radical cancer surgery. She came very close to death. Much of the tissue in her neck and shoulder had to be removed, and for a long time it was very painful for her to use her right arm.

One morning about a year after the surgery, my father took Mother to an appliance store and asked the manager to show her how to use a machine he had for ironing clothes. The machine was called an Ironrite. It was operated from a chair by pressing pedals with one's knees to lower a padded roller against a heated metal surface and turn the roller, feeding in shirts, pants, dresses, and other articles. You can see that this would make ironing (of which there was a great deal in our family of five boys) much easier, especially for a woman with limited use of her arm. Mother was shocked when Dad told the manager they would buy the machine and then paid cash for it. Despite my father's good income as a veterinarian, Mother's surgery and medications had left them in a difficult financial situation.

On the way home, my mother was upset: "How can we afford it? Where did the money come from? How will we get along now?" Finally Dad told her that he had gone without lunches for nearly a year to save enough money. "Now when you iron," he said, "you won't have to stop and go into the bedroom and cry until the pain in your arm stops." She didn't know he knew about that. I was not aware of my father's sacrifice and act of love for my mother at the time, but now that I know, I say to myself, "There is a man."

### "Arise . . . and be men"

The prophet Lehi pled with his rebellious sons, saying, "Arise from the dust,

my sons, *and be men*" (2 Nephi 1:21; italics added). By age, Laman and Lemuel were men, but in terms of character and spiritual maturity, they were still as children. They murmured and complained if asked to do anything hard. They didn't accept anyone's authority to correct them. They didn't value spiritual things. They easily resorted to violence, and they were good at playing the victim.

We see some of the same attitudes today. Some act as if a man's highest goal should be his own pleasure. Permissive social mores have "let men off the hook," as it were, so that many think it acceptable to father children out of wedlock and to cohabit rather than marry.<sup>1</sup> Dodging commitments is considered smart, but sacrificing for the good of others, naive. For some, a life of work and achievement is optional. A psychologist studying the growing phenomenon of what he calls "young men stuck in neutral" describes this scenario:

"Justin goes off to college for a year or two, wastes thousands of dollars of his parents' money, then gets bored and comes home to take up residence in his old room, the same bedroom where he lived when he was in high school. Now he's working 16 hours a week at Kinko's or part time at Starbucks.

"His parents are pulling their hair out. 'Justin, you're 26 years old. You're not in school. You don't have a career. You don't even have a girlfriend. What's the plan? When are you going to get a life?'"

" 'What's the problem?' Justin asks. 'I haven't gotten arrested for anything, I haven't asked you guys for money. Why can't you just chill?' "<sup>2</sup>

How's that for ambition?

We who hold the priesthood of God cannot afford to drift. We have work to do (see Moroni 9:6). We must arise from the dust of self-indulgence and be men! It

is a wonderful aspiration for a boy to become a man—strong and capable; someone who can build and create things, run things; someone who makes a difference in the world. It is a wonderful aspiration for those of us who are older to make the vision of true manhood a reality in our lives and be models for those who look to us for an example.

### Relationship to women

In large measure, true manhood is defined in our relationship to women. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given us the ideal to pursue in these words:

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. . . . By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.”<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, I have visited members of the Church in many countries, and despite differences in circumstances and cultures, everywhere I have been impressed with the faith and capacity of our women, including some of the very young. So many of them possess a remarkable faith and goodness. They know the scriptures. They are poised and confident. I ask myself, Do we have men to match these women? Are our young men developing into worthy companions that such women can look up to and respect?

President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking in this meeting in April 1998, gave specific counsel for young men:

“The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you. . . . [You] will largely determine the remainder of her life. . . .

“Work for an education. Get all the training that you can. The world will largely pay you what it thinks you are worth. Paul did not mince words when he wrote to Timothy, ‘But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel’ (1 Timothy 5:8).”<sup>4</sup>

### Importance of integrity

Integrity is fundamental to being men. Integrity means being truthful, but it also means accepting responsibility and honoring commitments and covenants. President N. Eldon Tanner, a former counselor in the First Presidency and a man of integrity, told of someone who sought his advice:

“A young man came to me not long ago and said, ‘I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can’t make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?’

“I looked at him and said, ‘Keep your agreement.’

“‘Even if it costs me my home?’

“I said, ‘I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, . . . and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.’”<sup>5</sup>

Good men sometimes make mistakes. A man of integrity will honestly face and correct his mistakes, and that is an example we can respect. Sometimes men try but fail. Not all worthy objectives are realized, despite one’s honest and best efforts. True manhood is not always measured by the fruits of one’s labors but by the labors themselves—by one’s striving.<sup>6</sup>

Though he will make some sacrifices and deny himself some pleasures in the

course of honoring his commitments, the true man leads a rewarding life. He gives much, but he receives more, and he lives content in the approval of his Heavenly Father. The life of true manhood is the good life.

### Jesus Christ as ideal of manhood

Most importantly, when we consider the admonition to be men, we must think of Jesus Christ. When Pilate brought Jesus forth wearing a crown of thorns, he declared, “Behold the man!” (see John 19:4–5). Pilate may not have fully understood the significance of his own words, but the Lord indeed stood before the people then as He stands today—the highest ideal of manhood. Behold the man!

The Lord asked His disciples what manner of men they should be and then answered, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3 Nephi 18:24). That is our ultimate quest. What did He do that we can emulate as men?

Jesus rejected temptation. When confronted by the great tempter himself, Jesus “[yielded] not to the temptation” (Mosiah 15:5). He countered with scripture: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Gospel commandments and standards are our protection also, and like the Savior, we may draw strength from the scriptures to resist temptation.

The Savior was obedient. He forsook completely the “natural man” (Mosiah 3:19) and yielded His will to the Father (see Mosiah 15:7). He was baptized to show “that, according to the flesh he humbled himself before the Father, and wittenesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7).

Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He employed the divine powers of the holy priesthood to bless those in need, “such as healing the sick, raising the dead,

causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases” (Mosiah 3:5). Jesus told His Apostles: “Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44–45). As His fellow servants, we may become great in His kingdom through love and service.

The Savior was fearless in opposing evil and error. “Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple . . . and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12–13). He called upon all to repent (see Matthew 4:17) and be forgiven (see John 8:11; Alma 5:33). So might we stand firm in defending sacred things and in raising the warning voice.

He gave His life to redeem mankind. Surely we can accept responsibility for those He entrusts to our care.

Brethren, let us be men, even as He is. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See, for example, James E. Faust, “Challenges Facing the Family,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 1–2; Eduardo Porter and Michelle O’Donnell, “Middle-Aged, No Degree, No Wife,” *New York Times*, published in *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Aug. 6, 2006, p. A7; Peg Tyre, “The Trouble with Boys,” *Newsweek*, Jan. 30, 2006, 44–51.
2. Leonard Sax, “Project Aims to Study Young Men Stuck in Neutral,” *Washington Post*, published in *Deseret Morning News*, Apr. 3, 2006, p. A13. “According to the Census Bureau, fully one-third of young men ages 22 to 34 [in the U.S.] are still living at home with their parents—a roughly 100 percent increase in the past 20 years.”
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 66, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 49, 50.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 99; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1966, 1137.
6. In the late 1830s, after the Saints had abandoned Kirtland, the Lord called a man named Oliver Granger to go back and try to settle some unfinished matters for the First Presidency. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said:

“Therefore, let [Oliver Granger] contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, *for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord.* . . . Therefore let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings of my people be on him forever and ever” (D&C 117:13, 15; italics added).

## Elder Marcus B. Nash

### Fishing experience as a young man

When I was a deacon like many of you young men, my father and I hiked to a mountain stream to fish for trout. As my dad attached the bait to the hook on the end of my fishing line, he told me that I would need to set the hook in the fish’s mouth when it tried to take the bait, or it would get away. I did not understand what it meant to set the hook, so he explained to me that the hook needed to be embedded in the fish’s mouth when it struck at the bait so it could not shake the hook loose and that the hook would be set if I quickly pulled back on the pole when the fish tried to take the bait.

Now, I really wanted to catch a fish, so I stood on the bank of that mountain stream like a coiled spring, every muscle taut, waiting for the telltale movement at the end of my pole which would signal that the fish was trying to take the bait. After a few minutes I noticed movement at the end of my pole, and in that instant I jerked back on the pole with all of my strength, expecting a big fight with the fish. To my surprise, I watched as that poor trout—with the hook now set very firmly in his mouth—was launched from the water into the air over my head and landed on the ground flopping behind me.

I have two observations from that experience: First, a fish out of water is miserable. Although its gills, fins, and tail

work very well in water, they are all but useless on land. Second, the unfortunate fish I caught that day perished because it was deceived into treating something very dangerous—even fatal—as worthwhile or at least as sufficiently intriguing to warrant a closer look and perhaps a nibble.

### To be truly happy, we need the gospel

My dear brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, there are a couple of lessons to be learned from this: First, a basic purpose of your life, as Lehi taught, is to “have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). In order to have joy, you need to understand that, as a child of your Heavenly Father, you inherited divine traits and spiritual needs—and just like a fish needs water, you need the gospel and the companionship of the Holy Ghost to be truly, deeply happy. Because you are the offspring of God (see Acts 17:28), it is incompatible with your eternal nature to do wrong and feel right. It cannot be done. It is part of your spiritual DNA, as it were, that peace, joy, and happiness will be yours only to the degree you live the gospel.

In contrast, to the degree that you choose not to live the gospel, you will be as miserable as a fish out of water (see Mosiah 4:30). As Alma stated to his son Corianton:

“Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.

“And now, my son, all men that are . . . in a carnal state . . . are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:10–11).

Note that to be without God in the world—in other words, to refuse to live His gospel and therefore lack the companionship of the Spirit—is to be in a state contrary to the nature of happiness. The gospel of Jesus Christ is, in fact, *the*—note that this is singular, meaning it is *the only*—“great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). If you opt for any other way of life or try to live only the parts of the gospel that seem convenient, such a choice will cheat you of the full, resplendent joy and happiness for which you were designed by our loving Father in Heaven and His Son.

### Avoiding unclean and evil things

Now to the second lesson from my fishing experience: just as a fish in a mountain stream must be careful of the lures placed in its path to avoid being pulled away from the water, so must you and I be wise in order to avoid being pulled away from a happy, gospel-centered life. Remember that, as Lehi observed, the devil “seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” and obtains “power to captivate” (2 Nephi 2:27, 29) us when we involve ourselves in unclean and evil things. Thus, do not be deceived into even nibbling at unworthy things, for Satan stands ready to set the hook. It was the very real risk of the hook being set subtly or suddenly that led the ancient prophet Moroni—who actually saw our day (see Mormon 8:35)—to pointedly warn you and me to “*touch* not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing” (Moroni 10:30; italics added).

There is much that is evil and unclean in music, the Internet, movies, magazines, and in alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. As to any evil and unclean thing, my young

friends, do not even touch it! Disguised in such things is a hook that sets subtly and much more suddenly than you dare think—and it can be an excruciatingly painful process to extract the hook. Alma described that for him the process of repentance was “nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28); indeed, he stated that “nothing [could be] so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains” (Alma 36:21).

### Making changes through repentance

There may be some of you who have been involved with that which is evil or unclean. Take hope in the doctrinal and historical fact that Alma’s faith in the Lord led him to repent, and as a direct result of his repentance he experienced such happiness through the power of the Atonement of Christ that, in his words, “there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy” (Alma 36:21). Such will be your experience as you seek the Lord through repentance.

Each of us needs to repent to some degree or another. To repent means to make the real changes in your life the Savior desires you to make for your happiness. Repentance is the great enabling principle of the gospel: when your faith in the Lord causes personal change, such action on your part, as Helaman states, “bringeth [you] unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of [your] souls” (Helaman 5:11). As you seek to change, remember that our loving Savior, as Alma states, has “all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance” (Alma 12:15). This is powerful, liberating, hope-filled doctrine!

The Prophet Joseph Smith learned from firsthand experience that the Lord expects us to avoid misery by living His gospel and wants us to understand that we can repent. When he lost the 116 pages of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon translation by giving in to the persuasions



of men, Joseph was miserable. The Lord told him, “You should have been faithful; and [God] would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble” (D&C 3:8). Such is the case for each of you young men: be faithful, and you will be supported by the hand of God. The Prophet was then reminded that—as with each of us—he would be forgiven if he repented. Imagine what joy he felt when he heard the Lord state, “But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen” (D&C 3:10).

### **An invitation to live the gospel**

My invitation to each of you tonight is to live the gospel to be truly happy, avoid evil and the misery it brings, and if you

have become involved with the evil or unclean thing, make the changes the Lord desires of you for your own happiness—and I witness that He will enable you to succeed through His matchless power.

As you accept this invitation, you will reap lasting happiness and build the foundation of your life upon “the rock of our Redeemer,” such that when the shafts of the evil one and the storms of the world assail you, they will, as Helaman taught, have “no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, *a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall*” (Helaman 5:12; italics added). Of the Lord Jesus Christ I bear my ardent witness: He is the Rock, the one sure foundation for happiness and healing. He lives, has all power in heaven and earth, knows your name, and He loves you. In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Stanley G. Ellis**

### **Power of attorney**

Several years ago Sister Ellis and I were called to preside over the Brazil São Paulo North Mission. The call meant that we would be away for three years. Given our family and business situation, we were impressed to keep our home and business in Houston rather than sell them.

As we began to make the necessary arrangements, it became clear we would need to have our lawyer prepare a power of attorney. That is a legal document that gives someone else the authority to do anything in our name. The person with this document could sell our home or other assets, borrow money in our name, spend our money, or even sell our business. The thought of giving someone that much power and authority over our affairs was scary.

We decided to give our power of attorney to a person we trusted, a good friend and partner, who exercised that power and authority very well. He did what we would have done if we were there.

### **The priesthood is a sacred trust**

Brethren, think of what the Lord has given us—His power and authority! The power and authority to act for Him in all things pertaining to His work!

With this priesthood power and, when necessary, the authorization of those with appropriate keys, we can perform the ordinances of salvation in His name: baptize for the remission of sins, confirm and confer the Holy Ghost, confer the priesthood and ordain others to priesthood offices, and perform temple ordinances. In His name we can administer His Church. In

His name we can bless, home teach, and even heal the sick.

What a trust the Lord has placed in us! Think of it, brethren. He trusts us!

Before we received the priesthood, we had already been prepared and proven. We had exercised faith in Jesus Christ, repented, been baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The level of experience we brought to our ordination varied. But the divine procedure was the same. We had been prayed about and interviewed by those exercising priesthood keys. We had been sustained by a vote of the Church members of our unit. We were ordained by one with authority and authorization to do so.

The Lord is careful with His priesthood. To exercise His power and authority is a sacred trust.

How wonderful that we have earned the trust of God! He trusts you! He trusts me!

### **The priesthood is received by covenant**

When we receive the priesthood, we do so by covenant. A covenant is a mutual promise. He promises to bless us on certain conditions. We promise to fulfill those conditions. As we do so, the Lord always keeps His word and gives us the blessing. Usually He gives us more than agreed. He is very generous.

When we receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, we receive what is called “the oath and covenant” of the priesthood. We promise the Lord two things, and He promises us two things. We promise to be “faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods” and faithful in “magnifying [our] calling.” He promises that we will be “sanctified by the Spirit.” Then after we are faithful in all things to the end, He promises that “all that my Father hath shall be given [us]” (see D&C 84:33–41).

### **Directions and warnings**

The Lord blesses His children through our priesthood service. To help us be successful in faithfully rendering priesthood service, He gives us directions and warnings. He has done that in the scriptures and continues to guide us through our leaders and through the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures contain many passages of direction and warning to holders of the priesthood. One of the best is section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In those few verses the Lord teaches us that the priesthood can only be exercised in righteousness. We should treat others with persuasion, patience, and kindness. He reminds us of the importance of charity and virtue in having the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

That section also warns us of those attitudes and actions that will cause us to lose our priesthood power. If we “aspire to the honors of men,” attempt to “cover our sins,” try to “gratify our pride” or “vain ambition,” or seek to “exercise control” over others, we lose the priesthood power (see vv. 35–37). From that point we would be practicing priestcraft. We would have left the service of God and would be putting ourselves in the service of Satan.

It would be good for priesthood holders to restudy Doctrine and Covenants section 121 regularly. It is easy to understand why our modern prophets have emphasized the need for us to maintain our worthiness and have given us *For the Strength of Youth* as a guide to help us.

One reason we must maintain our worthiness is that we never know when we will be called upon to use the priesthood.

When our son Matthew was five, he fell from the top of the high diving board at our neighborhood pool. He hit the concrete deck and suffered a fractured skull and a brain concussion. He was rushed by

a Life Flight helicopter to the Houston Medical Center for emergency treatment. I needed priesthood assistance immediately. Our home teacher and our priesthood leader were both worthy and prepared at that moment. They helped give Matthew a blessing, and he completely recovered.

We must be ready at any time. As we say in Scouting, “Be prepared.”

Surely we want to avoid priestcraft. But the Apostle Paul warned us of another danger. He warned that in our day there will be those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5).

How can we as priesthood holders have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof? Could it be that we hold the priesthood but do not exercise it? visit our families rather than home teach them? pray for someone in an ordinance or ordination instead of blessing them? do the Lord’s work the best way we know how without first pleading to know and do His will in His way?

Remember the Lord’s counsel to us through Nephi that we “must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place [we] shall pray” (2 Nephi 32:9).

### **Making a difference**

Years ago I was called to serve as a counselor in the Houston Texas North Stake presidency. I was studying the parable of the talents. You remember the story. A man needed to go away, so he entrusted his servants with his goods. One received five talents, another two, and the last received one. Upon his return, he asked for an accounting.

The servant who received five and returned ten, as well as the one who took two and returned four, were declared good and faithful servants. But what caught my attention was the servant who received one,

took care of it, and returned it safely back to his lord. I was surprised by the response of the master: “Thou wicked and slothful servant, . . . take therefore the talent from him, . . . and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness!” (See Matthew 25:14–30.)

This seemed to be a harsh reaction to one who seemed to be trying to take care of what he was given. But the Spirit taught me this truth—the Lord expects a difference! I knew in that moment that each of us will one day stand before God and give an accounting of our priesthood service and stewardships. Did we make a difference? In my case, was the Houston Texas North Stake better when I was released than when I was called?

Thankfully, the Lord teaches us how to be fruitful, how to make a difference. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (John 15:5). If we exercise His priesthood in His way, following the direction that we receive from His servants and His Spirit, we will be good and faithful servants!

My dear brethren of the priesthood, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, lives! He knows us; He loves us. He placed His trust in us by giving us His priesthood power and authority. I am a witness of this truth. May we use His power and authority to do His will in His way is my prayer.

As we hear from President Hinckley, President Monson, and President Faust, I bear my personal witness that each is a prophet, seer, and revelator. I am anxious to hear their counsel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” At the conclusion of the singing, President James E. Faust, Second

Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us, after which President Hinckley has asked that I address you.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

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## President James E. Faust

### Delivering rock salt

My grandfather used to graze his cattle each summer in the beautiful, lush, high mountain valleys east of our town in central Utah. However, the cattle craved and needed supplemental nutrients from licking rock salt. The rock salt came from a salt mine some distance away. Grandfather replenished the salt at the salt licks by putting a packsaddle on a sturdy horse and filling the packsaddle with rock salt. I called the packhorse Slowpoke for good reason. Grandfather put me on Slowpoke with the saddle loaded with rock salt. He gave me the reins so I could guide the horse up the mountain following Grandfather on his horse.

My horse Slowpoke was slow, but I didn't push him because he carried such a heavy load. It took a full day to ride up the mountain to the salt licks and to unload the rock salt from the pack animal. As the day got warmer, my sweaty legs would sting as they rubbed against the lumps of rock salt in the packsaddle. It was a joy when we crossed a stream and I could get off the horse and get rid of the sting by washing and drying my legs.

Grandfather would sing most of the day. Mostly he sang the songs of Zion. But one song he sang that impressed me greatly was “Show me your companions, and I will tell you what you are.” Looking back on it, taking salt to the mountain valley was an enjoyable experience, while the additional nutrients from the rock salt fortified the cattle.

### The need for spiritual nourishment

A nutrient furnishes nourishment that promotes growth and healing both in animals and humans. Grandfather's cattle craved the nutrients in the rock salt, but human beings need something more. They need to be replenished spiritually because “life is more than meat”<sup>1</sup> and “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”<sup>2</sup> The human spirit needs love. It also needs to be “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.”<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual nourishment prepares us for baptism. This preparation includes humbling ourselves before God, having “broken hearts and contrite spirits,” repenting of all our sins, being “willing to take upon [us] the name of Jesus Christ,” and manifesting “by [our] works that [we] have received of the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Our most important spiritual nutrient is a testimony that God is our Eternal Father, that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer, and that the Holy Ghost is our Comforter. This testimony is confirmed to us by the gift of the Holy Ghost. From this testimony we derive the spiritual nutrients of faith and trust in God, which bring forth the blessings of heaven. Spiritual nutrients come to us from various sources, but because of time constraints I would like to mention just three.

### Incorporating scriptures into our lives

A few years ago, a young man who was starting his senior year in high school re-

solved to nourish himself by studying the scriptures for half an hour each day. As he began reading the New Testament, he hit a stumbling block. He didn't feel the anticipated spiritual high, and he wasn't getting any insight. So he asked himself, "What am I doing wrong?" Then an episode at school came into his mind. He and some friends had been sharing jokes—some of which were not so funny, and downright shameful. He not only had joined in but had even added some off-color comments of his own. Just as he thought this, his eye fell on these words in Matthew: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."<sup>5</sup> He knew that the Spirit had directed him to these words at this time. He turned from his Bible and offered up a prayer of repentance.

The answer to his question "What am I doing wrong?" was simple. He was reading the scriptures, marking the scriptures, and even enjoying the scriptures, but he was not living the counsel given in the scriptures. As he renewed his scripture reading and tried to live by Christ's example, he soon noticed how different areas of his life began to blossom.<sup>6</sup> By incorporating the scriptures into his life, he had added an important spiritual nutrient.

### **Selfless service**

In our uncertain physical environment, we need to increase our spiritual nutrients—nutrients that come from the knowledge of the fulness of the gospel and the powers of the holy priesthood. When such knowledge penetrates our souls, we not only draw closer to God but we also want to serve Him and our fellowmen.

Some years ago a priests quorum decided to gather food for the needy as a service project. Jim, one of the priests, was excited to participate and was determined to collect more food than anyone else. The time arrived when the priests met at the

chapel. They all went out at the same time and returned at a specified time later in the evening. To everyone's surprise, Jim's cart was empty. He seemed rather sober, and some of the boys made fun of him. Seeing this and knowing that Jim had an interest in cars, the adviser said, "Come outside, Jim. I want you to look at my car. It's giving me some trouble."

When they got outside, the adviser asked Jim if he was upset. Jim said, "No, not really. But when I went out to collect the food, I really got a lot. My cart was full. As I was returning to the chapel, I stopped at the home of a nonmember woman who is divorced and lives within our ward boundaries. I knocked on the door and explained what we were doing, and she invited me in. She began to look for something to give me. She opened the refrigerator, and I could see there was hardly anything in it. The cupboards were bare. Finally, she found a small can of peaches.

"I could hardly believe it. There were all these little kids running around that needed to be fed, and she handed me this can of peaches. I took it and put it in my cart and went on up the street. I got about halfway up the block when I just felt warm all over and knew I needed to go back to that house. I gave her all the food."

The adviser said, "Jim, don't you ever forget the way you feel tonight, because that's what it is all about."<sup>7</sup> Jim had tasted the nutrient of selfless service.

### **Missionary work**

Many spiritual nutrients come while serving on a mission—from being totally involved in the work of the Master. They come from helping people become spiritually awake so that they can accept the gospel. Over a century ago when Elder J. Golden Kimball presided over the Southern States Mission, he called for a meeting of the elders. They were to meet in a secluded spot in the woods so they would

have privacy. One of the elders had a problem with one of his legs. It was raw and swollen to at least twice the size of his other leg. But the elder insisted on attending this special priesthood meeting in the woods. So two of the elders carried him to this meeting place.

Elder Kimball asked the missionaries, “Brethren, what are you preaching?”

They said, “We are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“Are you telling these people that you have the power and authority, through faith, to heal the sick?” he asked.

They said, “Yes.”

“Well then,” he continued, “why don’t you believe it?”

The young man with the swollen leg spoke up and said, “I believe it.” Here is the rest of the story told in Elder Kimball’s words: “[The elder] sat down on a stump and the elders gathered around him. He was anointed and I administered to him, and he was healed right in their presence. It was quite a shock; and every other elder that was sick was administered to, and they were all healed. We went out of that priesthood meeting and the elders received their appointments, and there was a joy and happiness that cannot be described.”<sup>8</sup> Their nutrient of faith had been replenished and their zeal for missionary work revived.

### **Living worthy of guidance**

Spiritual nutrients, which keep us spiritually healthy, can lose their potency and strength if we do not live worthy of the divine guidance we need. The Savior has told us: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”<sup>9</sup> We need to keep our minds and bodies clean from all forms of addiction and pollution. We would never choose to eat spoiled or contaminated food. In the same selective

way, we should be careful not to read or view anything that is not in good taste. Much of the spiritual pollution that comes into our lives comes through the Internet, computer games, television shows, and movies that are highly suggestive of or graphically portray humanity’s baser attributes. Because we live in such an environment, we need to increase our spiritual strength.

### **Hungering and thirsting**

Enos speaks of his soul hungering and crying all day and also into night in supplication for his soul.<sup>10</sup> He craved the spiritual nutrients that quench the thirst for spiritual truth. As the Savior of the world told the woman at the well in Samaria, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”<sup>11</sup>

This evening we have met as the priesthood of God in this vast congregation, both seen and unseen, hopefully because we want to be spiritually nourished. I hope that we will always hunger and thirst for the word of the Lord through His servants, the prophets, and that we may be filled each week as we attend our sacrament meetings and renew our covenants.

Each of you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood has inside of you all of the essential elements for your eternal destiny. These elements, some of them dormant, need to be strengthened and nourished from the outside. Some of them are physical; some of them are spiritual. The human spirit needs to know about its eternal journey—to know where it came from, why it is here in mortality, and where it must ultimately go to receive joy and happiness and fulfill its destiny. Replenishing our spirits with spiritual nutrients can be everlasting and will go with us into the eternities. As Amulek taught, “That same spirit which doth possess your bodies

at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>12</sup>

Brethren, we appreciate your devotion and righteousness. You carry out your callings in the quorums, branches, wards, and stakes so well that the Church grows, and the whole work of God goes forward throughout the world. Through your priesthood you are able to bless in the name of the Lord your families and others you may be called upon or assigned to bless. This comes from the divine agency entrusted to us by the Lord, for He has promised, “Whomsoever you bless I will bless.”<sup>13</sup>

Brethren, I hope we will be faithful and true to all of our covenants. I pray that we can be totally committed in all of our family relationships, especially to our spouses, but also to our parents, our children, and grandchildren. May we be found bearing our personal testimonies of the

truthfulness of this work all the days of our lives. May we go forward in righteousness as the humble servants of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Luke 12:23.
2. Job 32:8.
3. 1 Timothy 4:6.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
5. Matthew 12:36.
6. See Carl Houghton, “What Am I Doing Wrong?” *New Era*, Sept. 1987, 12.
7. See Robert B. Harbertson, “The Aaronic Priesthood: What’s So Great about It,” *New Era*, May 1990, 49.
8. In Max Nolan, “J. Golden Kimball in the South,” *New Era*, July 1985, 10.
9. Matthew 5:13.
10. See Enos 1:4.
11. John 4:14.
12. Alma 34:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.

## President Thomas S. Monson

A few weeks ago at a fast and testimony meeting at our ward, I watched a little boy on the back row mustering up courage to bear his testimony. He made three or four false starts and then sat down. Finally it was his turn. He squared his little shoulders, walked bravely up the aisle to the stand, took the two steps up to the level of the pulpit, stepped over and put his hands on the pulpit, gazed into the congregation, smiled—and then turned around, went back off those two steps and down the same aisle to his mother and father. I looked at you tonight in this vast Conference Center and thought of those listening in and could appreciate more fully the actions of that little boy.

### Honoring our priesthood duties

My brethren, I am honored by the privilege to speak to you this evening. I

have contemplated what I might say to you. There has come to my mind a favorite scripture from Ecclesiastes: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). I love, I cherish the noble word *duty*.

The legendary General Robert E. Lee of American Civil War fame declared: “Duty is the sublimest word in our language. . . . You cannot do more. You should never wish to do less” (in John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations* [1968], 620).

Each of us has duties associated with the sacred priesthood which we bear. Whether we bear the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, much is expected of each of us. The Lord Himself summed up our responsibility when He, in the revelation on the priesthood, urged, “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and

to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99).

I hope with all my heart and soul that every young man who receives the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which is conveyed when it is conferred.

### **The king’s emerald: a lesson on duty**

Fifty-one years ago I heard William J. Critchlow Jr., then president of the South Ogden Stake who would later become an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, speak to the brethren of the general priesthood session of conference and retell a story concerning trust, honor, and duty. May I share the story with you. Its simple lesson applies to us today, as it did then.

“[Young] Rupert stood by the side of the road watching an unusual number of people hurry past. At length he recognized a friend. ‘Where are all of you going in such a hurry?’ he asked.

“The friend paused. ‘Haven’t you heard?’ he said.

“ ‘I’ve heard nothing,’ Rupert answered.

“ ‘Well,’ continued [the] friend, ‘the King has lost his royal emerald! Yesterday he attended a wedding of the nobility and wore the emerald on the slender golden chain around his neck. In some way the emerald became loosened from the chain. Everyone is searching, for the King has offered a reward . . . to the one who finds it. Come, we must hurry.’

“ ‘But I cannot go without asking Grandmother,’ faltered Rupert.

“ ‘Then I cannot wait. I want to find the emerald,’ replied his friend.

“Rupert hurried back to the cabin at the edge of the woods to seek his grandmother’s permission. ‘If I could find it we could leave this hut with its dampness and buy a piece of land up on the hillside,’ he believed with Grandmother.

“But his grandmother shook her head. ‘What would the sheep do?’ she

asked. ‘Already they are restless in the pen, waiting to be taken to the pasture, and please do not forget to take them to water when the sun shines high in the heavens.’

“Sorrowfully, Rupert took the sheep to the pasture, and at noon he led them to the brook in the woods. There he sat on a large stone by the stream. ‘If I could only have had a chance to look for the King’s emerald!’ he thought. Turning his head to gaze down at the sandy bottom of the brook, suddenly he stared into the water. What was it? It could not be! He leaped into the water, and his gripping fingers held something that was green with a slender bit of gold chain [that had been broken]. ‘The King’s emerald!’ he shouted. ‘It must have been flung from the chain when the King [astride his horse galloped across the bridge spanning the stream, and the current carried] it here.’

“With shining eyes Rupert ran to his grandmother’s hut to tell her of his great find. ‘Bless you, my boy,’ she said, ‘but you never would have found it if you had not been doing your duty, herding the sheep.’ And Rupert knew that this was the truth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 86; paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation altered).

The lesson to be learned from this story is found in the familiar couplet: “Do [your] duty; that is best; Leave unto [the] Lord the rest!” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Legend Beautiful,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* [1893], 258).

### **A leader’s duty does not end**

To you who are or have been presidents of your quorums, may I suggest that your duty does not end when your term of office concludes. That relationship with your quorum members, your duty to them, continues throughout your life.

During the time I was a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, I was called to be



president of the quorum. With the urging and assistance of a dedicated and inspired quorum adviser, I worked diligently to ensure that each of the young men attended our meetings regularly. Two of them were a particular challenge, but with our perseverance and love and a little persuasion, they began to attend meetings and participate in quorum activities. However, as time passed and they left the ward to pursue education and employment, each of them drifted back into inactivity.

Over the years I have seen each of these two dear friends at various functions. Whenever I do, I place a hand on their shoulder and remind them, "I'm still your quorum president, and I won't let go. You mean so much to me, and I want you to enjoy the blessings which come with activity in the Church." They know I love them and that I'll never ever give up on them.

### **Helping a couple return to the Church**

For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep look up, ready to be fed the bread of life.

Many years ago, on a Halloween night, it was my privilege to be of assistance to one who had temporarily lost his way and needed a helping hand to return. I was driving home from the office rather late. I had been stalling on Halloween, letting my wife handle the trick-or-treat visitors. As I passed St. Mark's Hospital in Salt Lake City, I remembered that a dear friend, Max, lay ill in that very hospital. As he and I had become acquainted years before, we discovered that we had grown up in the same ward, although at different times. By the time I was born, Max and his parents had moved from the ward.

That Halloween night, I drove into the parking lot and entered the hospital. As I stopped at the desk to inquire as to

his room number, I was informed that when Max had registered at the hospital, he had listed as his religious preference not LDS but rather another church.

I entered Max's room and greeted him. I told him how proud I was to be his friend and how much I cared about him. I talked about his career in banking and as an orchestra leader on the side. I discovered that he had been offended by a comment or two from others and so had decided to attend another church. I said to him, "Max, you hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. I would like to give you a blessing tonight." He agreed, and the blessing was provided. He then informed me that his wife, Bernice, was also very ill and was, in fact, in an adjoining room. At my invitation, Max joined me in giving a blessing to her. He asked me to help him. I coached him. He anointed his wife. There were tears and embraces all around as I sealed the anointing with Max, his hands on his wife's head with mine, making that Halloween evening one ever to be remembered.

As I left the hospital that night, I stopped at the desk and told the receptionist that with the permission of Max and his wife the record should be changed to reflect their membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I waited and I watched until it was changed.

My friends Max and Bernice are now both on the other side of the veil, but they spent the last period of their lives active and happy and receiving the blessings which come with testimonies of the gospel and attendance at church.

Brethren, our task is to reach out to those who, for whatever reason, are in need of our help. Our challenge is not insurmountable. We are on the Lord's errand, and therefore we are entitled to the Lord's help. But we must try. From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

## Our responsibility to be worthy

Ours is the responsibility to so conduct our lives that when the call comes to provide a priesthood blessing or to assist in any way, we are worthy to do so. We have been told that truly we cannot escape the effect of our personal influence. We must be certain that our influence is positive and uplifting.

Are our hands clean? Are our hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, we find a lesson on worthiness gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. Through the proper rites, Darius had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander the Great, had been declared legitimate son of Amon. He too was Pharaoh. Alexander, finding the defeated Darius on the point of death, laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, "I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods, that I do these things truly and without fakery."

Darius replied with a gentle rebuke: "Alexander, my boy, . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?" (Adapted from Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* [1981], 192.)

## Magnifying our priesthood callings

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader and eighth President of the Church, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14).

And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.

Brethren, it is in *doing*—not just *dreaming*—that lives are blessed, others are guided, and souls are saved. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," declared James (James 1:22).

May all of us assembled tonight in this priesthood meeting make a renewed effort to qualify for the Lord's guidance in our lives. There are so many out there who plead and pray for help. There are those who are discouraged, those who long to return but who don't know how to begin.

I've always believed in the truth of the words "God's sweetest blessings always go by hands that serve him here below" (Whitney Montgomery, "Revelation," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others [1996], 283). Let us have ready hands, clean hands, and willing hearts, that we may participate in providing what our Heavenly Father would have others receive from Him.

## Blessing given to a terminally ill friend

I conclude with an example from my own life. I once had a treasured friend who seemed to experience more of life's troubles and frustrations than he could bear. Finally he lay in the hospital terminally ill. I knew not that he was there.

Sister Monson and I had gone to that same hospital to visit another person who was very ill. As we exited the hospital and proceeded to where our car was parked, I felt the distinct impression to return and make inquiry concerning whether my friend Hyrum might still be a patient there. A check with the clerk at the desk confirmed that Hyrum was indeed a patient there after many weeks.

We proceeded to his room, knocked on the door, and opened it. We were not prepared for the sight that awaited us. Balloon bouquets were everywhere. Prominently displayed on the wall was a poster

with the words "Happy Birthday, Daddy" written on it. Hyrum was sitting up in his hospital bed, his family members by his side. When he saw us, he said, "Brother Monson, how in the world did you know that today is my birthday?" I smiled, but I left the question unanswered.

Those in the room who held the Melchizedek Priesthood surrounded this, their father and grandfather and my friend, and a priesthood blessing was given.

After tears were shed, smiles of gratitude exchanged, and tender hugs received and given, I leaned over to Hyrum and spoke softly to him: "Remember the words of the Lord, for they will sustain you. He promised you, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you' (John 14:18)."

Time marches on. Duty keeps cadence with that march. Duty does not dim nor diminish. Catastrophic conflicts come and go, but the war waged for the souls of men continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you and to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere. I reiterate that word: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the of-

fice in which he is appointed, in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

Brethren, let us learn our duties. Let us ever be worthy to perform those duties and, in so doing, follow in the footsteps of the Master. When to Him came the call of duty, He answered, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). May we do likewise, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, amen.

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Brigham City for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Lead, Kindly Light." The benediction will then be offered by Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, you look like a shirtsleeve priesthood. You look all dressed in white, ready to go to work. And the time has come to go to work.

What a remarkable sight this is. This great Conference Center is filled to capacity, and our words are flung across the world. This is probably the largest gathering of priesthood men that has ever occurred. I congratulate you on your presence tonight.

### **"Rise up, O men of God!"**

I recently listened on television to a concert by the BYU Men's Chorus. They

sang a stirring number entitled "Rise Up, O Men of God." It was written in 1911 by William P. Merrill, and I discovered a version of it is found in our hymnbook, although I never remember singing it.

The words carry the spirit of the old English hymns written by Charles Wesley and others. The text reads:

Rise up, O men of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and soul and mind and  
strength  
To serve the King of Kings.  
Rise up, O men of God,  
In one united throng.

Bring in the day of brotherhood  
And end the night of wrong.

Rise up, O men of God!  
The church for you doth wait,  
Her strength unequal to her task;  
Rise up, and make her great!

Rise up, O men of God!  
Tread where his feet have trod.  
As brothers of the Son of Man,  
Rise up, O men of God!  
[*Hymns*, no. 324; third verse in *The Oxford American Hymnal*, ed. Carl F. Pfatteicher (1930), no. 256]

### Living worthy of the priesthood

The scriptures are very plain in their application to each of us, my brethren. For instance, Nephi quotes from Isaiah, saying, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments—then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (1 Nephi 20:18; see also Isaiah 48:18).

The words of Lehi are a clarion call to all men and boys of the priesthood. Said he with great conviction: “Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust” (2 Nephi 1:23).

There is not a man or boy in this vast congregation tonight who cannot improve his life. And that needs to happen. After all, we hold the priesthood of God. If we are boys who have received the Aaronic Priesthood, we are entitled to the ministering of angels to guide and direct, to bless and protect us. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. If we have had conferred upon us the Melchizedek Priesthood, we have been given the keys of the kingdom that carry with them eternal powers. These were spoken of by the Lord when He laid His hands upon the heads of His disciples.

With this priesthood comes a great obligation to be worthy of it. We cannot

indulge in unclean thoughts. We must not partake of pornography. We must never be guilty of abuse of any kind. We must rise up above such things. “Rise up, O men of God!” and put these things behind you, and the Lord will be your guide and stay.

Said the prophet Isaiah, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

### Concerns about dress and language

Some of you young men seem to delight in dressing in a slouchy manner. I know that it is a sensitive subject, but I believe it is unbecoming to young men who have been ordained to the holy priesthood of God. Our language at times matches our dress. We indulge in profanity, taking the name of the Lord in vain. God has spoken plainly against this.

I am confident you have heard this story of President Spencer W. Kimball, but I take the liberty of repeating it. He had undergone surgery in the hospital. A young male nurse had placed him on a gurney and was transporting him. When getting on the elevator, the nurse bumped the gurney and let out an oath using the name of the Lord.

President Kimball, only half-conscious, said, “Please! Please! That is my Lord whose name you revile.”

There was a deathly silence; then the young man whispered with a subdued voice, “I am sorry.” (See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 198.)

### Pursue educational opportunities

I call your attention to another matter that gives me great concern. In revelation the Lord has mandated that this people get all the education they can. He has

been very clear about this. But there is a troubling trend taking place. Elder Rolfe Kerr, Commissioner of Church Education, advises me that in the United States nearly 73 percent of young women graduate from high school, compared to 65 percent of young men. Young men are more likely to drop out of school than young women.

Approximately 61 percent of young men enroll in college immediately following high school, compared to 72 percent for young women.

In 1950, 70 percent of those enrolled in college were males, and 30 percent were females; by 2010, projections estimate 40 percent will be males, and 60 percent will be females.

Women have earned more bachelor's degrees than men every year since 1982 and more master's degrees since 1986.

It is plainly evident from these statistics that young women are exceeding young men in pursuing educational programs. And so I say to you young men, rise up and discipline yourself to take advantage of educational opportunities. Do you wish to marry a girl whose education has been far superior to your own? We speak of being "equally yoked." That applies, I think, to the matter of education.

In addition, your education will strengthen your service in the Church. A study was made some years ago that indicated the higher the education, the greater the faith and participation in religious activity.

### **Letter from a victim of pornography**

I previously mentioned pornography. It easily becomes an addiction of the worst kind. Let me read to you from a letter I received from a victim:

"I would like to share something with you that I have not been able to share with anyone else. I am a 35-year-old male.

For most of my adult life I have been addicted to pornography. I am very ashamed to admit this, . . . but for the most part, my addiction is as real as that of an alcoholic or a drug addict. . . .

"The main reason for my writing is to tell you that the Church can't do enough to counsel the members to avoid pornography. I was first introduced to this material as a child. I was molested by an older male cousin, and pornography was used to attract my interest. I am convinced that this exposure at an early age to sex and pornography is at the root of my addiction today.

"I think it is ironic that those who support the business of pornography say that it is a matter of freedom of expression. I have no freedom. I have lost my free agency because I have been unable to overcome this. It is a trap for me, and I can't seem to get out of it. *Please, please, please* plead with the brethren of the Church not only to avoid but eliminate the sources of pornographic material in their lives. Besides the obvious things like books and magazines, they need to turn off cable movie channels in their homes. I know many who have these services and claim that they are able to screen the bad things out, but this is not true. . . .

"Pornography and perversion have become so commonplace in our lives that the sources of this material are everywhere. I have found pornographic magazines by the roadside and in dumps. We need to talk to our children and explain how evil these things are and encourage them to avoid looking at them when they come across them. . . .

"Finally, President Hinckley, please pray for me and others in the Church who may be like me to have the courage and strength to overcome this terrible affliction.

"I am unable to sign my name, and I hope that you will understand."

### Avoiding what would harm us

The computer is a wonderful instrument when it is properly used. But when it is used to deal with pornography or so-called chat rooms or for any other purpose that leads to evil practices or evil thoughts, then there must be self-discipline enough to turn it off.

The Lord has declared, “Purge ye out the iniquity which is among you; sanctify yourselves before me” (D&C 43:11). No one can mistake the meaning of those words.

He says further, “The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple” (D&C 93:35). There is no equivocation there. The Lord has spoken plainly that we must take care of our mortal body and avoid that which would do it harm.

He has made to each of us a great promise. Said He, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

And further: “God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now” (D&C 121:26).

### Study lives of Savior and Joseph Smith

All of us would do well to study the life of the Master and try to emulate His words and doings. We would likewise do well to study the life of the Prophet Joseph. From his example, each of us could learn much concerning our own behavior.

My brethren, I testify of the truth of these eternal qualities. I testify that if we will make an effort to improve our lives, the result will become evident. God bless you, each of you, my dear brethren. Of these things I testify, humbly and gratefully, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Lead, Kindly Light.”  
Elder W. Craig Zwick offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 176th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 1, 2006. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. The choir sang “How Firm a Foundation” to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 176th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “How Firm a Foundation” and will now favor us with “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carl B. Pratt of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

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The choir sang “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire.”

Elder Carl B. Pratt offered the invocation.

The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

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### **President Hinckley**

We will now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. Sister Margaret S. Lifferth, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then speak to us. Following her remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Anthony D. Perkins of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place.”

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

My dear brothers and sisters, both within my view and assembled throughout the world, I seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the assignment and privilege to address you.

### **The need for a deep foundation of faith**

In 1959, not long after I began my service as president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, I met N. Eldon Tanner, a prominent Canadian who just months later would be called as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, then to the Quorum of the Twelve, and then as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church.

At the time I met him, President Tanner was president of the vast Trans-

Canada Pipelines, Ltd., and president of the Canada Calgary Stake. He was known as “Mr. Integrity” in Canada. During that first meeting, we discussed, among other subjects, the cold Canadian winters, where storms rage, temperatures can linger well below freezing for weeks at a time, and where icy winds lower those temperatures even further. I asked President Tanner why the roads and highways in western Canada basically remained intact during such winters, showing little or no signs of cracking or breaking, while the road surfaces in many areas where winters are less cold and less severe developed cracks and breaks and potholes.

Said he, “The answer is in the depth of the base of the paving materials. In order for them to remain strong and unbroken,

it is necessary to go very deep with the foundation layers. When the foundations are not deep enough, the surfaces cannot withstand the extremes of weather.”

Over the years I have thought often of this conversation and of President Tanner’s explanation, for I recognize in his words a profound application for our lives. Stated simply, if we do not have a deep foundation of faith and a solid testimony of truth, we may have difficulty withstanding the harsh storms and icy winds of adversity which inevitably come to each of us.

### **Withstanding the storms of life**

Mortality is a period of testing, a time to prove ourselves worthy to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. In order for us to be tested, we must face challenges and difficulties. These can break us, and the surface of our souls may crack and crumble—that is, if our foundations of faith, our testimonies of truth are not deeply embedded within us.

We can rely on the faith and testimony of others only so long. Eventually we must have our own strong and deeply placed foundation, or we will be unable to withstand the storms of life, which *will* come. Such storms come in a variety of forms. We may be faced with the sorrow and heartbreak of a wayward child who chooses to turn from the pathway leading to eternal truth and rather travel the slippery slopes of error and disillusionment. Sickness may strike us or a loved one, bringing suffering and sometimes death. Accidents may leave their cruel marks of remembrance or may snuff out life. Death comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life’s journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children.

At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end, no dawn to break the night’s darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jeremiah 8:22). We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone.

### **Effort required for a strong foundation**

How can we build a foundation strong enough to withstand such vicissitudes of life? How can we maintain the faith and testimony which will be required, that we might experience the joy promised to the faithful? Constant, steady effort is necessary. Most of us have experienced inspiration so strong that it brings tears to our eyes and a determination to ever remain faithful. I have heard the statement, “If I could just keep these feelings with me always, I would never have trouble doing what I should.” Such feelings, however, can be fleeting. The inspiration we feel during these conference sessions may diminish and fade as Monday comes and we face the routines of work, of school, of managing our homes and families. Such can easily take our minds from the holy to the mundane, from that which uplifts to that which, if we allow it, will chip away at our testimonies, our strong foundations.

Of course we do not live in a world where we experience nothing but the spiritual, but we can fortify our foundations of faith, our testimonies of truth, so that we will not falter, we will not fail. How, you may ask, can we most effectively gain and maintain the foundation needed to survive spiritually in the world in which we live?

May I offer three guidelines to help us in our quest.



## Prayer

First, fortify your foundation through prayer. “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed” (“Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” *Hymns*, no. 145).

As we pray, let us really communicate with our Father in Heaven. It is easy to let our prayers become repetitious, expressing words with little or no thought behind them. When we remember that each of us is literally a spirit son or daughter of God, we will not find it difficult to approach Him in prayer. He knows us; He loves us; He wants what is best for us. Let us pray with sincerity and meaning, offering our thanks and asking for those things we feel we need. Let us listen for His answers, that we may recognize them when they come. As we do, we will be strengthened and blessed. We will come to know Him and His desires for our lives. By knowing Him, by trusting His will, our foundations of faith will be strengthened. If any one of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees” (in William Neil, comp., *Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations* [1974], 144).

Let us not neglect our family prayers. Such is an effective deterrent to sin, and thence a most beneficent provider of joy and happiness. That old saying is yet true: “The family that prays together stays together.” By providing an example of prayer to our children, we will also be helping them to begin their own deep foundations of faith and testimonies, which they will need throughout their lives.

## Scripture study

My second guideline: Let us study the scriptures and “meditate therein day and night,” as counseled by the Lord in the book of Joshua (1:8).

In 2005, hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saints accepted President Gordon B. Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. I do believe December of 2005 would set an all-time record for hours devoted to meeting the challenge on time. We were blessed when we completed the task; our testimonies were strengthened, our knowledge increased. I would encourage all of us to continue to read and study the scriptures, that we might understand them and apply in our lives the lessons we find there. I paraphrase the poet James Phinney Baxter:

Who learns and learns but never  
knows  
Is like the one who plows and plows  
but never sows.  
[“The Baxter Collection,” Baxter  
Memorial Library, Gorham, Maine]

Spending time each day in scripture study will, without doubt, strengthen our foundations of faith and our testimonies of truth.

Recall with me the joy Alma experienced as he was journeying from the land of Gideon southward to the land of Manti and met the sons of Mosiah. Alma had not seen them for some time, and he was overjoyed to discover that they were “still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God” (see Alma 17:1–2).

May we also know the word of God and conduct our lives accordingly.

## Service

My third guideline for building a strong foundation of faith and testimony involves service.

While driving to the office one morning, I passed a dry-cleaning establishment which had a sign in the window. It read,

“It’s the Service That Counts.” The sign’s message simply would not leave my mind. Suddenly I realized why. In actual fact it is the service that counts—the Lord’s service.

In the Book of Mormon we read of noble King Benjamin. In the true humility of an inspired leader, he recounted his desire to serve his people and lead them in paths of righteousness. He then declared to them:

“Because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God.

“And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:16–17).

This is the service that counts, the service to which all of us have been called: the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Along your pathway of life you will observe that you are not the only traveler. There are others who need your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.

### Act of service by a Young Women class

Thirteen years ago it was my privilege to provide a blessing to a beautiful 12-year-old young lady, Jami Palmer. She had just been diagnosed with cancer and was frightened and bewildered. She subsequently underwent surgery and painful chemotherapy. Today she is cancer-free and is a bright, beautiful 26-year-old who has accomplished much in her life. Some time ago, I learned that in her darkest hour, when any future appeared somewhat grim, she learned that her leg where the cancer was situated would require multiple surgeries. A long-planned hike with her Young Women class up a rugged

trail to Timpanogos Cave—located in the Wasatch Mountains about 40 miles south of Salt Lake City, Utah—was out of the question, she thought. Jami told her friends they would have to undertake the hike without her. I’m confident there was a catch in her voice and disappointment in her heart. But then the other young women responded emphatically, “No, Jami, you are going with us!”

“But I can’t walk,” came the anguished reply.

“Then, Jami, we’ll carry you to the top!” And they did.

Today, the hike is a memory, but in reality it is much more. James Barrie, the Scottish poet, declared, “God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives” (paraphrasing James Barrie, in Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter’s Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* [1977], 335). None of those precious young women will ever forget that memorable day when a loving Heavenly Father looked down with a smile of approval and was well pleased.

As He enlists us to His cause, He invites us to draw close to Him, and we feel His Spirit in our lives.

As we establish a firm foundation for our lives, let us each one remember His precious promise:

Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not  
dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give  
thee aid.  
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and  
cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent  
hand.  
[“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*,  
no. 85]

May each of us qualify for this blessing, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Student shares gospel with truck driver

While attending a sacrament meeting during the summer months, I was fortunate to hear messages from three students who were home from school for the summer. One of the talks especially interested me.

She had been working during the summer recess in a restaurant frequented by truck drivers. One driver who had a regular run stopped at the restaurant on the same day each week to eat. The regularity of the stop created an opportunity for short visits. He asked the young lady where she lived. She reported that she was home for the summer to earn money to return to school in the fall. His next question was, "Where do you attend school?" Her answer with pride: "BYU-Idaho." He wanted to know more about the school, which led to a gospel discussion. Her first approach was to teach him about the Word of Wisdom. She was successful. She convinced him to give up smoking.

Then her shift was changed, and she no longer had the opportunity to serve him, so she wrote him a note and enclosed a Church missionary tract about the plan of salvation. After several days she received a note from the driver. It simply stated, "You've created a monster." Thanks to this young woman, he had found information which caused him to think about the changes he must make in his life. I do not know the full outcome of this little encounter between a waitress and a truck driver, but clearly his life was affected.

She then went on to explain how easy it is to let others know about the beauties of the gospel. Opportunities are there every day in our normal pursuits of life to open our mouths to let people know of the gospel truths that will bless them here and now and into the eternities to come.

### God's plan for us

Many people wonder, "Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?" Our Eternal Father did not send us to earth on an aimless, meaningless journey. He provided for us a plan to follow. He is the author of that plan. It is designed for man's progress and ultimate salvation and exaltation. Quoting from the missionary guide *Preach My Gospel*:

"God is the Father of our spirits. We are literally His children, and He loves us. We lived as spirit children of our Father in Heaven before we were born on this earth. We were not, however, like our Heavenly Father, nor could we ever become like Him and enjoy all the blessings that He enjoys without the experience of living in mortality with a physical body.

"God's whole purpose—His work and His glory—is to enable each of us to enjoy all His blessings. He has provided a perfect plan to accomplish His purpose. We understood and accepted this plan before we came to the earth" ([2004], 48).

### Many in the world are confused

Yet many people in the world today continue to struggle to find answers to life's most basic questions. The cries of "Lo, here" and "Lo, there" only grow louder and many, many times more confusing. Technology has multiplied the confusion by spreading these messages throughout the airwaves and across the massive amounts of cable lines that now cover the earth. There are so many avenues to broadcast more and more different messages, I guess it should not be surprising that people are confused. Centuries ago Paul predicted:

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

“And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

We need not be confused. The answers to the puzzling questions regarding the purpose of life have again been given to mankind for our guidance.

### **Our first estate**

We first heard about the plan of salvation before we were born, in what the scriptures call our first estate (see Abraham 3:26). What occurred in this first estate is dimly understood, but we do know that we lived there as spirits, children of our Heavenly Father, and we made certain steps of advancement to prepare for the opportunity of housing our eternal spirits in earthly bodies. We also know that our Father held a great council to explain the purpose of earth life. We had the opportunity of accepting or rejecting the plan of salvation. It was not forced upon us. The essence of the plan was that man would have an opportunity of working out his own salvation on earth, with God’s help. A leader was selected to teach us how to follow the plan and to redeem us from sin and death. As the Lord explained to Moses, “Behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2).

Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, became the leader in advocating the plan designed by the Father, and we accepted the plan and its conditions. With that choice we earned the right to come to earth and enter our second estate.

### **Life in mortality**

God created Adam and Eve in His own image, with bodies of flesh and bones, and placed them in the Garden of Eden. They were given the choice either to remain in the garden or to partake of

the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and have the opportunity of experiencing mortality. They accepted the challenge, partook of the fruit, and thus became mortal and subject to physical death. Because of their choice, they would experience all of the trials and difficulties of mortality.

There are two purposes for life in mortality. The first is that we might gain experiences that we could not obtain in any other way. The second is to obtain tabernacles of flesh and bones. Both of these purposes are vital to the existence of man. We are now being tried and tested to see if we will do all the things the Lord has commanded us to do. These commandments are the principles and ordinances of the gospel, and they constitute the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every principle and ordinance has a bearing upon the whole purpose of our testing, which is to prepare us to return to our Heavenly Father and become more like Him. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said this about following the straight and narrow path:

“What I think all of us need to do is to determine where we stand in every field of mortal endeavor. Then, based on the general overall concepts that are clear and plain, we make a determination on how we will live in this field or in that field in order to pass the probationary estate in order to succeed in the test of mortality. If we make the right choices, we’ll go on to eternal reward, and if we do not, then we’ll get some lower and lesser place in the kingdoms that are prepared.

“... Everyone in the Church who is on the straight and narrow path, who is striving and struggling and desiring to do what is right, though [he] is far from perfect in this life; if he passes out of this life while he’s on the straight and narrow, he’s going to go on to eternal reward in his Father’s kingdom” (*The Probationary Test of Mortality*, devotional address, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, Jan. 10, 1982, 8–9).

## Role of Jesus Christ

All of this is made possible by Jesus Christ. He is the centerpiece of the eternal plan of the Father, the Savior who was provided as a ransom for mankind. God sent His Beloved Son to overcome the Fall of Adam and Eve. He came to earth as our Savior and Redeemer. He overcame the obstacle of physical death for us by giving up His own life. When He died on the cross, His spirit became separated from His body. On the third day His spirit and His body were reunited eternally, never to be separated again.

Life on earth is of limited duration. There comes a time for all of us when the spirit and the body are separated in death. But because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we will all be resurrected, regardless of whether we have accomplished good or evil in this life. Immortality is the gift to every mortal child of our Father in Heaven. Death must be viewed as a portal to a new and better life. Through the glorious resurrection, body and spirit will be reunited. We will have a perfect, immortal body of flesh and bones that will never be subjected to pain or death. But the glory we attain to in the next life will depend on our performance in this life. Only through the gift of the Atonement and our obedience to the gospel can we return and live with God once again.

## Apostasy and restoration

After the Resurrection of the Savior, His Apostles went forth to preach this glorious message to the nations of the earth. They traveled extensively as they taught of the mission of our Savior. A great movement of Christianity started to spread throughout many lands. But the Church gradually drifted into a general apostasy in which the succession of the priesthood was broken. The authority to officiate in spiritual ordinances ceased to exist on earth.

Gradually, inspired men started to bring forth a reformation. President Gordon B. Hinckley has described it as the dawn of a brighter day. He said:

“Somehow, in that long season of darkness a candle was lighted. The age of Renaissance brought with it a flowering of learning, art, and science. There came a movement of bold and courageous men and women who looked heavenward in acknowledgment of God and His divine Son. We speak of it as the Reformation.

“And then, after many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 83–84; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 82–83).

Following the glorious event of the First Vision, the sacred record of the Book of Mormon was delivered to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This brought a new witness of our Lord and Savior and His mission to the peoples of the earth.

Thus we see in the eternal plan of our Father that His love has no bounds. Every one of His children is included. All men have the same origin and equal possibility to fulfill their eternal destiny.

## The plan is known today

The Book of Mormon prophet Amulek, testifying that the words of Christ will bring us our salvation, said:

“And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

“Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:30–32).

Let us be no more tossed to and fro by every worldly wind and doctrine of man (see Ephesians 4:14). We declare to the world that the heavens are open and the truth of God’s eternal plan has again been made known to mankind. We live in the

dispensation of the fulness of times. We live in a day when we have the witness through the scriptures of the great plan the Lord has given to His children from the beginning of time down to this present and last dispensation. The evidence is well documented; we are not left alone to wander through mortality without knowing of the master plan which the Lord has designed for His children. He has bound Himself by solemn covenant to give us the blessings of heaven according to our obedience to His law. Oh, remember, remember that these things are true, for the Lord God has revealed these eternal truths unto us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### Three towels: a lesson in honesty

In front of this vast worldwide audience and with some reservation, I make a personal confession. I do this as an introduction to a subject that has weighed heavily on my mind for some time. In 1955, after my freshman year of college, I spent the summer working at the newly opened Jackson Lake Lodge, located in Moran, Wyoming. My mode of transportation was a 14-year-old 1941 Hudson automobile that should have received its burial 10 years earlier. Among the car’s other identifying traits, the floorboards had rusted so badly that, if not for a piece of plywood, I could have literally dragged my feet on the highway. The positive is that unlike most 14-year-old cars in this time period, it used no oil—lots of water in the radiator, but no oil. I could never figure out where the water went and why the oil continually got thinner and thinner and clearer and clearer.

In preparation for the 185-mile drive home at the end of the summer, I took the car to the only mechanic in Moran. After

a quick analysis, the mechanic explained that the engine block was cracked and was leaking water into the oil. That explained the water and oil mystery. I wondered if I could get the water to leak into the gas tank; I would get better gasoline mileage.

Now the confession: after the miracle of arriving home, my father came out and happily greeted me. After a hug and a few pleasantries, he looked into the backseat of the car and saw three Jackson Lake Lodge towels—the kind you cannot buy. With a disappointed look, he merely said, “I expected more of you.” I hadn’t thought that what I had done was all that wrong. To me these towels were but a symbol of a full summer’s work at a luxury hotel, a rite of passage. Nevertheless, by taking them I felt I had lost the trust and confidence of my father, and I was devastated.

The following weekend I adjusted the plywood floorboard in my car, filled the radiator with water, and began the 370-mile round trip back to Jackson Lake Lodge to return three towels. My father never asked why I was returning to the lodge, and I never explained. It just didn’t

need to be said. This was an expensive and painful lesson on honesty that has stayed with me throughout my life.

### **Dishonesty in the world today**

Sadly, some of the greatest missing values in today's world are honesty and integrity. In the past few years an increasing number of business leaders have been exposed for dishonesty and other forms of bad behavior. As a result, tens of thousands of loyal, long-term employees have lost their livelihoods and pensions. For some this has resulted in loss of homes, change of education and other life plans. We read and hear of widespread cheating in our schools, with more concern about receiving a grade or degree than learning and preparation. We hear of students who have cheated their way through medical school and are now performing complicated procedures on their patients. The elderly and others are victims of scam artists, often resulting in the loss of homes or life savings. Always this dishonesty and lack of integrity are based on greed, arrogance, and disrespect.

In Proverbs we read, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

Mormon, speaking of the converted Lamanites who were known as the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, wrote: "And they were among the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; *for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end*" (Alma 27:27; italics added).

### **Integrity and a 25-cent newspaper**

Some 30 years ago, while working in the corporate world, some business associates and I were passing through O'Hare Airport in Chicago, Illinois. One of these

men had just sold his company for tens of millions of dollars—in other words, he was not poor.

As we were passing a newspaper vending machine, this individual put a quarter in the machine, opened the door to the stack of papers inside the machine, and began dispensing unpaid-for newspapers to each of us. When he handed me a newspaper, I put a quarter in the machine and, trying not to offend but to make a point, jokingly said, "Jim, for 25 cents I can maintain my integrity. A dollar, questionable, but 25 cents—no, not for 25 cents." You see, I remembered well the experience of three towels and a broken-down 1941 Hudson. A few minutes later we passed the same newspaper vending machine. I noticed that Jim had broken away from our group and was stuffing quarters in the vending machine. I tell you this incident not to portray myself as an unusual example of honesty, but only to emphasize the lessons of three towels and a 25-cent newspaper.

There will never be honesty in the business world, in the schools, in the home, or anywhere else until there is honesty in the heart.

Important and lasting lessons are often taught through simple examples—perhaps as simple as three towels or a 25-cent newspaper. I wonder how the world would be if simple lessons of honesty were taught in the home at an early age, simple lessons such as "Love your neighbor as yourself" (see Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31) and "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" (see Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31). I wonder where thousands of displaced employees would be today with their lost pensions if some businesspeople in high places had early experiences of three towels or a 25-cent newspaper.

### **Honesty a fundamental value**

Honesty is the basis of a true Christian life. For Latter-day Saints, honesty is an

important requirement for entering the Lord's holy temple. Honesty is embedded in the covenants that we make in the temple. Each Sunday as we partake of the holy emblems of the Savior's flesh and blood, we again renew our basic and sacred covenants—which encompass honesty. As Latter-day Saints we have a sacred obligation to not only teach the principles of honesty but also to live them, perhaps with examples as simple as three towels or a 25-cent newspaper. Honesty should be among the most fundamental values that govern our everyday living.

When we are true to the sacred principles of honesty and integrity, we are true to our faith, and we are true to ourselves.

My prayer is that as Latter-day Saints we will be known as among the most honest people in the world. And it might be said of us, as it was of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, that we are “perfectly honest and upright in all things; and . . . firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Margaret S. Lifferth

### Children need the help of each of us

While I have been serving in this calling, I have made some new friends. Eliza can sing many Primary songs. Lucas is learning the Articles of Faith in Spanish. Caitlyn is shy but curious. I sat by Martha in Primary, and she wrapped her arm through mine. These children reflect the light of the gospel in their faces.

Who are the children in your home or in your neighborhood? Look at them. Think of them. The Savior teaches us that to enter the kingdom of God, we must become as a child, “submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love” (Mosiah 3:19).

But however full of faith children come to us, they face the challenges of a fallen world. What does it take to help these children keep the light of faith in their eyes? We know that nothing can replace a righteous family in the life of a child. But in today's world, children will need not only a devoted mother and father, but they will need each of us to protect, teach, and love them.

### Protecting children

Brothers and sisters, protecting children means we provide an environment that invites the Spirit into their lives and validates it in their hearts. That automatically eliminates any form of indifference, neglect, abuse, violence, or exploitation.

And while conditions of depravity are more serious, we also protect children from other detrimental conditions, such as expectations that are too high or too low, overindulgence, overscheduling, and self-centeredness. Either extreme dulls a child's ability to identify, trust, and be guided by the Holy Ghost.

### Teaching children

Children are open to gospel truths more than at any other time, and protected childhood is literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to teach and strengthen children to choose the right.

It's easy to know what to teach. The scriptures and our prophets are clear about what to teach our children. Nephi summarizes it in this verse, “And we talk



of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

Knowing that we teach of Christ and His gospel, how do we do it? Begin by following the counsel of our prophets and making time in our homes for family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Have we heard that counsel so often that it seems too simple? Or are we so busy that adding one more thing feels too complex? I testify that even when our family worship seems less than effective, obedience alone invites the blessings of the Lord.

In fact, personal obedience and example in every part of our lives are the ultimate gospel lessons for children. So study, learn, and apply the gospel. We cannot teach principles that we do not know and that we do not live. Who we are and what is in our heart are discerned by children more quickly than we think.

### **Loving children**

So love the children. I remember feeling loved as a child, and because of that, it was easy for me to believe that the Savior loved me too. Children thrive in a home where parents understand their "sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

But all of us can help. Notice the children around you, and learn their names. And then invite, listen, affirm, guide, build, serve, and share testimony. Your love can help bring a child to the love of the Savior.

Vasily is a child who spends much of his time in the streets and is not supported by his parents in his search for truth. He found a small branch of the Church in his town, and he came to every event held at the church. He also brought his three

younger brothers to church, and other friends joined him in Primary. In fact, at one time, the largest Primary in that area was made up of these little boys who are not members of the Church. They were drawn to the truth, and the light of the gospel began to be reflected in their faces. They were welcomed, protected, taught, and loved by all the members of that little branch, including youth, young adults, missionaries, teachers, and priesthood leaders. Think of the children in your neighborhood or Primary class. Who are the children in your branch or ward? Is there one, like Vasily, who needs you?

### **Bringing children to the Savior**

When I think of these little boys and children like them, I take great hope from the account of the Savior's visit to the American continent. Remember that before the Savior's appearance, there were tempests, earthquakes, fires, and three days of profound darkness (see 3 Nephi 8). I have often thought about the children who experienced these events. And I can only imagine the fear and concern in the hearts of the parents.

And then the Savior appeared and commanded the multitude "that their little children should be brought" to Him (3 Nephi 17:11). How eager those parents must have been to bring their children to the Savior. And then they watched as the Savior wept over their children, blessed them one by one, prayed unto the Father for them, and called down angels to minister unto them (see 3 Nephi 17:21, 24). This account reminds us that it is the Savior who is the great protector, the ultimate teacher, and the eternal source of love and healing.

As the darkness of this day surrounds us, we are also commanded to bring our children to the Savior, and as Elder Ballard has reminded us, "we are the ones God has appointed to encircle today's children with love and the fire of faith and an

understanding of who they are” (“Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60).

Brothers and sisters, as a mother and a Primary leader, I know this work with children is not easy. Protecting, teaching, and loving children can be demanding, often discouraging, sometimes exhausting, and occasionally the fruits of our efforts are long delayed. But it is precisely because it is not easy to bring children to the Savior that we must come to Him ourselves.

As we seek Him and His Spirit to help us, we will see a miracle. We will recognize that our own hearts are changing and

we too are becoming “submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love” (Mosiah 3:19). We too will reflect the light of the gospel in our own countenance. We will come to understand these words of the Savior: “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me” (Matthew 18:5).

I love the Savior and testify of His redeeming power for me and you and for our children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Elder Anthony D. Perkins

### Snares of Satan

Children in pure faith proclaim, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup> But sometimes youth and adults do not feel the power of this simple declaration.

Satan is the “enemy to all righteousness”;<sup>2</sup> thus he plants doubts about the nature of the Godhead and our relationship with Them. Jesus Christ prophesied that in the last days even the very elect would be deceived.<sup>3</sup> Consider three examples of how Lucifer is “laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God.”<sup>4</sup>

*The snare of false inadequacy.* A faithful young person feels unable to meet the expectations of others. At home and school, she is rarely praised and often criticized. The popular media tells her she is not beautiful enough or smart enough. Every day this righteous sister questions whether she is an individual worthy of Heavenly Father’s love, the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, or the Spirit’s constant guidance.

*The snare of exaggerated imperfection.* An outstanding missionary feels incapable

of meeting the expectations of God. In his mind, this worthy elder imagines a stern Heavenly Father bound to irrevocable justice, a Savior capable of cleansing others’ transgressions but not this elder’s own, and a Holy Ghost unwilling to accompany an imperfect person.

*The snare of needless guilt.* A middle-aged woman is a devoted mother, a loving friend, a faithful Church servant, and a frequent temple patron. But in her heart, this sister cannot forgive herself of sins committed years ago that she has repented of and fully resolved with priesthood leaders. She doubts that her life will ever be acceptable to the Lord and has lost hope of eternal life in Heavenly Father’s presence.

### Feeling God’s love

If you have any thoughts and feelings similar to these good Saints, I invite you to become as a little child and feel again “the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world.”<sup>5</sup> Childlike faith in the perfect love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will “divide

asunder”<sup>6</sup> Satan’s snares of inadequacy, imperfection, and guilt.

Proverbs teaches, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”<sup>7</sup> May I suggest—in addition to consistent prayers, scripture study, and Church and temple attendance—five changes to your thoughts and heart to more fully feel the tender love of God.

### **See yourself as a child of God**

*First, see yourself as a precious child of a loving Father in Heaven.* Our children with confidence sing, “I am a child of God, and he has sent me here.”<sup>8</sup> Little children feel and know what perhaps you have forgotten. You are the beloved son or daughter of Heavenly Father, created “in his own image,”<sup>9</sup> and of immense value—so much so that Jesus Christ gave His life for you.

God the Father is merciful and has infinite love for you despite your faults. Only the voice of Satan will cause you to feel of no value. In contrast, the Holy Ghost will cause you to feel “godly sorrow”<sup>10</sup> unto repentance in a manner that fills you with hope of positive change.

When you feel worthless, “remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”<sup>11</sup> Refrain from repeatedly thinking or saying negative words about yourself—there is a clear difference between humility and humiliation. Identify and use your unique talents rather than dwelling on your weaknesses.

### **Place burdens on the Savior**

*Second, place your burdens on Jesus Christ.* When you feel overwhelmed by expectations and challenges, do not fight the battle alone. Follow the example of small children, and drop to your knees in prayer.

Jesus Christ has commanded us, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”<sup>12</sup> Doubt, fear, and worry indicate we have taken all of life’s burdens and anxieties on ourselves. When plagued

by thoughts that you are inadequate, confidently say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”<sup>13</sup> Then as you “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power,”<sup>14</sup> you can rest assured that the Lord will do the remainder and things will work out all right.

The Savior promised, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>15</sup> As you “cast [your] burden upon the Lord,”<sup>16</sup> you will feel the peace of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

### **Forgive yourself**

*Third, forgive yourself of sins and imperfections.* Heavenly Father is not expecting you to become completely perfect in this life. He knew His children would make mistakes as they learned from experience in mortality. But “God so loved the world”<sup>18</sup> that His plan of happiness provided a merciful Savior.

Jesus said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>19</sup> Start with yourself, and forgive others as well. If God will not remember our repented-of sins,<sup>20</sup> then why should we? Avoid wasting time and energy reliving the past.

To forgive yourself and others, you must trust the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The prophet Zenock prayed, “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.”<sup>21</sup> Our Father in Heaven is saddened when we limit the power of His Son’s atoning sacrifice. As you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, you can have your guilt “swept away.”<sup>22</sup> If guilt remains after sincere repentance, believe your priesthood leaders when they declare you to be worthy.<sup>23</sup>

### **Have hope**

*Fourth, sustain hope of eternal life.* If you imagine that your prior sins, character flaws, and poor decisions prevent you

from receiving all of God's blessings, consider the experience of Alma the Elder. Referring to his younger years as an immoral priest for the wicked King Noah, Alma admitted, "I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance."<sup>24</sup> Yet Alma's repentance was so complete and Christ's Atonement so infinite that Alma became a prophet and was promised eternal life.<sup>25</sup> As you do your best to be obedient and repentant, you too can receive a place in the celestial kingdom through the Atonement and grace of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

### Find joy

*Fifth, find joy each day.* One source of joy is service, for when you are busy helping others, you will have less capacity to agonize over your own shortcomings. The Savior wisely taught, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."<sup>27</sup>

You will experience greater joy in life as you eradicate adult-onset pessimism and substitute childlike optimism. Optimism is a virtue that allows us to see God's loving hand in the details of our life. A favorite hymn counsels, "Count your many blessings; see what God hath done."<sup>28</sup>

I testify of Heavenly Father, who in great and wonderful love reaches out to each of His children. I bear witness of Jesus Christ, who is "mighty to save"<sup>29</sup> us from our inadequacies, imperfections, and sins. I bear testimony of the Holy Ghost, who will accompany the imperfect yet penitent soul. To you faithful and worthy Saints who struggle with latter-day snares of the devil,<sup>30</sup> "may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son."<sup>31</sup> In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:1.
2. Alma 34:23; see also Acts 13:10; Mosiah 4:14; Moroni 9:6.
3. See Matthew 24:24; see also Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22, 37.
4. Alma 10:17.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 138:3.
6. Helaman 3:29.
7. Proverbs 23:7.
8. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. Genesis 1:27; see also Alma 22:12; Ether 3:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–18; Moses 6:8–10; Abraham 4:26–27.
10. 2 Corinthians 7:10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36; see also Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 10:31; Luke 8:50; Doctrine and Covenants 50:41; 122:9.
13. Philippians 4:13; see also 2 Corinthians 12:7–10; Hebrews 11:33–34; 1 Nephi 7:12; 17:3; Jacob 4:7; Alma 26:12; Ether 12:27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.
15. Matthew 11:28.
16. Psalm 55:22.
17. See Galatians 5:22; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:23.
18. John 3:16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Psalm 25:7; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19.
21. Alma 33:16.
22. See Enos 1:3–8; see also Alma 24:10; 36:16–19.
23. See Marvin J. Ashton, "On Being Worthy," *Ensign*, May 1989, 20–22.
24. Mosiah 23:9.
25. See Mosiah 26:20.
26. See Titus 3:7; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Nephi 2:6–8; 10:24–25; 25:23; Enos 1:27; Moroni 7:41; Doctrine and Covenants 138:14.
27. Mark 8:35; see also Alma 36:24–25.
28. "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.
29. 2 Nephi 31:19; see also Isaiah 63:1; Alma 7:14; 34:18; Doctrine and Covenants 133:47.
30. See 2 Timothy 2:26.
31. Alma 33:23.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

My beloved brothers and sisters, thank you for your faith, your devotion, and your love. We share an enormous responsibility to be who the Lord wants us to be and to do what He wants us to do. We are part of a great movement—the gathering of scattered Israel. I speak of this doctrine today because of its unique importance in God’s eternal plan.

### Abrahamic covenant

Anciently, the Lord blessed Father Abraham with a promise to make his posterity a chosen people.<sup>1</sup> References to this covenant occur throughout the scriptures. Included were promises that the Son of God would come through Abraham’s lineage, that certain lands would be inherited, that nations and kindreds of the earth would be blessed through his seed, and more.<sup>2</sup> While some aspects of that covenant have already been fulfilled, the Book of Mormon teaches that this Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled only in these latter days!<sup>3</sup> It also emphasizes that we are among the covenant people of the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Ours is the privilege to participate personally in the fulfillment of these promises. What an exciting time to live!

### Israel became scattered

As descendants of Abraham, the tribes of ancient Israel had access to priesthood authority and blessings of the gospel, but eventually the people rebelled. They killed the prophets and were punished by the Lord. Ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria. From there they became lost to the records of mankind. (Obviously, the ten tribes are not lost to the Lord.) Two remaining tribes continued a short time and then, because of their rebellion, were taken captive into Babylon.<sup>5</sup> When they returned, they were favored of the Lord, but again they honored Him

not. They rejected and vilified Him. A loving but grieving Father vowed, “I will scatter you among the heathen,”<sup>6</sup> and that He did—into all nations.

### Israel to be gathered

God’s promise for the gathering of scattered Israel was equally emphatic.<sup>7</sup> Isaiah, for example, foresaw that in the latter days the Lord would send “swift messengers” to these people who were so “scattered and peeled.”<sup>8</sup>

This promise of the gathering, woven all through the fabric of the scriptures, will be fulfilled just as surely as were the prophecies of the scattering of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

### The Church of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time and the Apostasy

Prior to His Crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ had established His Church. It included apostles, prophets, sevens, teachers, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> And the Master sent His disciples into the world to preach His gospel.<sup>11</sup>

After a time the Church as established by the Lord fell into spiritual decay. His teachings were altered; His ordinances were changed. The Great Apostasy came as had been foretold by Paul, who knew that the Lord would not come again “except there come a falling away first.”<sup>12</sup>

This Great Apostasy followed the pattern that had ended each previous dispensation. The very first was in the time of Adam. Then came dispensations of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. Each prophet had a divine commission to teach of the divinity and the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. In each age these teachings were meant to help the people. But their disobedience resulted in apostasy. Thus, all previous dispensations were limited in time and location. They were limited in time be-

cause each ended in apostasy. They were limited in location to a relatively small segment of planet earth.

### **The restoration of all things**

Thus a complete restoration was required. God the Father and Jesus Christ called upon the Prophet Joseph Smith to be the prophet of this dispensation. All divine powers of previous dispensations were to be restored through him.<sup>13</sup> This dispensation of the fulness of times would not be limited in time or in location. It would not end in apostasy, and it would fill the world.<sup>14</sup>

### **The gathering of Israel—an integral part of the restoration of all things**

As prophesied by Peter and Paul, *all* things were to be restored in this dispensation. Therefore, there must come, as part of that restoration, the long-awaited gathering of scattered Israel.<sup>15</sup> It is a necessary prelude to the Second Coming of the Lord.<sup>16</sup>

This doctrine of the gathering is one of the important teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has declared, “I give unto you a sign . . . that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion.”<sup>17</sup> The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the entire world that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill covenants He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>18</sup> We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil.

The Book of Mormon is central to this work. It declares the doctrine of the gathering.<sup>19</sup> It causes people to learn about Jesus Christ, to believe His gospel, and to join His Church. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.<sup>20</sup>

To us the honored name of *Abraham* is important. It is mentioned in more verses of scriptures of the Restoration than in all verses of the Bible.<sup>21</sup> Abraham is linked to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>22</sup> The Lord reaffirmed the Abrahamic covenant in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>23</sup> In the temple we receive our ultimate blessings, as the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>24</sup>

### **The dispensation of the fulness of times**

This dispensation of the fulness of times was foreseen by God as the time to gather, both in heaven and on earth. Peter knew that after a period of apostasy, a restoration would come. He, who had been with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, declared:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; . . .

“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”<sup>25</sup>

In modern times the Apostles Peter, James, and John were sent by the Lord with “the keys of [His] kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times,” in which He would “gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”<sup>26</sup>

In the year 1830 the Prophet Joseph Smith learned of a heavenly messenger named Elias, who possessed keys to bring to pass “the restoration of all things.”<sup>27</sup>

Six years later the Kirtland Temple was dedicated. After the Lord accepted that holy house, heavenly messengers came with priesthood keys. Moses appeared<sup>28</sup> “and committed . . . the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

“After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.”<sup>29</sup>

Then Elijah the prophet came and proclaimed, “Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.”<sup>30</sup>

These events occurred on April 3, 1836,<sup>31</sup> and thus fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy.<sup>32</sup> Sacred keys of this dispensation were restored.<sup>33</sup>

### **Gathering of souls on the other side of the veil**

Mercifully, the invitation to “come unto Christ”<sup>34</sup> can also be extended to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel.<sup>35</sup> Part of their preparation requires earthly efforts of others. We gather pedigree charts, create family group sheets, and do temple work vicariously to gather individuals unto the Lord and into their families.<sup>36</sup>

### **To participate in the gathering: a commitment by covenant**

Here on earth, missionary work is crucial to the gathering of Israel. The gospel was to be taken first to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.”<sup>37</sup> Consequently, servants of the Lord have gone forth proclaiming the Restoration. In many nations our missionaries have searched for those of scattered Israel; they have hunted for them “out of the holes of the rocks”; and they have fished for them as in ancient days.<sup>38</sup>

The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. People can be “brought to the knowledge of the Lord”<sup>39</sup>

without leaving their homelands. True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion<sup>40</sup> in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. Scripture foretells that the people “shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.”<sup>41</sup> “Every nation is the gathering place for its own people.”<sup>42</sup> The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth. Zion is “the pure in heart.”<sup>43</sup> Zion is wherever righteous Saints are. Publications, communications, and congregations are now such that nearly all members have access to the doctrines, keys, ordinances, and blessings of the gospel, regardless of their location.

Spiritual security will always depend upon *how* one lives, not *where* one lives. Saints in every land have equal claim upon the blessings of the Lord.

This work of Almighty God is true. He lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, restored to accomplish its divine destiny, including the promised gathering of Israel. President Gordon B. Hinckley is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Genesis 12:1–2; Doctrine and Covenants 132:29–32; Abraham 2:6–11.
2. See Genesis 26:1–4, 24, 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4; John 8:33, 39; Acts 3:25; 1 Nephi 17:40; 2 Nephi 29:14; Jacob 5; Ether 13:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 52:2.
3. See, for example, 1 Nephi 15:12–18.
4. See 1 Nephi 14:14; 15:14; 2 Nephi 30:2; Mosiah 24:13; 3 Nephi 29:3; Mormon 8:15; Doctrine and Covenants 133:26–34.
5. The tribe of Levi provided priests among the people and was not to be numbered as a tribe or to receive tribal inheritance. Two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and

- Ephraim, were given land inheritances. They were numbered among the tribes, in the stead of their father, Joseph. The number of twelve tribes was thus maintained.
6. Leviticus 26:33; see also Jeremiah 9:16.
  7. See Genesis 22:16–18; 3 Nephi 20–22; Abraham 2:10–11.
  8. Isaiah 18:2, 7.
  9. See Leviticus 26:44; Deuteronomy 4:27–31; 28; 29; 30:2–5; Nehemiah 1:9; Isaiah 11:11–12; Jeremiah 31:7–8, 10–12; Ezekiel 37:21–22; Amos 9:14–15; Matthew 24:31; Jacob 6:2; see also Russell M. Nelson, “The Exodus Repeated,” *Ensign*, July 1999, 6–13.
  10. See Luke 10:1, 17; Ephesians 4:11; Articles of Faith 1:6.
  11. See Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15.
  12. 2 Thessalonians 2:3. “Falling away” is translated from the Greek *apostasia*, meaning “apostasy.”
  13. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18; 132:45.
  14. See Isaiah 27:6.
  15. See 1 Nephi 15:18; see also Book of Mormon title page, paragraph 2.
  16. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:17.
  17. 3 Nephi 21:1.
  18. See Genesis 12:2–3; 26:3–4; 35:11–12; and chapter headings for 3 Nephi 21; 29.
  19. Doctrines relating to the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel are among the earliest lessons taught in the Book of Mormon: “After the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; . . . the natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 10:14).
  20. See Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 554.
  21. Abraham is mentioned in 506 verses of scripture: 216 are in the Bible; 290 are in the scriptures of the Restoration.
  22. The covenant may also be received by adoption (see Matthew 3:9; Luke 3:8; Galatians 3:26–29; 4:5–7; Abraham 2:9–10).
  23. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:58; 132:31–32.
  24. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–40; 132:19; Abraham 2:11.
  25. Acts 3:19, 21.
  26. Doctrine and Covenants 27:13. Paul also prophesied of our day “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [the Lord] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (Ephesians 1:10).
  27. Doctrine and Covenants 27:6.
  28. It is appropriate that Moses, who first led God’s children to the land of their inheritance, would be the one to commit the keys of the gathering of Israel to the restored Church. Moses had come to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration and there had bestowed upon them the same priesthood keys in their day. At the conference of the Church in April 1840, the Prophet Joseph Smith appointed Orson Hyde to go to Jerusalem and there dedicate the land for the return of the Jews and scattered Israel (see 2 Nephi 9:2; 10:7–9; 25:16–17, 20; 3 Nephi 21:22–28; D&C 29:7–8). On Sunday, October 24, 1841, Elder Hyde knelt on the Mount of Olives and dedicated that land for the gathering of the Jews and of Israel to their ancient inheritance.
  29. Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–12.
  30. Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–15.
  31. Significant is the fact that Moses, Elias, and Elijah came on Easter Sunday, at the beginning of Passover.
  32. See Malachi 4:5–6.
  33. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:16.
  34. Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32; Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
  35. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:6–8.
  36. See 1 Corinthians 15:29; 1 Peter 4:6.
  37. Matthew 10:6; 15:24.
  38. See Jeremiah 16:16.
  39. 3 Nephi 20:13.
  40. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 14:6.
  41. 2 Nephi 9:2.



42. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Mexico City Mexico Area Conference 1972, 45.  
 43. Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.

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The choir sang “How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place.”

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### **President Hinckley**

We are grateful to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will sing “Come, Ye Thankful People,” and the benediction will then be offered by Elder W. Douglas Shumway of the Seventy. We shall meet again at 2:00.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

### **President Hinckley’s health**

My brothers and sisters, let me first deal with a personal matter.

The President of the Church belongs to the entire Church. His life is not his own. His mission is to serve.

Now, as all of you know, I am somewhat old in years. I had my 96th birthday last June. I have learned from many sources that there is considerable speculation concerning my health. I wish to put the record straight. If I last a few months longer, I will have served to an older age than any previous President. I do not say this to be boastful but rather grateful. Last January I underwent major surgery. It was a miserable experience, particularly for one who had never previously been a patient in a hospital. Following this was the question as to whether I should undergo further treatment. I chose to do so. My doctors have called the results miraculous. I know that the favorable results come from your many prayers in my behalf. I am deeply grateful to you.

The Lord has permitted me to live; I do not know for how long. But whatever the time, I shall continue to give my best to the task at hand. It is not an easy thing to preside over this large, complex Church. Nothing escapes the attention of the First Presidency. No major decision, no expenditure of funds is made without their approval. The responsibility and stress are great.

But we shall carry on as long as the Lord wishes. As I said last April, we are in His hands. I feel well; my health is reasonably good. But when it is time for a successor, the transition will be smooth and according to the will of Him whose Church this is. And so, we go forward in faith—and faith is the theme I wish to discuss this morning.

### **Moving forward with faith**

From the beginning this Church has moved forward with faith. Faith was the strength of the Prophet Joseph.

I am grateful for the faith that took him into the grove to pray. I am grateful for his faith to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. I am grateful that he went to the Lord in prayer that was answered with the bestowal of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. I am grateful that in faith he organized the Church and set it on its course. I thank him for the gift of his life as a testimony to the truth of this work.

Faith was also the moving power behind Brigham Young. I often reflect on the tremendous faith he exercised in bringing a very large number of people to settle this Salt Lake Valley. He knew very little of the area. He had never seen it, except in vision. I suppose he had studied what meager information there was, but he knew almost nothing of the soil or the water or the climate. And yet when he

looked upon it, he said without hesitation, “This is the right place, drive on” (in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224).

And so it has been with each of the Presidents of the Church. In the face of terrible opposition, they have moved forward with faith. Whether it was crickets destroying their crops. Whether it was drought or late frost. Whether it was persecution by the federal government. Or, more recently, whether it was an urgent need to extend humanitarian aid to victims of the tsunami, or earthquakes, or floods in divers places, it has all been the same. Welfare shelves have been emptied. Cash by the millions has been dispatched to those in need, regardless of Church membership—all in faith.

### **Suffering and faith of pioneers of 1856**

This is an important anniversary year in the history of the Church, as all of you know. It is the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Willie and Martin handcart companies and the Hunt and Hodgett wagon companies which accompanied them.

Much has been written concerning this, and I need not go into detail. All of you are familiar with the story. Suffice it to say that those who set out on the long journey from the British Isles to the valley of the Great Salt Lake began their travel in faith. They had little or no knowledge of what they were getting into. But they moved forward. They began their journey with great expectation. That expectation gradually failed them as they moved west. As they commenced the tedious journey following the Platte River and then up the valley of the Sweetwater, the cold hand of death took its fearsome toll. Their food was rationed; their oxen died; their carts broke down; they had inadequate bedding and clothing. Storms raged. They sought shelter, but they found none. The storms

beat about them. They literally starved to death. Scores died and were buried in the frozen ground.

### **“Go and bring in those people”**

Fortunately, they were passed by Franklin D. Richards on his way from England. He had a lightweight conveyance with horses and was able to travel much faster. He came on to this valley. It was this very season of the year. The general conference was in session. When Brigham Young received the news, he immediately stood before the congregation and said:

“I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak to-day and during the conference, it is this, on the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, and probably many are now 700 miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the plains, and the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before the winter sets in. . . .

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day, I shall not wait until to-morrow, nor until [the] next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen, I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them; also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, . . . 60 or 65 good spans of mules, or horses, with harness. . . .

“I will tell you all,” said he, “that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, or

temporal duties, otherwise your faith will be in vain; the preaching you have heard will be in vain to you, and you will sink to hell, unless you attend to the things we tell you" (*Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252).

Immediately horses and mules and strong wagons were offered. Flour in abundance was forthcoming. Warm clothing and bedding were quickly assembled. Within a day or two the loaded wagons were moving eastward through the snow.

When the rescuers reached the beleaguered Saints, they were like angels from heaven. People wept tears of gratitude. The handcart people were transferred into wagons so they could travel more quickly to the Salt Lake community.

Some two hundred died, but a thousand were saved.

### **Mary Penfold Goble among the victims**

Among those who were in dire circumstances on the plains was my wife's great-grandmother. She was part of the Hunt wagon company.

Today, my wife's gravesite in the Salt Lake City Cemetery looks down at the gravesite of her great-grandmother, Mary Penfold Goble, who died in the arms of her daughter as she was entering this valley on December 11, 1856. She was buried the next day. She had lost three of her children on that long journey. The feet of a surviving daughter were terribly frozen.

What a story it is. It is filled with suffering and hunger and cold and death. It is replete with accounts of freezing rivers that had to be waded through; of howling blizzards; of the long, slow climb up Rocky Ridge. With the passing of this anniversary year, it may become largely forgotten. But hopefully it will be told again and again to remind future generations of the suffering and the faith of those who came before. Their faith is our inheritance. Their faith is a reminder to us of the price they paid for the comforts we enjoy.

### **The faith of a widow**

But faith is not demonstrated only in big heroic events, such as the coming of the handcart pioneers. It is also demonstrated in small but significant events. Let me tell you of one such event.

When the Manti Utah Temple was under construction some 120 years ago, George Paxman worked as a finish carpenter. He and his young wife, Martha, had one child and were expecting another.

While hanging one of the heavy east doors of the temple, George suffered a strangulated hernia. He was in terrible pain. Martha laid him in a wagon and took him to the town of Nephi, where she put him on the train and took him to Provo. There he died. Spurning marriage, she remained a widow for 62 years, supporting herself with needlework.

Now permit me to diverge from this narrative to say that when I was engaged to marry my wife, I gave her a ring. When we were married, I gave her a wedding band. She wore them for years. Then one day I noticed that she had taken them off and was wearing this little gold wedding band. It had belonged to her grandmother. The ring had been given her by her husband, George. The ring was the only thing he left in this life. One day in the spring, Martha was housecleaning. She brought all of the furnishings out to give the house a thorough cleaning. Upon shaking the straw from the mattress, she looked down, and the ring was gone. She looked everywhere most carefully. It was the only physical remembrance of her beloved husband. She raked through the straw with her fingers but could not find the ring. Tears fell from her eyes. She went to her knees and prayed that the Lord would help her to find the ring. When she opened her eyes, she looked down and there it was.

Now I hold it in my hand. It is too small for all of you to see. It is 18-karat gold, old and scarred and bent. But it represents faith, the faith of a widow who

pleaded with the Lord in her extremity. Such faith is the wellspring of activity. It is the root of hope and trust. It is this simple faith that all of us so much need.

### **The need for increased faith**

In the on-working of this great cause, increased faith is what we most need. Without it, the work would stagnate. With it, no one can stop its progress.

Said the Savior, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).

To his son Helaman, Alma declared, “Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; teach them to

humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Alma 37:33).

May the Lord bless us with faith in the great cause of which we are a part. May faith be as a candle to guide us in the night by its light. May it go before us as a cloud in the day.

For this I humbly pray, in the sacred and holy name of Him who is the strength of our faith, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Come, Ye Thankful People.”

Elder W. Douglas Shumway offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” Then President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by A. Roger Merrill, general president of the

Sunday School, and Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.”

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### **An ensign to the nations**

On July 26, 1847, their third day in the valley (the second having been the Sabbath), Brigham Young, with members of the Twelve and some others, climbed a peak about one and a half miles from where I now stand. They thought it a good place to raise an ensign to the nations. Heber C. Kimball wore a yellow bandana. They tied it to Willard Richards’s walking stick and waved it aloft, an ensign to the nations. Brigham Young named it Ensign Peak.<sup>1</sup>

Then they descended to their worn-out wagons, to the few things they had carried 2,000 miles, and to their travel-weary followers. It was not what they possessed that gave them strength but what they knew.

They knew they were Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. They knew that the priesthood had been delivered to them by angelic messengers. They knew they had the commandments and the covenants to offer opportunity for the eternal salvation and exaltation for all mankind. They were sure that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost attended them.

They busied themselves plowing up gardens, putting up shelters against the winter soon to come. They prepared for others already on the prairie following them to this new gathering place.

A revelation, written nine years earlier, directed them to “arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

“And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may

be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:5–6).

They were to be the “light,” the “standard.”

### **Living by the standards**

The standard, established by revelation, is contained in the scriptures through the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The principles of the gospel life we follow are based on doctrine, and the standards accord with the principles. We are bound to the standards by covenant, as administered through the ordinances of the gospel by those who have received priesthood and the keys of authority.

Those faithful Brethren were not free, and we are not free, to alter the standards or to ignore them. We must live by them.

It is not a cure or a comfort to simply say they do not matter. We all know they do matter, for all mankind is “instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil” (2 Nephi 2:5).

If we are doing the best we can, we should not become discouraged. When we fall short, as we do, or stumble, which we might, there is always the remedy of repentance and forgiveness.

We are to teach our children the moral standard to avoid every kind of immorality. The precious powers within their mortal bodies “are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”<sup>2</sup> We must be completely faithful in marriage.

We are to keep the law of tithing. We attend to our responsibilities in the Church. We gather each week for sacrament meeting to renew the covenants and earn the promises in those simple and sacred prayers over the bread and water. We are to honor the priesthood and be obedient to the covenants and ordinances.

### **Stakes of Zion**

Those Brethren on Ensign Peak knew that they were to live ordinary lives and keep the image of Christ engraven in their countenances (see Alma 5:14).

They understood that the stakes were to be a defense and a refuge, but at that time there was not one stake on the earth. They knew their mission was to establish stakes of Zion in every nation of the earth.

Perhaps they wondered what kind of wrath or storm could be poured out that they had not already experienced. They had endured savage opposition, violence, terrorism. Their homes had been burned, their property taken. They were driven from their homes time after time after time. They knew then, as we know now, that there would be no end to opposition. The nature of it changes, but it never ends. There would be no end to the kinds of challenges that the early Saints would face. New challenges would be different than, but certainly not less than, that through which they had made their way.

Now the stakes of Zion number in the thousands and are all over the world. The members number in the millions and growing. Neither of these can be held back, for this is the work of the Lord. Now members live in 160 nations and speak over 200 languages.

Some live with an unspoken fear of what awaits us and the Church in the world. It grows ever darker in morality and spirituality. If we will gather into the Church, live the simple principles of the gospel, live moral lives, keep the Word of

Wisdom, tend to our priesthood and other duties, then we need not live in fear. The Word of Wisdom is a key to both physical health and revelation. Avoid tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco, and narcotics.

We can live where we wish, doing the best we can to make a living, whether modest or generous. We are free to do as we wish with our lives, assured of the approval and even the intervention of the Almighty, confident of constant spiritual guidance.

Each stake is a defense and a refuge and a standard. A stake is self-contained with all that is needed for the salvation and exaltation of those who would come within its influence, and temples are ever closer.

### **No end to opposition**

There has been no end to opposition. There are misinterpretations and misrepresentations of us and of our history, some of it mean-spirited and certainly contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Sometimes clergy, even ministerial organizations, oppose us. They do what we would never do. We do not attack or criticize or oppose others as they do us.

Even today there are those preposterous stories handed down and repeated so many times they are believed. One of the silliest of them is that Mormons have horns.

Years ago, I was at a symposium at a college in Oregon. Present were a Catholic bishop, a rabbi, an Episcopalian minister, an Evangelical minister, a Unitarian clergyman, and myself.

The president of the school, Dr. Bennett, hosted a breakfast. One of them asked which wife I had brought. I told them I had a choice of one. For a second, I thought that I was being singled out for embarrassment. Then someone asked the Catholic bishop if he had brought his wife.

The next question came from Dr. Bennett to me: "Is it true that Mormons have horns?"

I smiled and said, "I comb my hair so that they can't be seen."

Dr. Bennett, who was completely bald, put both hands on the top of his head and said, "Oh! You can never make a Mormon out of me!"

Strangest of all, otherwise intelligent people claim we are not Christian. This shows that they know little or nothing about us. It is a true principle that you cannot lift yourself by putting others down.

### **The Church is our defense and refuge**

Some suppose that our high standards will repel growth. It is just the opposite. High standards are a magnet. We are all children of God, drawn to the truth and to good.

We face the challenge of raising families in the world in darkening clouds of wickedness. Some of our members are unsettled, and sometimes they wonder: Is there any place one can go to escape from it all? Is there another town or a state or a country where it is safe, where one can find refuge? The answer generally is no. The defense and the refuge is where our members now live.

The Book of Mormon prophesies, "Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance" (3 Nephi 21:28).

Those who come out of the world into the Church, keep the commandments, honor the priesthood, and enter into activity have found the refuge.

### **We are not to be afraid**

A few weeks ago in one of our meetings, Elder Robert C. Oaks, one of the seven Presidents of the Seventy (a retired

four-star general and commander of NATO air forces in Central Europe), reminded us of an accord signed by 10 nations on board the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, which ended World War II. Some of us were in Asia at the time. Said Elder (General) Oaks: "I can't even imagine a circumstance today in which such a meeting could be held or such an accord could be signed to end the war against terrorism and wickedness in which we are engaged. It is not that kind of war."

We are not to be afraid, even in a world where the hostilities will never end. The war of opposition that was prophesied in the revelations continues today. We are to be happy and positive. We are not to be afraid. Fear is the opposite of faith.

### **Each of us is to be a standard**

We know that activity in the Church centers in the family. Wherever members are in the world, they should establish a family where children are welcome and treasured as "an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). A worthy Latter-day Saint family is a standard to the world.

Not only are we to maintain the highest of standards, but each of us is to *be* a standard, a defense, a refuge. We are to "let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16; see also 3 Nephi 12:16).

All the struggles and exertions of past generations have brought to us in our day the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the authority to administer, and the where-withal to accomplish the ministry. It all comes together in this dispensation of the fulness of times, in the which the consummation of all things will be completed and the earth prepared for the coming of the Lord.

We are as much a part of this work as were those men who untied that yellow

bandana from Willard Richards's walking stick and descended from Ensign Peak. That bandana, waved aloft, signaled the great gathering which had been prophesied in ancient and modern scriptures.

We speak of the Church as our refuge, our defense. There is safety and protection in the Church. It centers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints learn to look within themselves to see the redeeming power of the Savior of all mankind. The principles of the gospel taught in the Church and learned from the scriptures become a guide for each of us individually and for our families.

We know that the homes we establish, and those of our descendants, will be the refuge spoken of in the revelations—the “light,” the “standard,” the “ensign” for all nations, and the “refuge” against the gathering storms (see D&C 115:5–6; Isaiah 11:12; 2 Nephi 21:12).

### **Jesus Christ is our ensign**

The ensign to which all of us are to rally is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, whose Church this is and whose name we bear and whose authority we carry.

We look forward with faith. We have seen many events in our lifetime, and many will yet occur that will tax our courage and extend our faith. We are to “rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [will be our] reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12).

Willingly defend the history of the Church, and do “not [be] ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

We will face the challenges, for we cannot avoid them, and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and teach of Him as our Savior and our Refuge, our Redeemer.

If a well-worn yellow bandana was good enough to be an ensign to the world, then ordinary men who hold the priesthood and ordinary women and ordinary children in ordinary families, living the gospel as best they can all over the world, can shine forth as a standard, a defense, a refuge against whatever is to be poured out upon the earth.

“We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

This Church will prosper. It will prevail. Of this I am absolutely certain. I bear this testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 26, 1847, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:270–71.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

## **Elder David A. Bednar**

This afternoon I pray that the Holy Ghost will assist me and you as we review together important gospel principles.

### **Visits to less-active members**

One of my favorite activities as a priesthood leader is visiting members of

the Church in their homes. I especially enjoy calling upon and talking with members who commonly are described as “less active.”

During the years I served as a stake president, I often would contact one of the bishops and invite him to prayerfully identify individuals or families we could



visit together. Before traveling to a home, the bishop and I would kneel and petition our Heavenly Father for guidance and inspiration, for us and for the members with whom we would meet.

Our visits were quite straightforward. We expressed love and appreciation for the opportunity to be in their home. We affirmed that we were servants of the Lord on His errand to their home. We indicated that we missed and needed them—and that they needed the blessings of the restored gospel. And at some point early in our conversation I often would ask a question like this: “Will you please help us understand why you are not actively participating in the blessings and programs of the Church?”

### **“I was offended by . . .”**

I made hundreds and hundreds of such visits. Each individual, each family, each home, and each answer was different. Over the years, however, I detected a common theme in many of the answers to my questions. Frequently responses like these were given:

“Several years ago a man said something in Sunday School that offended me, and I have not been back since.”

“No one in this branch greeted or reached out to me. I felt like an outsider. I was hurt by the unfriendliness of this branch.”

“I did not agree with the counsel the bishop gave me. I will not step foot in that building again as long as he is serving in that position.”

Many other causes of offense were cited—from doctrinal differences among adults to taunting, teasing, and excluding by youth. But the recurring theme was, “I was offended by . . .”

The bishop and I would listen intently and sincerely. One of us might next ask about their conversion to and testimony of the restored gospel. As we talked, eyes often were moist with tears as these good

people recalled the confirming witness of the Holy Ghost and described their prior spiritual experiences. Most of the “less-active” people I have ever visited had a discernible and tender testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. However, they were not presently participating in Church activities and meetings.

And then I would say something like this: “Let me make sure I understand what has happened to you. Because someone at church offended you, you have not been blessed by the ordinance of the sacrament. You have withdrawn yourself from the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Because someone at church offended you, you have cut yourself off from priesthood ordinances and the holy temple. You have discontinued your opportunity to serve others and to learn and grow. And you are leaving barriers that will impede the spiritual progress of your children, your children’s children, and the generations that will follow.” Many times people would think for a moment and then respond, “I have never thought about it that way.”

The bishop and I would then extend an invitation: “Dear friend, we are here today to counsel you that the time to stop being offended is now. Not only do we need you, but you need the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Please come back—now.”

### **Choose not to be offended**

When we believe or say that we have been offended, we usually mean we feel insulted, mistreated, snubbed, or disrespected. And certainly clumsy, embarrassing, unprincipled, and mean-spirited things do occur in our interactions with other people that would allow us to take offense. However, it ultimately is impossible for another person to offend you or to offend me. Indeed, believing that another person offended us is fundamentally false. To be offended is a *choice* we make; it is

not a *condition* inflicted or imposed upon us by someone or something else.

In the grand division of all of God's creations, there are things to act and things to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:13–14). As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of moral agency, the capacity for independent action and choice. Endowed with agency, you and I are agents, and we primarily are to act and not just be acted upon. To believe that someone or something can *make* us feel offended, angry, hurt, or bitter diminishes our moral agency and transforms us into objects to be acted upon. As agents, however, you and I have the power to act and to choose how we will respond to an offensive or hurtful situation.

Thomas B. Marsh, the first President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation, elected to take offense over an issue as inconsequential as milk strippings (see *Deseret News*, Apr. 16, 1856, 44). Brigham Young, on the other hand, was severely and publicly rebuked by the Prophet Joseph Smith, but he chose not to take offense (see Truman G. Madsen, "Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran," *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16).

In many instances, choosing to be offended is a symptom of a much deeper and more serious spiritual malady. Thomas B. Marsh allowed himself to be acted upon, and the eventual results were apostasy and misery. Brigham Young was an agent who exercised his agency and acted in accordance with correct principles, and he became a mighty instrument in the hands of the Lord.

The Savior is the greatest example of how we should respond to potentially offensive events or situations.

"And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and

he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9).

Through the strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, you and I can be blessed to avoid and triumph over offense. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

### A latter-day learning laboratory

The capacity to conquer offense may seem beyond our reach. This capability, however, is not reserved for or restricted to prominent leaders in the Church like Brigham Young. The very nature of the Redeemer's Atonement and the purpose of the restored Church are intended to help us receive precisely this kind of spiritual strength.

Paul taught the Saints in Ephesus that the Savior established His Church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12–13).

Please note the use of the active word *perfecting*. As described by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, the Church is not "a well-provisioned rest home for the already perfected" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 38). Rather, the Church is a learning laboratory and a workshop in which we gain experience as we practice on each other in the ongoing process of "perfecting the Saints."

Elder Maxwell also insightfully explained that in this latter-day learning laboratory known as the restored Church, the members constitute the "clinical material" (see "Jesus, the Perfect Mentor," *Ensign*, Feb. 2001, 13) that is essential for growth and development. A visiting teacher learns her duty as she serves and loves her Relief

Society sisters. An inexperienced teacher learns valuable lessons as he teaches both supportive and inattentive learners and thereby becomes a more effective teacher. And a new bishop learns how to be a bishop through inspiration and by working with ward members who wholeheartedly sustain him, even while recognizing his human frailties.

Understanding that the Church is a learning laboratory helps us to prepare for an inevitable reality. In some way and at some time, someone in this Church will do or say something that could be considered offensive. Such an event will surely happen to each and every one of us—and it certainly will occur more than once. Though people may not intend to injure or offend us, they nonetheless can be inconsiderate and tactless.

You and I cannot control the intentions or behavior of other people. However, we do determine how we will act. Please remember that you and I are agents endowed with moral agency, and we can choose not to be offended.

During a perilous period of war, an exchange of letters occurred between Moroni, the captain of the Nephite armies, and Pahoran, the chief judge and governor of the land. Moroni, whose army was suffering because of inadequate support from the government, wrote to Pahoran “by the way of condemnation” (Alma 60:2) and harshly accused him of thoughtlessness, slothfulness, and neglect. Pahoran might easily have resented Moroni and his message, but he chose not to take offense. Pahoran responded compassionately and described a rebellion against the government about which Moroni was not aware. And then he responded, “Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul. . . . And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart” (Alma 61:2, 9).

One of the greatest indicators of our own spiritual maturity is revealed in how we respond to the weaknesses, the inexperience, and the potentially offensive actions of others. A thing, an event, or an expression may be offensive, but you and I can choose not to be offended—and to say with Pahoran, “It mattereth not.”

## Two invitations

I conclude my message with two invitations.

*Invitation number one.* I invite you to learn about and apply the Savior’s teachings about interactions and episodes that can be construed as offensive.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. . . .

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43–44, 46–48).

Interestingly, the admonition to “be ye therefore perfect” is immediately preceded by counsel about how we should act in response to wrongdoing and offense. Clearly, the rigorous requirements that lead to the perfecting of the Saints include assignments that test and challenge us. If a person says or does something that we consider offensive, our first obligation is to refuse to take offense and then communicate privately, honestly, and directly with that individual. Such an approach invites inspiration from the Holy Ghost and permits misperceptions to be clarified and true intent to be understood.

*Invitation number two.* Many of the individuals and families who most need to hear this message about choosing not to be offended are probably not participating with us in conference today. I suspect all of us are acquainted with members who are staying away from church because they have chosen to take offense—and who would be blessed by coming back.

Will you please prayerfully identify a person with whom you will visit and extend the invitation to once again worship with us? Perhaps you could share a copy of this talk with her or him, or you may prefer to discuss the principles we have reviewed today. And please remember that such a request should be conveyed

lovingly and in meekness—and not in a spirit of self-righteous superiority and pride.

As we respond to this invitation with faith in the Savior, I testify and promise that doors will open, our mouths will be filled, the Holy Ghost will bear witness of eternal truth, and the fire of testimony will be rekindled.

As His servant, I echo the words of the Master when He declared, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended” (John 16:1). I witness the reality and divinity of a living Savior and of His power to help us avoid and overcome offense. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## A. Roger Merrill

### Experience as a missionary

One morning when I was serving as a young missionary in Beaumont, Texas, my companion became ill and needed to rest. Following the counsel of our mission president for such situations, I pulled a chair up by the open window in our fourth-story apartment and began to read in the Book of Mormon.

Soon I became immersed in the scriptures, and after a time I came to Alma chapter 29, verses 1 and 2:

“O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

“Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.”

As I pondered on Alma’s words, they became deeply personal. My companion

and I had knocked on hundreds of doors in Beaumont, offering to share our message, but with limited success. In my mind’s eye, I began to imagine what it might be like if I were an angel and could cry repentance with a voice to shake the earth. I looked out the window at the people coming and going on the street below. I imagined what it would be like if I were standing there shining like an angel, with my hands raised, speaking with a voice of thunder. I envisioned the buildings shaking and people falling to the earth. Under the circumstances I imagined, they might have a sudden desire to listen to what I had to say!

But then I read the next verse: “But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me” (v. 3).

I was humbled to realize the Lord loves all His children and has a plan for His work. My job was to do my part.

I was also humbled to realize something else. In that moment, I *knew* that

what I was reading was not fiction—it was real. Quietly and peacefully while I was reading, I had been filled with light and with the realization that this Alma was an actual person, that he had lived, and that he too had deeply desired to share the gospel message with others.

If you had asked me in that moment, “Do you know this is true?” I would have replied, “Absolutely!” At that point, it became clear to me that I was receiving a spiritual witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

### Receiving by the Spirit

As I have reflected on that experience—and many such witnesses since—I have come to better understand how vitally important it is to *receive* by the Spirit. We often focus, appropriately, on the importance of teaching by the Spirit. But we need to remember that the Lord has placed equal, if not greater, importance on receiving by the Spirit. (See D&C 50:17–22.)

Such receiving is a foundational gospel pattern. It is set forth in the very ordinance by which we are confirmed members of the Church. In this ordinance we are instructed to “receive the Holy Ghost.” This is a formal invitation to act, to receive this great gift.

As I have become more aware of this principle, I find that the scriptures are replete with the doctrine of receiving. As President Boyd K. Packer has said, “No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways than ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21).

At the very core of our mortal probation is the choice to receive Jesus as the Christ. The Apostle John taught:

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:11–12).

One cannot help but wonder how many gifts and blessings surround us that we do not receive. The Lord has said: “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33).

In our Church meetings, in our personal and family scripture study, and even this day as we listen to the Lord’s prophets and apostles, some of us will receive more than others. Why? I am learning that those who truly receive do at least three things that others may not do.

### Seeking the Spirit

First, they *seek*. We live in an entertainment world, a spectator world. Without realizing it, we can find ourselves coming to conference or going to church with the attitude, “Here I am; now inspire me.” We become spiritually passive.

When we focus instead on seeking and receiving the Spirit, we become less concerned about a teacher or speaker holding our attention and more concerned about giving our attention to the Spirit. Remember, *receive* is a verb. It is a principle of action. It is a fundamental expression of faith.

### Feeling the Spirit

Second, those who receive, *feel*. While revelation comes to the mind and heart, it is most often felt. Until we learn to pay attention to these spiritual feelings, we usually do not even recognize the Spirit.

In a recent conversation I had with one of our daughters-in-law, she suggested that we can help even young children become aware of these feelings of the Spirit. We can ask them questions such as “How do you feel as we read this scripture together? What do you feel the Spirit is prompting you to do?” These are good

questions for us all. They demonstrate the desire to receive.

### Intending to act

Third, those who receive by the Spirit *intend to act*. As the prophet Moroni instructed, to receive a witness of the Book of Mormon, we must ask “with real intent” (Moroni 10:4). The Spirit teaches when we honestly intend to do something about what we learn.

As I have read back over my journal entry to understand and learn more from the experience I had as a missionary, I have realized that although I had read in the Book of Mormon before, what happened

in Beaumont that morning was different because I was different. As inexperienced as I was, at least on that occasion I was sincerely trying to seek and to feel, and my intent was to act in faith on what I learned. I know now that such witnesses are available to each of us on a regular basis if we will receive them.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God. Jesus is the Christ. The gospel has been restored, and we truly are in the presence of modern apostles and prophets.

I pray that this day and always we will learn to better receive, that we may truly rejoice in both the gift and “in him who is the giver of the gift.”

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Craig A. Cardon

### Moving individuals closer to God

Years ago our young family moved into a home on what was then the edge of development in our community, which afforded a view of the mountains to the east. One Monday morning, just as I finished dressing and was ready to rush out the door to work, our six-year-old son, Craig, came bringing his four-year-old brother, Andrew, into the room by the hand. With determination Craig looked up at me and said, “Dad, yesterday in Primary my teacher told us that if you hold the priesthood, you can move mountains. I told Andy this, and he doesn’t believe me. You hold the priesthood, right, Dad?” Then turning his little body and pointing out the window, he looked back at me and said, “See those mountains over there? Show him, Dad!”

What followed was a sweet experience. How grateful I was for young sons who were beginning a lifetime of learning about the priesthood.

While the Lord truly taught those to whom He had given the priesthood that

by faith mountains would move<sup>1</sup>—and there are recorded instances of such<sup>2</sup>—my hope is to bring greater understanding to that aspect of the doctrine of the priesthood which *moves individuals* closer to God, affording them the opportunity to become like Him and live eternally in His presence. This doctrine involves both the sons and the daughters of God. Accordingly, I pray that what I share will be of help to both.

### Priesthood authority and ordinances

In 1823 the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith and quoted several scriptures, including the following from Malachi: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet.”<sup>3</sup> This first recorded reference to priesthood in this dispensation anticipated a process that would unfold in the decades to come.

In 1829 John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood,<sup>4</sup> followed shortly thereafter by Peter, James, and John restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

In 1836 Moses and Elias restored the keys of the gathering of Israel and of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham,<sup>6</sup> followed then by Elijah restoring the keys of sealing. The revelation then concludes with Elijah telling the Prophet Joseph, “Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands.”<sup>7</sup>

With all priesthood authority, offices, and keys again on earth, in 1841 the Lord emphasized to the Prophet the importance of building temples, where the Lord could make available to His children priesthood ordinances by which His sons and daughters would be prepared to return to His presence.<sup>8</sup>

He declared: “Let this house be built . . . that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto *my people*;

“For I deign to reveal . . . things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times.”<sup>9</sup>

Earlier in Kirtland the Lord had taught the Prophet Joseph about the oath and covenant of the priesthood, explaining the conditions by which promised blessings are realized.<sup>10</sup> In Nauvoo, understanding grew as to the eternal scope and power of the priesthood<sup>11</sup> in blessing all His faithful children, whether in this life or the next.<sup>12</sup> While the priesthood is given to worthy sons of God, His daughters are also a part of His people to whom He reveals His priesthood ordinances. And the promised blessing of “all that [the] Father hath”<sup>13</sup> is available to both men and women who exercise faith in Jesus Christ, receive the ordinances, and endure in faith to the end. “Therefore, in the ordinances [of the Melchizedek Priesthood], the power of godliness is manifested.”<sup>14</sup>

The crowning temple ordinance is available only to a man *and* a woman when they are sealed together, forming an eternal family unit. It is by virtue of this and all other priesthood ordinances that the families of the earth shall be blessed.<sup>15</sup> This sealing ordinance is so central to the

Lord’s purposes that He has promised to the faithful who are not sealed in this life through no fault of their own this blessing in the life to come.<sup>16</sup> No other doctrine in all of religion better confirms God’s commensurate love for both His sons *and* His daughters.

### **Power to change our natures**

The priesthood also has the power to change our very natures. As Paul wrote, “All those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God.”<sup>17</sup> This likeness is not only in ordination and ordinance but also in the perfecting of individual hearts, something that occurs “in process of time”<sup>18</sup> as we “[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man.”<sup>19</sup> When a man is ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, he enters into an “order”<sup>20</sup> by which he may be refined through service to others, especially his own family, and blessed by the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.<sup>21</sup>

The Lord instructed all of us when He taught that for priesthood bearers, unrighteousness brings an end to heavenly power or influence, while righteousness strengthens them. He identified qualities that “greatly enlarge the soul” as “persuasion, . . . long-suffering, . . . gentleness[,] . . . meekness, . . . love unfeigned[,] . . . kindness, and pure knowledge.”<sup>22</sup> He then added these instructive words: “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.”<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that after inviting us to have charity toward “all men,” the Lord added the phrase “and to the household of faith.” Why? Doesn’t “all men” include the household of faith? Consider the implications when this added phrase is un-

derstood to mean more specifically “your very own household of faith.” Unfortunately, there are a few within the Church who exhibit greater charity toward non-family members than toward their own spouses and children, siblings and parents. They may show feigned kindness publicly while privately sowing and cultivating seeds of contention, demeaning those who should be closest to them. These things should not be.

The Lord then spoke of thoughts that are garnished—embellished and guarded—by virtue unceasingly. Such thoughts abhor sin.<sup>24</sup> They allow our communications to be “Yea, yea; Nay, nay,”<sup>25</sup> unencumbered by guile. They see the good and the potential in others, undeterred by the inevitable imperfections in others.

### As the dew from heaven

The verse concludes with a beautifully instructive reference to a distilling process. To better understand the application of these principles in the refinement of our personal lives, consider two glasses of water, each with the same outward appearance, placed in a room with high humidity. After a period of time, water begins to condense on one of the glasses because it is at a different temperature, occasioned by prior preparation not obvious initially, while the other glass remains dry and unaffected. Without compulsory means, the humidity is able to “flow unto”<sup>26</sup> the one glass, while the other receives nothing. In a similar way, qualities that greatly enlarge the soul; charity toward others, especially our families; and thoughts garnished with virtue adjust our spiritual temperatures to allow the doctrine of the priesthood to distill upon our souls.

So it is that the priesthood, through the workings of the Spirit, moves individuals closer to God through ordination, ordinances, and refinement of individual natures, thus affording God’s children the opportunity to become like Him and live

eternally in His presence—a work more glorious than moving mountains.<sup>27</sup>

I conclude by joining my prayer with that of Thomas Kelly, in words edited by Parley P. Pratt:

As the dew from heav’n distilling  
Gently on the grass descends  
And revives it, thus fulfilling  
What thy providence intends,  
Let thy doctrine, Lord, so gracious,  
Thus descending from above,  
Blest by thee, prove efficacious  
To fulfill thy work of love.<sup>28</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Matthew 17:20.
2. See Ether 12:30; Moses 7:13; see also Jacob 4:6; Helaman 10:9.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:38.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 13.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:9; 27:12.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–12.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
8. As evidenced by the Prophet Joseph Smith’s instructions in the upper room of his store in Nauvoo, the Lord restored temple ordinances to the earth prior to revealing them or making them available to His people in the Nauvoo Temple, as He continues to do today in all His temples, accompanied by personal revelation and inspiration (see *History of the Church*, 5:1–2).
9. Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41; italics added; see also vv. 31–32, 34, 39.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–42.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:8–9.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9; see also *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 86.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
15. See Abraham 2:11.
16. “The prophets have stated clearly that no blessing will be withheld from any of God’s sons or daughters if they love Him, have faith in Him, keep His commandments, and endure faithfully to the end” (M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling*



with *Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family* [1997], 55). "All who qualify for [temple sealing and eternal family] blessings will, in the Lord's due time, have them here or in the next life" (Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 69).

17. Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3; see also Moses 1:6.
18. Moses 7:21.
19. Mosiah 3:19.
20. Alma 13:2, 16; Doctrine and Covenants 107:3.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; 121:46.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
24. See Alma 13:12.
25. Matthew 5:37.

26. Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.

27. See Moses 1:39.

28. "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling," *Hymns*, no. 149.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Then Elders Don R. Clarke, Keith R. Edwards, and Larry W. Gibbons of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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## Elder Don R. Clarke

### Help for a blind farmer

My maternal grandfather, Alma Benjamin Larsen, was only 34 years old when he woke up one morning and noticed that he had problems seeing. Shortly thereafter, he lost his sight entirely. Grandfather had served a mission and been a faithful member of the Church. He was a farmer with a wife and three children, and he could not imagine life without sight. Grandfather's wife and small children now had to bear the extra burdens of helping on the farm, and money became tight.

During this time of physical darkness, many people became instruments in God's hands to help my blind grandfather. One experience that had a powerful impact on his family happened in 1919. It was a year of great financial difficulty for all the people in Grandfather's town. Farms were being foreclosed, and businesses were going broke. There was a sizable mortgage on his farm, and Grandfather received a statement saying he would have to pay

\$195 in order to carry the mortgage over for another year. For him, paying this bill was like demanding a pound of flesh. Nearly everyone was in the same condition, and it seemed impossible to obtain that much money. If he had gathered everything that the farm produced—the horses, cows, and machinery—he could not have sold them for \$195. Grandfather asked a neighbor to butcher two or three of his cows, and he sold them and some other products. He had extended credit to his neighbors with the understanding that they would pay at the end of the year, but none of his debtors was able to pay him. The economic situation for his family was bleak.

In his journal, Grandfather recounts: "I shall never forget that cold evening, just before Christmas of 1919. It looked as though we would lose the farm. My daughter, Gladys, laid a slip of paper in my hand and said, 'This came in the mail today.' I took it to her mother and asked her what it was. This is what my wife read to me,

'Dear Brother Larsen, I've had you on my mind all day today. I am wondering if you are in financial trouble. If you are, I have \$200 you may have.' The letter was signed 'Jim Drinkwater.' Jim was a small, crippled man, and he would have been the last man on earth that anyone would have thought had that much money on hand. I went to his house that night and he said, 'Brother Larsen, I received a wireless message from heaven this morning, and I could not get you off my mind all day. I was sure you were in financial trouble.' Brother Drinkwater gave me \$200 and we sent the \$195 to the mortgage company, and with the extra \$5 we bought boots and clothes for the children. Santa Claus did come that year."

My grandfather then goes on to bear his testimony: "The Lord has never let me down. He has touched the hearts of others as He touched the heart of Brother Drinkwater. I bear witness that the only safety and security that I have ever found has come through trying to keep the commandments of the Lord and upholding and sustaining the authorities of this Church."

### **Becoming instruments in God's hands**

I have thought about Jim Drinkwater many times and wondered how he came to be one that the Lord could trust. Jim was a little, crippled man that God trusted to help a blind farmer with a heavy mortgage and three children. I have learned a great deal from my grandfather's experience with Jim Drinkwater. I have learned that a person does not need to have a Church calling, an invitation to help someone, or even good health to become an instrument in God's hands. How then do you and I become instruments in God's hands? The prophets and the scriptures teach us how.

### *Have love for God's children*

First of all, we must have love for God's children. When the lawyer asked

the Savior, "Master, which is the great commandment?" the Savior replied:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:36–39).

Joseph F. Smith said: "Charity, or love, is the greatest principle in existence. If we can lend a helping hand to the oppressed, if we can aid those who are despondent and in sorrow, if we can uplift and ameliorate the condition of mankind, it is our mission to do it, it is an essential part of our religion to do it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1917, 4). When we feel love for God's children, we are given opportunities to help them in their journey back to His presence.

### *Be willing to do what is uncomfortable*

The missionary experiences of the sons of Mosiah also help us understand how to become instruments in God's hands. "And it came to pass that they journeyed many days in the wilderness" (Alma 17:9). We must be willing to journey. The sons of Mosiah were willing to step outside their surroundings and do that which was uncomfortable. Had Ammon not been willing to journey into a foreign land, inhabited by a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people, he never would have found and helped Lamoni and his father, and many Lamanites may have never learned about Jesus Christ. God has asked us to journey, go on missions, accept callings, invite someone to church, or help someone in need.

### *Fast and pray*

In their pursuit to help their Lamanite brothers, the sons of Mosiah also learned the importance of fasting and prayer: "They fasted much and prayed much that

the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth" (Alma 17:9). Do we really want to be instruments in God's hands? If so, our desire will permeate our prayers and be the focus of our fasts.

After losing his eyesight, my grandfather fasted and prayed that if he was to remain in darkness, the Lord would give him peace. He states that almost within the hour "my mind was enlightened and the cloud of darkness had lifted from me." He could see again, not with physical eyes, but spiritual eyes. Later, Alma Benjamin Larsen was called to be a patriarch, where he served for 32 years. Like the sons of Mosiah, my grandfather fasted and prayed, and as a result, he was given the opportunity to bless thousands of God's children.

### *Be receptive to promptings*

We, like Jim Drinkwater and my grandfather, also need to be receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, for when we desire to be an instrument in the hands of God, we can receive revelation. The prophet Alma the Younger tells us of revelations that he received: "I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. . . . Yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to re-

pentance; and this is my joy" (Alma 29:9). Alma had received revelation of what to do.

I have a little book that I carry with me, where I record the inspiration and thoughts that I receive from the Spirit. It does not look like much, and it becomes worn out and needs to be replaced from time to time. As thoughts come to my mind, I write them down and then I try to do them. I have found that many times, as I have done something on my list, my action was the answer to someone's prayer. There have also been those times that I didn't do something on my list, and I have found out later that there was someone I could have helped, but I didn't. When we receive promptings regarding God's children, if we write down the thoughts and inspiration we receive and then obey it, God's confidence in us increases and we are given more opportunities to be instruments in His hands.

In the words of President Faust: "You can be powerful instruments in the hands of God to help bring about this great work. . . . You can do something for another person that no one else ever born can do" ("Instruments in the Hands of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 115). God treasures those who help His children. I invite all of us to follow the counsel of the prophets and become instruments in the hands of God and be among His treasures because we have helped His children.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Keith R. Edwards

### **Approach suffering with focus on Christ**

The Choir has sung "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."<sup>1</sup> In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, speaking messianically, prophesies:

"And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of

naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men."<sup>2</sup>

The great and exquisite suffering of the Savior was for us, to keep us from hav-

ing to suffer as He suffered.<sup>3</sup> However, suffering is a part of life, and few will escape its grasp. Since it is something that each of us has gone through, is going through, or will go through, there is scriptural suggestion that we can learn spiritual lessons if we can approach suffering, sorrow, or grief with a focus on Christ. Anciently Paul wrote that our suffering may give us an opportunity to know the Savior better. Paul wrote to the Romans:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Experience with injured son**

Now, lest anyone go looking for hardship and suffering, that is not what is taught. Rather, it is the attitude with which we approach our hardships and trials that allows us to know the Savior better. Experience teaches us that suffering is one of life’s experiences that will come without seeking it. If I may use a personal example:

Some years ago when our first son was about a year old, I was the source of some seemingly unnecessary suffering. We were attending college, and one evening I had been playing with my boy on the floor. I left the room to study, and as I closed the door behind me he apparently reached for me, raising his hand up behind his head, and his finger went into the hinged side of the door. When I closed the door he suffered a rather severe injury to his finger.

We rushed him to the emergency room at the hospital, he was given a local anesthetic, and a doctor came in; he assured us that it could be repaired. Almost paradoxically, at that point the only thing my one-year-old wanted was to be held by his dad. As long as he could see me he resisted any efforts to bind him for the delicate surgery. When I left the room he

calmed down, and the doctor was able to proceed.

During the process I was anxious and would draw close to the open door and look around the corner to see how things were proceeding. Perhaps by some unseen sense, as I would peek noiselessly around the corner, which was located behind him and to the side, his head would come up and he would strain to see if I was there.

On one of those occasions, as I saw him with his arm pinned out from his side—his head arched, searching for his father—the thought came to my mind of another Son, His arms stretched out, nailed to a cross, searching for His Father, and to my mind came the words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”<sup>5</sup> What was a very traumatic moment in my life suddenly became very sacred.

### **Examples of those willing to endure**

There is throughout the scriptures a line of men and women who always seemed to keep their focus on Christ—people who, no matter what injury or injustice life dealt them, remained faithful and willing to endure. I speak of Abraham, dispossessed of the land of his inheritance and commanded to sacrifice Isaac; of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers, imprisoned for honoring virtue and chastity, and left to linger in jail because of a thoughtless servant; of Ruth, widowed young and left destitute, yet constant and loyal to her mother-in-law; of all three Nephis, both Almas, and of course the Prophet Joseph.

Particularly notable to me is Nephi’s endurance. Continually receiving the wrath of his brothers, he was bound for four days on the boat coming to the promised land. He could not move, and on the fourth day, when it appeared that they were about to be swallowed up by the ocean, the brothers, fearing that they might perish, “loosed the bands which were upon [his] wrists, and behold they

had swollen exceedingly; and also [his] ankles were much swollen, and great was the soreness thereof.

“Nevertheless, [he] did look unto [his] God, and [he] did praise him all the day long; and [he] did not murmur.”<sup>6</sup>

Remember, though, that it was Nephi who recorded: “They scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it.”<sup>7</sup> Nephi understood.

Although the purpose of the suffering is not always apparent at the time, the Prophet Joseph had a singularly spiritual experience as he lingered in Liberty Jail. The Lord comforted him:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”<sup>8</sup>

“Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

“The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”<sup>9</sup>

### **Appreciation for the Savior’s suffering**

As we are called upon to endure suffering, sometimes inflicted upon us intentionally or negligently, we are put in a unique position—if we choose, we may be allowed to have new awareness of the suffering of the Son of God. While Alma tells us that Christ suffered all that any of us will ever have to suffer that He might know how to succor us,<sup>10</sup> the reverse may also be true: that our suffering may allow us insight into the depth and magnitude of His atoning sacrifice.

As I have pondered that event with my own son so many years ago, it has provided new insights and perhaps even deeper understanding of the magnitude and magnificence of the Atonement. I have a deeper appreciation of what a Father was willing to allow His Son to go

through for me and for each of us. I had a new personal insight into the depth and breadth of the Atonement. I could not imagine that I would willingly have let my son suffer even in this small way; and our Father “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>11</sup>

Although we have never discussed it, my son, too, would have the opportunity to appreciate the passage where the Savior explains, “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”<sup>12</sup>

Although I would not suggest that anything here can approach the holy Atonement, the scar on my son’s hand is continually before him, and he has the opportunity, if he chooses to take it, to use his scar as a reminder of scars in the palms of the Savior—suffered for our sins. He has the opportunity to understand in his own way the love the Savior has for us in willingly being scarred, bruised, broken, and torn for us.

Although suffering may provide insight, we must be careful not to compare but rather to appreciate. There will always be infinite differences between us and our Savior. His comment to Pilate, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee,”<sup>13</sup> reminds us again of the willing and voluntary nature of His sacrifice. We can never endure the depth, the exquisite nature, or the magnitude of His suffering, “which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”<sup>14</sup> But like Nephi, we can have a greater appreciation for that which He did, and we can feel His Spirit succoring us, and we can know the Savior in a very real sense, “and this is life eternal, that [we] might know” Him.<sup>15</sup>

I bear testimony that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that through His suffering and Atonement we can receive a remission of our sins and can gain eternal

life. I bear witness of His gentle and loving kindness. He is the Only Begotten of the Father and in all things did the will of His Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 141.
2. 1 Nephi 19:9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.
4. Romans 8:16–17.

5. Matthew 27:46.
6. 1 Nephi 18:15–16.
7. 1 Nephi 19:9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–8.
10. See Alma 7:11–12.
11. John 3:16.
12. Isaiah 49:16.
13. John 19:11.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
15. John 17:3.

## Elder Larry W. Gibbons

### Belief in God as our Creator

As someone trained in medicine, understanding the complexity and the order and the harmony of the human body reinforces my faith in a Creator. I believe in God. I believe He created us.

The alternative to a belief in a Creator is to believe that life arose somehow spontaneously by accident. I do not believe that.

And if God created us, it is not logical that He would then leave us alone. It makes sense He would give us guidance. Some of this guidance has come in the form of what we call commandments.

### Commandments are guideposts

Commandments are not given to burden or restrict us. Rather, they are guideposts from an all-wise Heavenly Father to keep us out of trouble, to bring us a fullness of happiness in this life, and to bring us safely back home to Him.

In a talk at Brigham Young University in 1994, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner said:

“I’m a traditional Jew, and I observe the biblical dietary laws. . . . I suspect most of you assume I go around all day saying to myself, ‘Boy, would I love to eat pork chops, but that mean old God won’t let me.’ Not so. The fact . . . is, I go around all

day saying, ‘Isn’t it incredible? There are five billion people on this planet and God cares what I have for lunch [and] what kind of language I use.’

“ . . . I am not diminished by being told there are certain things I may not do because they are wrong. Rather, it enhances me.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder Henry B. Eyring said it even better in the first worldwide leadership training broadcast: “The Lord has given us His standards of worthiness. He has not done it to keep us away from Him but to draw us to Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Brothers and sisters, keeping the commandments makes all the difference in this life and in the next. To be worthy of the celestial kingdom and the joy that is there, we must keep the commandments!

The only standard that makes sense for any of us is a celestial standard. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.”<sup>3</sup> It’s that simple! But we do not have to wait to experience celestial joy. Living the commandments brings joy here and now.

### Leaving the world behind

My fear is that too many of us are not fully committed to living all the commandments. These Saints are not willing

to leave the world completely behind. They are holding back.

In the priesthood leadership session of a regional conference, we sang the hymn “Ye Elders of Israel.” The chorus contains a line “O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell.”<sup>4</sup> Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke and expressed the thought that bidding Babylon farewell is actually one of our challenges, that too many of us like to keep a summer cottage there.<sup>5</sup>

We cannot keep one foot in the Church and one foot in the world. One reason is the world and the Church are rapidly diverging. We will lose our balance.

We know that “no man can serve two masters.”<sup>6</sup> Some, I fear, are attempting to do what President Marion G. Romney described as trying to “serve the Lord without offending the devil.”<sup>7</sup>

The Savior taught: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”<sup>8</sup>

How do we lose our savor? One way is when we stop being different from the world. Many in the Church are drifting in the direction of the world and looking and becoming more and more like the world. We must stop drifting.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: “As Latter-day Saints, we need not look like the world. We need not entertain like the world. Our personal habits should be different. Our recreation should be different.”<sup>9</sup>

In this day of moral relativism we must be prepared to take a stand and say, “This is right, and this is wrong.” We cannot follow the crowd! Now, I am not suggesting, of course, that we move to the wilderness and lock our doors. We can be in the world, go to school, go to work, join worthwhile community organizations, and so forth. But we must hold to the Lord’s standards.

## **Being “altogether” Latter-day Saints**

I have a dear friend who is a respected physician. He writes a regular national article on health. Often his subject concerns nutrition. He has a problem. He loves doughnuts—delicious but not usually considered one of the world’s most nutritious foods.

To resolve this dilemma, he has come up with what he calls his 80:20 theory of nutrition. This theory says if you are very good 80 percent of the time, you can eat what you want the other 20 percent of the time.

Now, this may be all right in nutrition, but the 80:20 principle is not acceptable in such things as gambling, pornography, or honesty. Brothers and sisters, are we sometimes 80:20 members of the Church?

Consider the woman who keeps the Sabbath day holy, unless she needs something from the store. Or the man who is honest in all his dealings until he cannot resist the urge to exaggerate his tax deductions because it saves him over \$1,000. Or the father who is kind and gentle with his wife and children except when he has had a difficult day at the office.

Brothers and sisters, let’s sell that summer cottage in Babylon. Let us be not “almost” but “altogether” Latter-day Saints.

In Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28, the Lord says: “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.” I love that phrase “settle this.” Brothers and sisters, I pray that we are “settled.” There are precious blessings that come only from the complete yielding of one’s heart to God.

## **Safety in keeping the commandments**

President Heber J. Grant said: “There is but one path of safety to the Latter-day Saints, and that is the path of duty. It is not a testimony, it is not marvelous manifestations, it is not knowing that the Gospel of

Jesus Christ is true, . . . it is not actually knowing that the Savior is the Redeemer, and that Joseph Smith was His prophet, that will save you and me, but it is the keeping of the commandments of God, the living the life of a Latter-day Saint.”<sup>10</sup>

Now, young men and young women, as you begin to set your priorities in life, remember, the only true security in life is living the commandments. Financial security and public position are hollow without righteousness. I promise you that.

You lived with your Heavenly Father in a premortal life. You were there with Him. Your spirit knows what it is like to live in celestial realms. You can never be truly happy in an uncelestial environment. *You know too much.* That is one of the reasons that for you, wickedness never can be happiness.<sup>11</sup> What a great thing it is to decide once and for all early in life what you will do and what you will not do with regards to honesty, modesty, chastity, the Word of Wisdom, and temple marriage.

Brothers and sisters, stay on the straight and narrow path. No, stay in the *middle* of the straight and narrow path. Don't drift; don't wander; don't dabble; be careful.

Remember, do not flirt with evil. Stay out of the devil's territory. Do not give Satan any home-field advantage. Living the commandments will bring you the happi-

ness that too many look for in other places.

As Elder Nelson taught this morning, this *is* the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This *is* His Church. The Restoration *did* occur! There is no reason to hold back.

I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today. I am grateful to stand with him and thank him for his teaching, his leadership, and his wonderful example of strength. I know that God lives and is our Father. I testify that Jesus is the Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. "The Human Soul's Quest for God," *Brigham Young Magazine*, Feb. 1995, 26.
2. "Standards of Worthiness," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 13.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 88:22.
4. *Hymns*, no. 319.
5. See *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (1997), 25.
6. Matthew 6:24.
7. "The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6.
8. Matthew 5:13.
9. "Gifts of the Spirit," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 17.
10. "The President Speaks," *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1936, 659.
11. See Alma 41:10.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Carolyn Rasmus's conversion

Not long after our friend Carolyn Rasmus joined the faculty of Brigham Young University, a group of her new teaching colleagues invited her to join them on a Saturday hike in the mountains above Provo. Carolyn was not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but she had felt particularly wel-

come in her new circle of associates. She eagerly joined them for the climb.

As the sun steadily rose, so did the hikers on the mountainside. Then, as the ten o'clock hour approached, the group began to find places to sit down. Carolyn thought, "This is wonderful. How did they know I needed the rest?" and she, too, looked for a comfortable spot to stretch out. But the participants seemed unusu-



ally earnest about this particular break, some pulling out pencils and notebooks while one intently dialed a transistor radio.

What then happened would be a turning point in her life forever. One of her friends said, “Carolyn, we need to explain something. This is the first Saturday in October, and for us that means not only lovely weather and bright fall foliage, but it also means a general conference of the Church. As Latter-day Saints, wherever we are or whatever we are doing, we stop and listen. So we are going to sit here among the oak and the pines, look out over the valley below, and listen to the prophets of God for a couple of hours.”

“A couple of hours!” thought Carolyn. “I didn’t know there were prophets of God still living,” she said, “and I certainly didn’t know there were two hours’ worth!” Little did she know that they were going to stop again at two o’clock that afternoon for another two hours and then invite her to tune in at home for four more the next day.

Well, the rest is history. With the gift of a leather-bound copy of the scriptures from her students, the love of friends and families in the LDS ward she began to attend, and spiritual experiences we want all who make their way into the light of the gospel to have, Carolyn was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. With her introduction to general conference that day sitting high atop Y Mountain, Sister Rasmus had seen her own personal fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophetic invitation: “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Importance of general conference**

We are coming to the close of another marvelous general conference. We

have been blessed to hear messages from our leaders, including and especially President Gordon B. Hinckley, the man we sustain as God’s oracle on earth, our living prophet, seer, and revelator. As prophets have done in dispensations from Adam down to the present day, President Hinckley has figuratively gathered us in a kind of global equivalent of the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, has loved us and taught us and bestowed upon us his blessing.<sup>2</sup>

I think it is safe to say that the prayer all the brethren and sisters have had as they have spoken this weekend is that general conference will have been as uplifting—and if needful, as life-changing—for each of us as it was for Sister Rasmus and countless thousands of others who semiannually respond to our LDS hymn, “Come, listen to a prophet’s voice, and hear the word of God.”<sup>3</sup>

In my own expression of testimony and gratitude for the messages and meaning of general conference, may I suggest three things these twice-yearly gatherings declare to all the world.

### **A living prophet on the earth**

First, they declare eagerly and unequivocally that there is again a living prophet on the earth speaking in the name of the Lord. And how we need such guidance! Our times are turbulent and difficult. We see wars internationally and distress domestically. Neighbors all around us face personal heartaches and family sorrows. Legions know fear and troubles of a hundred kinds. This reminds us that when those mists of darkness enveloped the travelers in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, it enveloped *all* of the participants—the righteous as well as the unrighteous, the young along with the elderly, the new convert and seasoned member alike. In that allegory all face opposition and travail, and only the rod of iron—the declared word of God—can

bring them safely through. We *all* need that rod. We all need that word. No one is safe without it, for in its absence any can “[fall] away into forbidden paths and [be] lost,” as the record says.<sup>4</sup> How grateful we are to have heard God’s voice and felt the strength of that iron rod in this conference these past two days.

Not often but over the years some sources have suggested that the Brethren are out of touch in their declarations, that they don’t know the issues, that some of their policies and practices are out-of-date, not relevant to our times.

As the least of those who have been sustained by you to witness the guidance of this Church firsthand, I say with all the fervor of my soul that never in my personal or professional life have I ever associated with any group who are so *in* touch, who know so profoundly the issues facing us, who look so deeply into the old, stay so open to the new, and weigh so carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully everything in between. I testify that the grasp this body of men and women have of moral and societal issues exceeds that of any think tank or brain trust of comparable endeavor of which I know anywhere on the earth. I bear personal witness of how thoroughly good they are, of how hard they work, and how humbly they live. It is no trivial matter for this Church to declare to the world prophecy, seership, and revelation, but we do declare it. It is true light shining in a dark world, and it shines from these proceedings.

### Call to action

Secondly, each of these conferences marks a call to action not only in our own lives but also on behalf of others around us, those who are of our own family and faith and those who are not. This morning President Hinckley movingly reminded us that this is the 150th anniversary of those handcart companies that, as general conference was convening in October of 1856

here in the Salt Lake Valley, were staggering through the last freezing miles of Nebraska and were soon to be stranded in the impassable snows of the high country of Wyoming. He quoted to us President Brigham Young’s inspiring general conference message to the Saints, simply “go and bring in those people now on the plains.”<sup>5</sup>

As surely as the rescue of those in need was the general conference theme of October 1856, so too is it the theme of this conference and last conference and the one to come next spring. It may not be blizzards and frozen-earth burials that we face this conference, but the needy are still out there—the poor and the weary, the discouraged and downhearted, those “[falling] away into [the] forbidden paths” we mentioned earlier, and multitudes who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”<sup>6</sup> They are all out there with feeble knees, hands that hang down,<sup>7</sup> and bad weather setting in. They can be rescued only by those who have more and know more and can help more. And don’t worry about asking, “Where are they?” They are everywhere, on our right hand and on our left, in our neighborhoods and in the workplace, in every community and county and nation of this world. Take your team and wagon; load it with your love, your testimony, and a spiritual sack of flour; then drive in any direction. The Lord will lead you to those in need if you will but embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ that has been taught in this conference. Open your heart and your hand to those trapped in the 21st century’s equivalent of Martin’s Cove and Devil’s Gate. In doing so we honor the Master’s repeated plea on behalf of lost sheep and lost coins and lost souls.<sup>8</sup>

### Declaration that Jesus is the Christ

Lastly, a general conference of the Church is a declaration to all the world that Jesus is the Christ, that He and His

Father, the God and Father of us all, appeared to the boy prophet Joseph Smith in fulfillment of that ancient promise that the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth would again restore His Church on earth and again “come in like manner as [those Judean Saints had] seen him [ascend] into heaven.”<sup>9</sup> This conference and every other conference like it is a declaration that He condescended to come to earth in poverty and humility, to face sorrow and rejection, disappointment and death in order that we might be saved from those very fates as our eternity unfolds, that “with his stripes we are healed.”<sup>10</sup> This conference proclaims to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the loving messianic promise that “his mercy endureth for ever.”<sup>11</sup>

To all of you who think you are lost or without hope, or who think you have done too much that was too wrong for too long, to every one of you who worry that you are stranded somewhere on the wintry plains of life and have wrecked your handcart in the process, this conference calls out Jehovah’s unrelenting refrain, “[My] hand is stretched out still.”<sup>12</sup> “I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them,” He said, “[and even if they] deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, . . . if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.”<sup>13</sup> His mercy endureth forever, and His hand is stretched out still. His is the pure love of Christ, the charity that never faileth, that compassion which endures even when all other strength disappears.<sup>14</sup>

I testify of this reaching, rescuing, merciful Jesus, that this is His redeeming Church based on His redeeming love, and that, as those in the Book of Mormon declared, “there came prophets among the people, who were sent from the Lord [to speak it]. . . . [Yea,] there came prophets in the land again.”<sup>15</sup> I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley is in every way,

from head to toe, such a prophet, one whose life and voice we cherish and for whom we have prayed so much. He will now conclude this semiannual gathering. For such a blessing—and all these blessings and so many more—I give personal thanks at general conference time, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:3.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:53–56.
3. “Come, Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,” *Hymns*, no. 21.
4. 1 Nephi 8:28; see also vv. 23–24.
5. *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252; see also LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1960), 120–21.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
8. See Luke 15.
9. Acts 1:11.
10. Isaiah 53:5.
11. Psalm 136:1.
12. See Isaiah 5:25; 9:17, 21.
13. 2 Nephi 28:32.
14. See Moroni 7:46–47.
15. Ether 7:23; 9:28.

#### President Monson

It’s almost difficult to declare the conclusion of this session and this conference. But as we do conclude the conference, we express sincere appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, and the Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Brigham City, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who participated in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will now be our concluding speaker at this concluding session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### General conferences a miracle

My beloved brothers and sisters, what a miracle these conferences are. There is nothing to compare with them anywhere in the world. When you think that we gather here in this great conference hall and that what we say is carried all across the world so that people on every continent worship together the living God, it is truly and wonderfully a miracle. All who have spoken have done so very well. We wish there had been time to hear from all of the General Authorities. Unfortunately, that has not been possible. Representatives of the auxiliary organizations have inspired us with their messages.

The prayers have likewise inspired us. The music has been simply superb.

We are so grateful for this tremendous Conference Center, this great hall in which to meet, and for the technology which has permitted our words to be car-

ried over the earth to our people in many lands and climes.

We wish that there were peace in the earth and constantly pray that it may come.

Now, our beloved associates, we leave with you our love and our blessing. May the Spirit of the Lord dwell in your homes. May love govern your family relations.

For this we pray as we bid you good-bye for another six months, in the sacred and holy name of our Redeemer, and leave our love and blessing with you, in His name, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." At the end, the congregation joined the choir in singing a reprise of the first verse.

Elder Donald L. Staheli offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Brigham City, Utah, provided music for

the priesthood session. N. Geoffrey Anderson directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

### F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-seventh  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
and the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**March 31 and April 1, 2007**



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# Report of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 2007. The Saturday afternoon session was held in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, during which the newly renovated building was rededicated. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, March 31, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Merwyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang “Glory to God on High.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to the first general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow location in the Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young

Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Glory to God on High” and will now favor us with “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Elder Robert F. Orton offered the invocation.

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Hinckley has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2006. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles will then address us, and following his remarks the choir will sing “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

As I now present to you the authorities, may we all participate not only with our uplifted hand but with our pledged heart.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presi-



dency. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2007:

D. Allen Andersen, C. Elmer Black Jr., Ildefonso de Castro Deus, Oscar W. Chavez, Hector A. Dávalos, Carlos R. Fernandez, Carlos J. García, John R. Gibson, José L. Gonzalez, Paulo Grahl, Beaver T. Ho Ching, Emmanuel A. Kissi, Erich W. Kopischke, G. Steven Laney, Barry Lee, James B. McDonald, Gerald A. Mead, Jorge Mendez, Rodrigo Myrrha, Carlos A. Perez, Richard G. Peterson, Eric B. Shumway, Joseph W. Sitati, A. Kim Smith, W. Blake Sonne, Gary M. Stewart, Michael J. Teh, Robert B. White, and John W. Yardley. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Enrique R. Falabella, Erich W. Kopischke, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, and Claudio D. Zivic. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Richard K. Ahadjie, Rubén V. Alliaud, Climato C. A. Almeida, Sergio M.

Anaya, Wilford W. Andersen, Fernando J. D. Araújo, Nolan D. Archibald, Carlos L. Astorga, Hector Avila, Marvin T. Brinkerhoff, M. Anthony Burns, David Cabrera, Rafael E. Castro, Gerald J. Caussé, Robert E. Chambers, Yoon Hwan Choi, Kim B. Clark, David L. Cook, Nelson D. Cordova, Gary L. Crittenden, Stephen L. Fluckiger, Jovencio A. Guanzon, Mario E. Guerra, Luis S. Hernandez, Garith C. Hill, Frederick C. Ihesiene, David H. Ingram, Tetsuji Ishii, Kapumba T. Kola, Richard K. Melchin, R. Bruce Merrell, Peter F. Meurs, Benson E. Misalucha, Enrique J. Montoya, K. Brett Nattress, Russell T. Osguthorpe, Gamaliel Osorno, Patrick H. Price, Paulo R. Puerta, Rubén L. Spitale, Natã C. Tobias, Frank V. Trythall, Terence M. Vinson, Taniela B. Wakolo, Richard W. Wheeler, and Scott D. Whiting. All in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Bonnie Rae Dansie Parkin, Kathleen Hurst Hughes, and Anne Clark Pingree as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society general board. It is also proposed that we release Julie Bangerter Beck and Elaine Schwartz Dalton as counselors in the Young Women general presidency. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Julie Bangerter Beck as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Silvia Henriquez Allred as first counselor and Barbara Thompson as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elaine Schwartz Dalton as the first counselor in the Young Women general presidency and Mary Nielsen Cook as the second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative, President

Hinckley. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called General Authorities, Relief Society general presidency, and counselors in the Young Women general presidency to take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2006

### Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. After receiving the council's authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expendi-

tures, and safeguarding of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2006 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2006

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2006:

#### Number of Church units

Stakes . . . . . 2,745  
Missions . . . . . 344

Districts . . . . . 630  
Wards and branches . . . . . 27,475

#### Church membership

Total membership . . . . . 12,868,606  
Increase in children of record  
during 2006 . . . . . 94,006  
Converts baptized during 2006 . . 272,845

**Missionaries**

Full-time missionaries . . . . . 53,164

**Temples**

Temples dedicated during 2006 . . . . . 2  
(Sacramento California and Helsinki  
Finland)

Temples rededicated during 2006 . . . . . 2  
(Santiago Chile and Papeete Tahiti)

Temples in operation . . . . . 124

**Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April**

*Elder Devere Harris*, former member of the Seventy; *Elder Spencer H. Osborn*, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Elisa Young Rogers Wirthlin*, wife of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Norma Berntson Ashton*, widow of Elder Marvin J. Ashton, former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Dorothy Porter Holt*, former counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

**Elder Richard G. Scott**

This conference began with a profoundly moving presentation of the classic hymn “Sweet Hour of Prayer” by the magnificent Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The familiar lyrics remind us that prayer is the source of comfort, relief, and protection, willingly granted by our loving, compassionate Heavenly Father.

**The gift of prayer**

Prayer is a supernal gift of our Father in Heaven to every soul. Think of it: the absolute Supreme Being, the most all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful personage, encourages you and me, as insignificant as we are, to converse with Him as our Father. Actually, because He knows how desperately we need His guidance, He commands, “Thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.”<sup>1</sup>

It matters not our circumstance, be we humble or arrogant, poor or rich, free or enslaved, learned or ignorant, loved or forsaken, we can address Him. We need no appointment. Our supplication can be brief or can occupy all the time needed. It can be an extended expression of love and gratitude or an urgent plea for help. He

has created numberless cosmos and populated them with worlds, yet you and I can talk with Him personally, and He will ever answer.

**How should you pray?**

We pray to our Heavenly Father in the sacred name of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Prayer is most effective when we strive to be clean and obedient, with worthy motives, and are willing to do what He asks. Humble, trusting prayer brings direction and peace.

Don’t worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your compassionate, understanding Father. You are His precious child whom He loves perfectly and wants to help. As you pray, recognize that Father in Heaven is near and He is listening.

A key to improved prayer is to learn to ask the right questions. Consider changing from asking for the things you want to honestly seeking what He wants for you. Then as you learn His will, pray that you will be led to have the strength to fulfill it.

Should you ever feel distanced from our Father, it could be for many reasons. Whatever the cause, as you continue to plead for help, He will guide you to do

that which will restore your confidence that He is near. Pray even when you have no desire to pray. Sometimes, like a child, you may misbehave and feel you cannot approach your Father with a problem. That is when you most need to pray. Never feel you are too unworthy to pray.

I wonder if we can ever really fathom the immense power of prayer until we encounter an overpowering, urgent problem and realize that we are powerless to resolve it. Then we will turn to our Father in humble recognition of our total dependence on Him. It helps to find a secluded place where our feelings can be vocally expressed as long and as intensely as necessary.

I have done that. Once I had an experience that caused me immense anxiety. It had nothing to do with disobedience or transgression but with a vitally important human relationship. For some time I poured my heart out in urgent prayer. Yet try as I might, I could find no solution, no settling of the powerful stirring within me. I pled for help from that Eternal Father I have come to know and trust completely. I could see no path that would provide the calm that is my blessing generally to enjoy. Sleep overcame me. When I awoke, I was totally at peace. Again I knelt in solemn prayer and asked, "Lord, how is it done?" In my heart, I knew the answer was His love and His concern for me. Such is the power of sincere prayer to a compassionate Father.

### **President Hinckley's example**

I have learned much about prayer by listening to President Hinckley offer supplications in our meetings. You can also learn from him by carefully studying the exceptional public prayer he offered at the conclusion of the October 2001 conference for Father's children throughout the world. He prayed from his heart, not from a prepared manuscript. (For convenience, that prayer is reproduced at the end of this message.<sup>2</sup>)

Study that prayer, and you will find that there are no vain repetitions, no posturing to impress others, as sometimes occurs. He combines simple words eloquently. He prays as a humble, trusting son who knows well his beloved Father in Heaven. He confides in the certainty that His answer will come when most needed. Each prayer is tailored to its purpose, with a clear statement of what needs resolution, as well as ample expression of gratitude for specific, recognized blessings. His spontaneous prayers are like crafted gems, a silent witness to the fundamental place prayer has occupied in his life for many, many years.

### **How are prayers answered?**

Some truths regarding how prayers are answered may help you.

Often when we pray for help with a significant matter, Heavenly Father will give us gentle promptings that require us to think, exercise faith, work, at times struggle, then act. It is a step-by-step process that enables us to discern inspired answers.

I have discovered that what sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust. Seldom will you receive a complete response all at once. It will come a piece at a time, in packets, so that you will grow in capacity. As each piece is followed in faith, you will be led to other portions until you have the whole answer. That pattern requires you to exercise faith in our Father's capacity to respond. While sometimes it's very hard, it results in significant personal growth.

He will always hear your prayers and will invariably answer them. However, His answers will seldom come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. Rather, He will prompt you in quiet moments when the Spirit can most effectively touch your mind and heart. Hence, you should find periods of quiet time to recog-

nize when you are being instructed and strengthened. His pattern causes you to grow.

President David O. McKay testified, "It is true that the answers to our prayers may not always come as direct and at the time, nor in the manner, we anticipate; but they do come, and at a time and in a manner best for the interests of him who offers the supplication."<sup>3</sup> Be thankful that sometimes God lets you struggle for a long time before that answer comes. Your character will grow; your faith will increase. There is a relationship between those two: the greater your faith, the stronger your character; and increased character enhances your ability to exercise even greater faith.

On occasion, the Lord will give you an answer before you ask. This can occur when you are unaware of a danger or may be doing the wrong thing, mistakenly trusting that it is correct.

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something you desire very much is not answered the way you want. It is difficult to understand why your exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not grant the desired result. The Savior taught, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*."<sup>4</sup> At times it is difficult to recognize what is *best* or *expedient* for you over time. Your life will be easier when you accept that what God does in your life is for your *eternal* good.

### **"In your mind and in your heart"**

You are asked to *look* for an answer to your prayers.<sup>5</sup> Obey the Master's counsel to "study it out in your mind."<sup>6</sup> Often you will think of a solution; as you seek confirmation that your answer is right, help will come. It may be through your prayers, or as an impression of the Holy Ghost, and at times by the intervention of others.<sup>7</sup>

This guidance about prayer given to Oliver Cowdery can also aid you: "Behold,

... you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

"... You must study it out in your mind; then ... ask me if it be right, and if it is right ... your bosom shall burn ... ; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right."<sup>8</sup>

Then the answer comes as a *feeling* with an accompanying conviction. The Savior defines two separate ways: "I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost."<sup>9</sup>

Answers to the mind and heart are messages from the Holy Ghost to our spirits. For me, response to the mind is very specific, like dictated words, while response to the heart is generalized, like a feeling to pray more.<sup>10</sup>

Then the Lord clarifies, "But if [what you propose] be not right you ... shall have a stupor of thought."<sup>11</sup> That, for me, is an unsettling, discomfoting feeling.

Oliver Cowdery was taught another way in which positive answers come: "Did I not speak *peace* to your mind concerning the matter?"<sup>12</sup> The feeling of peace is the most common confirming witness that I personally experience. When I have been very concerned about an important matter, struggling to resolve it without success, I continued those efforts in faith. Later, an all-pervading peace has come, settling my concerns, as He has promised.

### **Three ways God replies**

Some misunderstandings about prayer can be clarified by realizing that the scriptures define principles for effective prayer, but they do not assure *when* a response will be given. Actually, He will reply in one of *three* ways. First, you can feel the peace, comfort, and assurance that confirm that your decision is right. Or second, you can sense that unsettled feeling, the stupor of thought, indicating that your choice is wrong. Or third—and this is the difficult one—you can feel no response.

What do you do when you have prepared carefully, have prayed fervently, waited a reasonable time for a response, and still do not feel an answer? You may want to express thanks when that occurs, for it is an evidence of His trust. When you are living worthily and your choice is consistent with the Savior's teachings and you need to act, proceed with trust. As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision.

### Gratitude for the gift of prayer

An important aspect of prayer is gratitude. Jesus declared, "And in nothing doth man offend God . . . save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."<sup>13</sup> When we contemplate the incomparable gift of prayer and the limitless blessings that flow from it, honest appreciation fills our mind and heart to overflowing with thanksgiving. Should we not, therefore, continually and profoundly express to our beloved Father, as well as we are able, our unbounded gratitude for the supernal gift of prayer and for His answers that meet our needs while motivating us to grow?

I testify our Father will always answer your prayers in the way and in the time that will be for your best eternal good. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 19:28.
2. "O God, our Eternal Father, Thou great Judge of the Nations, Thou who art the governor of the universe, Thou who art our Father and our God, whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. We pray for the great democracies of the earth which Thou hast overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain.
3. "O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 90).
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 153.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:64; italics added; see also vv. 63, 65.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:23, 36; 8:2–3, 10; 9:9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8; italics added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; italics added.
10. See Enos 1:3–5, 9–10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:9.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23; italics added.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.

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The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

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### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Jay E. Jensen and John B. Dickson

of the Seventy. Following their remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us, after which the choir will sing “Search, Ponder, and Pray.”

## **Elder Jay E. Jensen**

### **The influence of hymns**

This magnificent choir gives inspiring sermons. In fact, “some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns.”<sup>1</sup> My testimony and conversion to the restored gospel were strongly influenced by singing the hymns of Zion as a young boy. I grew up in the small town of Mapleton, Utah, and attended meetings in what is known today as the “old white church.” My 95-year-old mother still lives in Mapleton. When I visit her, I drive past the old white church, and a flood of sweet memories fills my mind. Among them is the converting power of the hymns we sang in priesthood, Sunday School, and sacrament meetings. My experiences were similar to that of President Hinckley when, as a deacon, he attended a stake priesthood meeting with his father. They sang “Praise to the Man.”<sup>2</sup> Later he would say, “I had an impression that has never left that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”<sup>3</sup> I believe that many of our Saints experience this again and again. Hymns play an essential role in spirituality, revelation, and conversion.

### **Hymns invite the Spirit**

Hymns are “an essential part of our church meetings. [They] invite the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> They often do this quicker than anything else we may do. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, “We get nearer

to the Lord through music than perhaps through any other thing except prayer.”<sup>5</sup>

Two missionaries teaching an older couple in their home in Peru were interrupted by the arrival of the couple’s son, his wife, and three children. The elders explained who they were and what they were doing. The son was suspicious of the missionaries, resulting in an awkward moment. The junior companion prayed silently, “Heavenly Father, what do we do?” The impression came to sing. They sang “I Am a Child of God.”<sup>6</sup> The Spirit touched the hearts of this family of five. Instead of two converts, all seven became members, influenced initially by a hymn.

Music in Church meetings and classes should facilitate a spirit of worship, revelation, and testimony. For sacrament meetings, the bishopric or branch presidency is responsible to select or approve music. They ensure that the music, the words, and the musical instruments are sacred and dignified and will promote worship and revelation. Music becomes a performance when it brings attention to itself. Years ago, I was responsible for the music in a meeting where a special musical number was a performance. It was a disappointment. The spirit of worship was diminished.

### **Hymns invite revelation**

Hymns “create a feeling of reverence.”<sup>7</sup> The words *reverence* and *revelation*

are like twins who like each other's company. When the Seventy and Presiding Bishopric are invited to meetings with the First Presidency and the Twelve, we are reminded to arrive early and reverently listen to prelude music. Doing so invites revelation and prepares us for the meeting.

President Packer taught that a member who softly plays "prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom. If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!"<sup>8</sup>

### **Hymns invite conversion**

The hymns of the Restoration carry with them the spirit of conversion. They came as a result of sacrifice. Hymns like "Praise to the Man,"<sup>9</sup> "Come, Come, Ye Saints,"<sup>10</sup> "Ye Elders of Israel,"<sup>11</sup> "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,"<sup>12</sup> "Redeemer of Israel,"<sup>13</sup> and many others reinforce the great truths of the Restoration—such as the divinity of the Father and the Son, the plan of redemption, revelation, latter-day scriptures, the gathering of Israel, the holy priesthood, and ordinances and covenants. These nourishing hymns create an atmosphere that invites the Spirit, which leads us to conversion.

How incomplete and empty sacrament meetings would be without hymns of worship.<sup>14</sup> Sacred among all hymns are those that capture the sacrifice and the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement.

My earliest memories of the healing power of the Savior are associated with sacrament hymns. This sentence is real to me: "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me."<sup>15</sup>

My understanding of the doctrines of the Atonement is connected to the hymns. This verse is illustrative:

How great, how glorious, how complete  
Redemption's grand design,  
Where justice, love, and mercy meet  
In harmony divine!<sup>16</sup>

### **Teaching children hymns begins at home**

Singing hymns and listening to appropriate music begin at home. The First Presidency has reminded us:

"Latter-day Saints should fill their homes with the sound of worthy music.

"... We hope the hymnbook will take a prominent place among the scriptures and other religious books in our homes. The hymns can bring families a spirit of beauty and peace and can inspire love and unity among family members.

"Teach your children to love the hymns. Sing them on the Sabbath, in [family] home evening, during scripture study, at prayer time. Sing as you work, as you play, and as you travel together. Sing hymns as lullabies to build faith and testimony in your young ones."<sup>17</sup>

### **Worship more meaningfully through hymns**

Important lessons I have learned and seek to apply about hymns are:

1. Strive to be more punctual to meetings, sit quietly and listen to the prelude music, and experience reverence and revelation.

2. Exit meetings more reverently, allowing the postlude music to extend the spirit of the meeting.

3. Sing the hymns. I see some who have access to hymnals but do not sing.

4. Choose hymns appropriate to the meeting and messages.

5. Use hymns to introduce or to emphasize scriptures and gospel truths in lessons and classes.

6. Listen to the hymns more frequently in our homes, inviting the Spirit to prevail.



I pray that we may eliminate any inappropriate music from our lives and follow the counsel of the First Presidency: “Brothers and sisters, let us use the hymns to invite the Spirit of the Lord into our congregations, our homes, and our personal lives. Let us memorize and ponder them, recite and sing them, and partake of their spiritual nourishment. Know that the song of the righteous is a prayer unto our Father in Heaven, ‘and it shall be answered with a blessing upon [your] heads.’”<sup>18</sup> Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Hymns*, ix.
2. *Hymns*, no. 27.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 399.

4. *Hymns*, ix.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 111.
6. *Hymns*, no. 301.
7. *Hymns*, ix.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.
9. *Hymns*, no. 27.
10. *Hymns*, no. 30.
11. *Hymns*, no. 319.
12. *Hymns*, no. 19.
13. *Hymns*, no. 6.
14. Just as hymns are essential to Sabbath and family worship, so are hymns and carols to Christmas (see *Hymns*, nos. 201–14).
15. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
16. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
17. *Hymns*, x.
18. *Hymns*, x.

## Elder John B. Dickson

### Message to youth: Commit now

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I would like to address the youth of the Church this morning as Sister Dickson and I would counsel our own family.

We know that you are an exceptionally bright generation of youth that will soon take our place as leaders in the home, the workplace, the community, and the Church.

Your Heavenly Father loves each of you and has sent you to earth with a purpose. He has revealed a plan of happiness that, if followed, will ultimately bring you home to His presence, having triumphed over the trials and challenges of this world. Committing yourself now to live by the pattern the Lord has set will give you great strength in the proper use of your moral agency. The sincere commitments you make to yourself and to the Lord will be vital. We learn from the book of Psalms to “commit thy way unto the Lord; . . . and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

You have come into this world at a time that has been anticipated from the beginning—a time prior to the Second Coming of the Lord, in which, on one hand, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness and, on the other, there is great turmoil, confusion, and wickedness. The proving ground that you were born into is wonderful, affording great opportunities, but at the same time there is danger in abundance, even danger to one’s very soul. Now is the time to commit yourself to the Lord as to what you will become during this mortal probation. Along with your parents, living prophets, and the scriptures, the Holy Ghost will help you distinguish between right and wrong so correct decisions can be made.

Hopefully you will prayerfully study the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* and review and carry with you, in your wallet or purse, the abbreviated copy of the pamphlet. Great happiness will come to you in this life and eternally if you decide now to live after the pattern that is set forth in its pages.

## **Commitment to live the Word of Wisdom**

Let me help you understand how this pattern of making early commitments can help you by relating the experience of one Church leader. As a young man he decided that he would always keep the Word of Wisdom and never use alcohol or tobacco. He does not remember what prompted him to make that important commitment at the time, but a crucial victory was won in his heart, and on his knees he made a commitment with the Lord to always keep that commandment. Over the years there were invitations to use these substances, but he learned that “No, thank you” was a good answer. There was no personal battle over the Word of Wisdom, because years before he had made a commitment in his heart, and he had sincerely made a commitment to the Lord to obey that law.

As you seek to receive Heavenly Father’s blessings regarding the Word of Wisdom, include a commitment to never touch the illegal drugs that are prevalent in today’s society. The adversary will have very little power to tempt you with things that you have never touched.

## **“Beware concerning yourselves”**

As members of the Church we have been baptized and have made a covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and keep God’s commandments. If mistakes are made, the gospel allows us to sincerely repent and be forgiven. Your commitment can begin from where you are presently, whether young or old, including repenting and forsaking sin where mistakes have already been made.

The Lord promises great, eternal blessings to His righteous, repentant children, but knowing there is great danger here in this life, He has commanded us, saying, “Beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life” (D&C 84:43). Because He loves us and wants us back, this commandment to

“beware concerning [ourselves]” prompts us to be careful concerning everything about us—the type of social settings we enter, what we see and read, the media and entertainment we choose, the music we listen to, and more.

Setting a pattern of early commitment is very important. For example, to receive the blessings promised to those who pay tithes and offerings, you should commit now to pay tithing on all earnings. Paying tithing helps us become less selfish and more like our Heavenly Father, who wants to share all that He has with His righteous children. Making that decision will be extremely important. It is interesting to note that, like tithing, every commandment is designed for your eternal happiness and to help you become more like your Father in Heaven. Decide now to be like Nephi of old, who was absolutely determined to “go and do the things which the Lord [had] commanded” (1 Nephi 3:7).

## **Commit to standards**

Let us now consider other commitments that will bless your lives. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if, in spite of what others at school might be doing, from this moment forward you would be known for your absolute integrity and clean language? Decide now that you will never cheat; that your language will be pure; that as long as you live, vulgar words or jokes will never come from your lips. These are commitments you can make in the quiet of your room and upon your knees. Success will come to you as you earnestly, prayerfully, and humbly approach the Lord. The scriptures teach, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

You would also want to make commitments regarding modesty of dress and how to act while dating. Keeping the Lord’s standards is always easier when you have already determined how you will

act when faced with decisions in the presence of a date, friends, or peers. Some individuals may not understand your standards as you follow righteous principles and keep your commitments, but they will truly respect and admire you and wish that they were more like you.

Other standards to ponder and commit to are absolute moral cleanliness and sexual purity, Sabbath observance, preparation for missions and the temple, and a determination to always partake of the sacrament worthily.

President Hinckley loves the youth and has constantly encouraged you to follow the standards the Lord has set. Follow-

ing a living prophet's encouragement and counsel will lead you on a path to eternal or everlasting happiness.

As you commit now to do the will of the Lord, He will help and strengthen you. Your faith, trust, and desire to follow Him will be your greatest key to success. I know our Heavenly Father loves each of you and that He truly sent His Only Begotten Son to help you and that you can gloriously succeed as you sincerely commit to follow Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### The power of words

The Prophet Joseph Smith deepened our understanding of the power of speech when he taught, “*It is by words . . . [that] every being works when he works by faith.*” God said, ‘Let there be light: and there was light.’ Joshua spake, and the great lights which God had created stood still. Elijah commanded, and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain. . . . All this was done by faith. . . . *Faith, then, works by words; and with [words] its mightiest works have been, and will be, performed.*”<sup>1</sup> Like all gifts “which cometh from above,” words are “sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

It is with this realization of the power and sanctity of words that I wish to caution us, if caution is needed, regarding how we speak to each other and how we speak of ourselves.

There is a line from the Apocrypha which puts the seriousness of this issue better than I can. It reads, “The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh: but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones.”<sup>3</sup> With that stinging image in mind,

I was particularly impressed to read in the book of James that there was a way I could be “a perfect man.”

### “Offend not in word”

Said James: “For in many things we offend all. *[But] if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,* and able also to bridle the whole body.”

Continuing the imagery of the bridle, he writes: “Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

“Behold also . . . ships, which though they be . . . great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm.”

Then James makes his point: “The tongue is [also] a little member. . . . *[But] behold, how great a [forest (Greek)] a little fire [can burn]!*

“. . . So is the tongue [a fire] among our members, . . . it defileth the whole body, . . . it is set on fire of hell.

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea . . . hath been tamed of mankind:

“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”<sup>4</sup>

Well, *that* is pretty straightforward! Obviously James doesn’t mean our tongues are *always* iniquitous, nor that *everything* we say is “full of deadly poison.” But he clearly means that at least some things we say can be destructive, even venomous—and that is a chilling indictment for a Latter-day Saint! The voice that bears profound testimony, utters fervent prayer, and sings the hymns of Zion *can be* the same voice that berates and criticizes, embarrasses and demeans, inflicts pain and destroys the spirit of oneself and of others in the process. “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing,” James grieves. “My brethren [and sisters], these things ought not so to be.”

Is this something we could all work on just a little? Is this an area in which we could each try to be a little more like a “perfect” man or woman?

### Care in speaking to family members

Husbands, you have been entrusted with the most sacred gift God can give you—a wife, a daughter of God, the mother of your children, who has voluntarily given herself to you for love and joyful companionship. Think of the kind things you said when you were courting, think of the blessings you have given with hands placed lovingly upon her head, think of yourself and of her as the god and goddess you both inherently are, and then reflect on other moments characterized by cold, caustic, unbridled words. Given the damage that can be done with our tongues, little wonder the Savior said, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of

the mouth, this defileth a man.”<sup>5</sup> A husband who would never dream of striking his wife physically can break, if not her bones, then certainly her heart by the brutality of thoughtless or unkind speech. Physical abuse is uniformly and unequivocally condemned in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If it is possible to be more condemning than that, we speak even more vigorously against all forms of sexual abuse. Today, I speak against verbal and emotional abuse of anyone against anyone, but especially of husbands against wives. Brethren, these things ought not to be.

In that same spirit we speak to the sisters as well, for the sin of verbal abuse knows no gender. Wives, what of the unbridled tongue in *your* mouth, of the power for good or ill in *your* words? How is it that such a lovely voice which by divine nature is so angelic, so close to the veil, so instinctively gentle and inherently kind could ever in a turn be so shrill, so biting, so acrid and untamed? A woman’s words can be more piercing than any dagger ever forged, and they can drive the people they love to retreat beyond a barrier more distant than anyone in the beginning of that exchange could ever have imagined. Sisters, there is no place in that magnificent spirit of yours for acerbic or abrasive expression of any kind, including gossip or backbiting or catty remarks. Let it never be said of our home or our ward or our neighborhood that “the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . [burning] among our members.”<sup>6</sup>

May I expand this counsel to make it a full family matter. We must be so careful in speaking to a child. What we say or don’t say, how we say it and when is so very, very important in shaping a child’s view of himself or herself. But it is even more important in shaping that child’s faith in us and their faith in God. Be constructive in your comments to a child—always. Never tell them, even in whimsy, that they are fat or dumb or lazy or homely. You would never do that maliciously, but

they remember and may struggle for years trying to forget—and to forgive. And try not to compare your children, even if you think you are skillful at it. You may say most positively that “Susan is pretty and Sandra is bright,” but all Susan will remember is that she isn’t bright and Sandra that she isn’t pretty. Praise each child individually for what that child is, and help him or her escape our culture’s obsession with comparing, competing, and never feeling we are “enough.”

### **Speak encouragingly**

In all of this, I suppose it goes without saying that negative speaking so often flows from negative thinking, including negative thinking about ourselves. We see our own faults, we speak—or at least think—critically of ourselves, and before long that is how we see everyone and everything. No sunshine, no roses, no promise of hope or happiness. Before long we and everybody around us are miserable.

I love what Elder Orson F. Whitney once said: “The spirit of the gospel is optimistic; it trusts in God and looks on the bright side of things. The opposite or pessimistic spirit drags men down and away from God, looks on the dark side, murmurs, complains, and is slow to yield obedience.”<sup>7</sup> We should honor the Savior’s declaration to “be of good cheer.”<sup>8</sup> (Indeed, it seems to me we may be more guilty of breaking that commandment than almost any other!) Speak hopefully. Speak encouragingly, including about yourself. Try not to complain and moan incessantly. As someone once said, “Even in the golden age of civilization, someone undoubtedly grumbled that everything looked too yellow.”

I have often thought that Nephi’s being bound with cords and beaten by rods must have been more tolerable to him than listening to Laman and Lemuel’s constant murmuring.<sup>9</sup> Surely he must have said at least once, “Hit me one more time. I can still hear you.” Yes, life has its

problems, and yes, there are negative things to face, but please accept one of Elder Holland’s maxims for living—no misfortune is so bad that whining about it won’t make it worse.

Paul put it candidly but very hopefully. He said to all of us:

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but [only] that which is good . . . [and] edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God. . . .

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you. . . .

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Speaking with a new tongue**

In his deeply moving final testimony, Nephi calls us to “follow the Son [of God], with full purpose of heart,” promising that “after ye have . . . received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, [ye] can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels. . . . And . . . how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Christ was and is “the Word,” according to John the Beloved,<sup>12</sup> full of grace and truth, full of mercy and compassion.

So, brothers and sisters, in this long eternal quest to be more like our Savior, may we try to be “perfect” men and women in at least this one way now—by offending not in word, or more positively put, by speaking with a new tongue, the tongue of angels. Our words, like our deeds, should be filled with faith and hope and charity, the three great Christian imperatives so desperately needed in the world today. With such words, spoken under the influence of the Spirit, tears can be dried, hearts can be healed, lives can be elevated, hope can return, confidence can prevail. I pray

that my words, even on this challenging subject, will be encouraging to you, not discouraging, that you can hear in my voice that I love you, because I do. More importantly, please know that your Father in Heaven loves you and so does His Only Begotten Son. When They speak to you—and They will—it will not be in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but it will be with a voice still and small, a voice tender and kind.<sup>13</sup> It will be with the tongue of angels. May we all rejoice in the thought that when we say edifying, encouraging things unto the least of these, our brethren and sisters and little ones, we say it unto God.<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 72–73; italics added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 63:64.
3. Ecclesiasticus 28:17.
4. James 3:2–10; italics added.
5. Matthew 15:11.
6. James 3:6.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1917, 43.
8. Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33.
9. See 1 Nephi 3:28–31; 18:11–15.
10. Ephesians 4:29–32.
11. 2 Nephi 31:13–14; 32:2–3.
12. John 1:1.
13. See 1 Kings 19:11–12.
14. See Matthew 25:40.

## Elder David A. Bednar

### Lessons from canning season

My boyhood home in California was located relatively close to large orchards of apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, and other delicious fruits. We also lived near fields of cucumbers, tomatoes, and a variety of vegetables.

As a boy I always looked forward to canning season. I did not like scrubbing the canning jars or working in our hot kitchen. But I did like working with my mom and dad. And I loved eating my work! I am sure I ate more fruit than ever made it into any of our canning jars.

My memories of time spent in the kitchen with Mom and Dad are stirred every time I see a bottle of home-canned cherries or peaches. The basic lessons I learned about temporal self-reliance and provident living while picking and canning produce have blessed me throughout my life. Interestingly, simple and ordinary experiences often provide the most important learning opportunities we ever have.

As an adult I have reflected upon the things I observed in our kitchen during canning season. This morning I want to

discuss some of the spiritual lessons we can learn from the process by which a cucumber becomes a pickle. I invite the Holy Ghost to be with us as we consider the significance of those lessons for me and for you as we come unto Christ and are spiritually reborn.

### Cucumbers and pickles

A pickle is a cucumber that has been transformed according to a specific recipe and series of steps. The first steps in the process of changing a cucumber into a pickle are *preparing* and *cleaning*. I remember many hours spent on the back porch of my home removing stems from and scrubbing dirt off of the cucumbers we had picked. My mom was very particular about the preparing and cleaning of the cucumbers. She had high standards of cleanliness and always inspected my work to make sure this important task was properly completed.

The next steps in this process of change are *immersing* and *saturating* the cucumbers in salt brine for an extended period of time. To prepare the brine, my

mom always used a recipe she learned from her mother—a recipe with special ingredients and precise procedures. Cucumbers can only become pickles if they are totally and completely immersed in the brine for the prescribed time period. The curing process gradually alters the composition of the cucumber and produces the transparent appearance and distinctive taste of a pickle. An occasional sprinkle of or dip in the brine cannot produce the necessary transformation. Rather, steady, sustained, and complete immersion is required for the desired change to occur.

The final step in the process requires the *sealing* of the cured pickles in jars that have been sterilized and purified. The pickles are packed in canning jars, covered with boiling hot brine, and processed in a boiling-water-bath canner. All impurities must be removed from both the pickles and the bottles so the finished product can be protected and preserved. As this procedure is properly followed, the pickles can be stored and enjoyed for a long period of time.

To summarize, a cucumber becomes a pickle as it is prepared and cleaned, immersed in and saturated with salt brine, and sealed in a sterilized container. This procedure requires time and cannot be hurried, and none of the essential steps can be ignored or avoided.

### **A mighty change**

The Lord's authorized servants repeatedly teach that one of the principal purposes of our mortal existence is to be spiritually changed and transformed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Alma declared:

"Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

"And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25–26).

We are instructed to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny [ourselves] of all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32), to become "new creature[s]" in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), to put off "the natural man" (Mosiah 3:19), and to experience "a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). Please note that the conversion described in these verses is mighty, not minor—a spiritual rebirth and fundamental change of what we feel and desire, what we think and do, and what we are. Indeed, the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through our reliance upon "the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8). As we choose to follow the Master, we choose to be changed—to be spiritually reborn.

### **Preparing and cleaning**

Just as a cucumber must be prepared and cleaned before it can be changed into a pickle, so you and I can be prepared with "the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6) and initially cleansed through the ordinances and covenants administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood.

"And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" (D&C 84:26–27).

And the Lord has established a high standard of cleanliness.

"Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the

kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence” (Moses 6:57).

Proper preparing and cleaning are the first basic steps in the process of being born again.

### **Immersing and saturating**

Just as a cucumber is transformed into a pickle as it is immersed in and saturated with salt brine, so you and I are born again as we are absorbed by and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we honor and “observe the covenants” (D&C 42:13) into which we have entered, as we “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3), as we “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart” (Moroni 7:48), and as we “serve [God] with all [of our] heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2), then:

“Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

The spiritual rebirth described in this verse typically does not occur quickly or all at once; it is an ongoing process—not a single event. Line upon line and precept upon precept, gradually and almost imperceptibly, our motives, our thoughts, our words, and our deeds become aligned with the will of God. This phase of the transformation process requires time, persistence, and patience.

A cucumber only becomes a pickle through steady, sustained, and complete immersion in salt brine. Significantly, salt is the key ingredient in the recipe. Salt frequently is used in the scriptures as a symbol both of a covenant and of a covenant people. And just as salt is essential in transforming a cucumber into a pickle, so covenants are central to our spiritual rebirth.

We begin the process of being born again through exercising faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, and being baptized by immersion for the remission of sins by one having priesthood authority.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

And after we come out of the waters of baptism, our souls need to be continuously immersed in and saturated with the truth and the light of the Savior’s gospel. Sporadic and shallow dipping in the doctrine of Christ and partial participation in His restored Church cannot produce the spiritual transformation that enables us to walk in a newness of life. Rather, fidelity to covenants, constancy of commitment, and offering our whole soul unto God are required if we are to receive the blessings of eternity.

“I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

Total immersion in and saturation with the Savior’s gospel are essential steps in the process of being born again.

### **Purifying and sealing**

Cured cucumbers are packed into sterilized jars and heat processed in order to remove impurities and to seal the containers from external contaminants. The boiling-water-bath procedure enables the pickles to be both protected and preserved over a long period of time. In a similar way, we progressively become purified and sanctified as you and I are washed in the blood of the Lamb, are born again, and receive the ordinances and honor the



covenants that are administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

The word *sealing* in my message today does not refer exclusively to the ordinance of eternal marriage performed in the house of the Lord. Rather, I am using this particular word as explained in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“This is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

“They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

“That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

“And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (vv. 50–53).

The Holy Spirit of Promise is the ratifying power of the Holy Ghost. When sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, an ordinance, vow, or covenant is binding on earth and in heaven. (See D&C 132:7.) Receiving this “stamp of approval” from the Holy Ghost is the result of faithfulness, integrity, and steadfastness in honoring gospel covenants “in [the] process of time” (Moses 7:21). However, this sealing can be forfeited through unrighteousness and transgression.

Purifying and sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise constitute the culminat-

ing steps in the process of being born again.

### **“In the energy of my soul”**

My beloved brothers and sisters, I pray this parable of the pickle may help us to evaluate our lives and to better understand the eternal importance of spiritual rebirth. With Alma, “I speak in the energy of my soul” (Alma 5:43).

“I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again” (Alma 5:49).

I witness the reality and divinity of a living Savior who invites us to come unto Him and be transformed. I testify His Church and priesthood authority have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through faith in Christ, we can be spiritually prepared and cleansed from sin, immersed in and saturated with His gospel, and purified and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise—even born again. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Search, Ponder, and Pray.”

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### **President Monson**

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this morning. President Hinckley has asked that I now speak to you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul E. Koelliker of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### “If a man die, shall he live again?”

Recently I was looking through some family photo albums. Cherished memories flooded my mind as I came across image after image of loved ones gathered at family outings, birthdays, reunions, anniversaries. Since these photographs were taken, some of those beloved family members have departed this life. I thought of the words of the Lord, “Thou shalt live together in love, inasmuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die.”<sup>1</sup> I miss each one who has left our family circle.

Though difficult and painful, death is an essential part of our mortal experience. We began our sojourn here by leaving our premortal existence and coming to this earth. The poet Wordsworth captured that journey in his inspired ode to immortality. He wrote:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's  
Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!<sup>2</sup>

Life moves on. Youth follows childhood, and maturity comes ever so imperceptibly. As we search and ponder the purpose and the problems of life, all of us sooner or later face the question of the length of life and of a personal, everlasting life. These questions most insistently assert themselves when loved ones leave us or when we face leaving those we love.

At such times, we ponder the universal question, best phrased by Job of old, who centuries ago asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?”<sup>3</sup>

### Skepticism in the world

Today, as always, the skeptic's voice challenges the word of God, and each must choose to whom he will listen. Clarence Darrow, the famous lawyer and agnostic, declared, “No life is of much value, and . . . every death is [but a] little loss.”<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer, the German philosopher and pessimist, wrote, “To desire immortality is to desire the eternal perpetuation of a great mistake.”<sup>5</sup> And to their words are added those of new generations, as foolish men crucify the Christ anew—for they modify His miracles, doubt His divinity, and reject His Resurrection.

Robert Blatchford, in his book *God and My Neighbor*, attacked with vigor accepted Christian beliefs, such as God, Christ, prayer, and immortality. He boldly asserted, “I claim to have proved everything I set out to prove so fully and decisively that no Christian, however great or able he may be, can answer my arguments or shake my case.”<sup>6</sup> He surrounded himself with a wall of skepticism. Then a surprising thing happened. His wall suddenly crumbled to dust. He was left exposed and undefended. Slowly he began to feel his way back to the faith he had scorned and ridiculed. What had caused this profound change in his outlook? *His wife died*. With a broken heart, he went into the room where lay all that was mortal of her. He looked again at the face he loved so well. Coming out, he said to a friend: “It is she, and yet it is not she. Everything is changed. Something that was there before is taken away. She is not the same. What can be gone if it be not the soul?”

Later he wrote: “Death is not what some people imagine. It is only like going into another room. In that other room we shall find . . . the dear women and men and the sweet children we have loved and lost.”<sup>7</sup>

## Testimonies of Christ's Resurrection

Against the doubting in today's world concerning Christ's divinity, we seek a point of reference, an unimpeachable source, even a testimony of eyewitnesses. Stephen, from biblical times, doomed to the cruel death of a martyr, looked up to heaven and cried, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."<sup>8</sup>

Who can help but be convinced by the stirring testimony of Paul to the Corinthians? He declared "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and . . . was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: . . . And," said Paul, "last of all he was seen of me."<sup>9</sup>

In our dispensation, this same testimony was spoken boldly by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he and Sidney Rigdon testified, "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!"<sup>10</sup>

This is the knowledge that sustains. This is the truth that comforts. This is the assurance that guides those who are bowed down with grief—out of the shadows and into the light.

## A family's testimony of the Resurrection

On Christmas Eve, 1997, I met a remarkable family. Each member of the family had an unshakable testimony of the truth and of the reality of the Resurrection. The family consisted of a mother and father and four children. Each of the children—three sons and a daughter—had been born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, and each was handicapped. Mark, who was then 16 years old, had undergone spinal surgery in an effort to help him move about more freely. The other two boys—Christopher, age 13, and Jason, age 10—were to leave for California in a few days to undergo similar surgery.

The only daughter, Shanna, was then five years old—a beautiful child. All of the children were intelligent and faith-filled, and it was obvious that their parents, Bill and Sherry, were proud of each one. We visited for a while, and the special spirit of that family filled my office and my heart. The father and I gave blessings to the two boys who were facing surgery, and then the parents asked if little Shanna could sing for me. Her father mentioned that she had diminished lung capacity and that it might be difficult for her, but that she wanted to try. To the accompaniment of a recorded cassette, and in a beautiful, clear voice—never missing a note—she sang of a brighter future:

On a beautiful day that I dream about  
In a world I would love to see  
Is a beautiful place where the sun  
comes out  
And it shines in the sky for me.  
On this beautiful winter's morning,  
If my wish could come true somehow,  
Then the beautiful day that I dream  
about  
Would be here and now.<sup>11</sup>

The emotions of all of us were very near the surface as she finished. The spirituality of this visit set the tone for my Christmas that year.

I kept in touch with the family, and when the oldest son, Mark, turned 19, arrangements were made for him to serve a special mission at Church headquarters. Eventually, the other two brothers also had an opportunity to serve such missions.

Nearly a year ago, Christopher, who was then 22 years old, succumbed to the disease with which each of the children has been afflicted. And then, last September, I received word that little Shanna, now 14 years old, had passed away. At the funeral services, Shanna was honored by beautiful tributes. Leaning on the pulpit for support, each of her surviving brothers, Mark and Jason, shared poignant family experiences. Shanna's mother sang a lovely musical

number as part of a duet. Her father and grandfather gave touching sermons. Though their hearts were broken, each bore powerful and deep-felt testimony of the reality of the Resurrection and of the actuality that Shanna lives still, as does her brother Christopher, each awaiting a glorious reunion with their beloved family.

When it was my time to speak, I recounted that visit the family made to my office nearly nine years earlier and spoke of the lovely song Shanna sang on that occasion. I concluded with the thought: "Because our Savior died at Calvary, death has no hold upon any one of us. Shanna lives, whole and well, and for her that beautiful day she sang about on a special Christmas Eve in 1997, the day she dreamed about, *is here and now.*"

### **The Crucifixion and the Resurrection**

My brothers and sisters, we laugh, we cry, we work, we play, we love, we live. And then we die. Death is our universal heritage. All must pass its portals. Death claims the aged, the weary and worn. It visits the youth in the bloom of hope and the glory of expectation. Nor are little children kept beyond its grasp. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "It is appointed unto men once to die."<sup>12</sup>

And dead we would remain but for one Man and His mission, even Jesus of Nazareth. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, His birth fulfilled the inspired pronouncements of many prophets. He was taught from on high. He provided the life, the light, and the way. Multitudes followed Him. Children adored Him. The haughty rejected Him. He spoke in parables. He taught by example. He lived a perfect life.

Though the King of kings and Lord of lords had come, He was accorded by some the greeting given to an enemy, a traitor. There followed a mockery which some called a trial. Cries of "Crucify him, crucify him"<sup>13</sup> filled the air. Then commenced the climb to Calvary's hill.

He was ridiculed, reviled, mocked, jeered, and nailed to a cross amidst shouts of "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."<sup>14</sup> "He saved others; himself he cannot save."<sup>15</sup> His response: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>16</sup> "Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."<sup>17</sup> His body was placed by loving hands in a sepulchre hewn of stone.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, along with others, came to the sepulchre. To their astonishment, the body of their Lord was gone. Luke records that two men in shining garments stood by them and said: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."<sup>18</sup>

Next week the Christian world will celebrate the most significant event in recorded history. The simple pronouncement, "He is not here, but is risen," was the first confirmation of the literal Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The empty tomb that first Easter morning brought comforting assurance, an affirmative answer to Job's question, "If a man die, shall he live again?"<sup>19</sup>

### **The assurance of everlasting life**

To all who have lost loved ones, we would turn Job's question to an answer: If a man die, he *shall* live again. We know, for we have the light of revealed truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life," spoke the Master. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>20</sup>

Through tears and trials, through fears and sorrows, through the heartache and loneliness of losing loved ones, there is assurance that life is everlasting. Our Lord and Savior is the living witness that such is so.

With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the first-fruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again. "Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"<sup>21</sup> May the whole world know it and live by that knowledge, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
2. William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (1939), 628.
3. Job 14:14.
4. *The Story of My Life* (1932), 450.
5. Arthur Schopenhauer, in *The Home Book of Quotations*, sel. Burton Stevenson (1934), 969.

6. *God and My Neighbor* (1914).
7. See *More Things in Heaven and Earth: Adventures in Quest of a Soul* (1925), 11.
8. Acts 7:56.
9. 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, 8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.
11. "The Beautiful Day," from the movie *Scrooge* (1970), music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse.
12. Hebrews 9:27.
13. Luke 23:21.
14. Mark 15:32.
15. Mark 15:31.
16. Luke 23:34.
17. Luke 23:46.
18. Luke 24:5–6.
19. Job 14:14.
20. John 11:25–26.
21. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136; see also Job 19:25.

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The choir sang "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Elder Paul E. Koelliker offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

This session is originating from the historic Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. It has been beautifully refurbished, and we will rededicate it during this session. As we sit here, it brings back a thousand memories as we contemplate the past when we held so many meetings of various kinds in this great hall.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with

John Longhurst and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Lowell M. Snow of the Seventy, followed by the choir singing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” We will then be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presi-

dency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. The choir will then sing “We Love Thy House, O God.”

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The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.” Elder Lowell M. Snow offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### A defining experience

Forty-six years ago I was called as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, and for the first time, I came to this pulpit. I was 37 years old. I found myself standing among the venerable and wise prophets and apostles, “whose names,” as the song proclaims, “we all revere” (“Oh, Holy Words of Truth and Love,” *Hymns*, no. 271). I felt how keenly inadequate I was.

About that time here in the Tabernacle I had a defining experience. It gave me assurance and courage.

In those days Primary conference was held here before the April conference. I came through a south door as the opening song was being sung by a large choir of Primary children. Sister Lue S. Groesbeck, a member of the Primary general board, was leading them. They sang:

Rev'rently, quietly, lovingly we think of thee;

Rev'rently, quietly, softly sing our melody.

Rev'rently, quietly, humbly now we pray,

Let thy Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts today.

(“Reverently, Quietly,” *Children's Songbook*, 26)

As the children sang quietly, the organist, who understood that excellence does not call attention to itself, did not play a solo while they sang. He skillfully, almost invisibly blended the young voices into a melody of inspiration, of revelation. That was the defining moment. It fixed deeply and permanently in my soul that which I most needed to sustain me in the years to follow.

### The still, small voice

I felt perhaps that which Elijah the prophet had felt. He sealed the heavens against the wicked king Ahab and fled to a cave to seek the Lord:

“A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks . . . ; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire [came] a still small voice.

“And it was so,” the record says, “when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave” to speak to the Lord (1 Kings 19:11–13).

I felt something of what the Nephites must have felt when the Lord appeared to them: “They heard a voice as if it came

out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn” (3 Nephi 11:3).

It is this still, small voice which Elijah and the Nephites heard that the Prophet Joseph Smith understood when he wrote, “Thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things” (D&C 85:6).

In that defining moment, I understood that the still, small voice is felt more than heard. If I hearkened to it, I would be all right in my ministry.

After that, I had the assurance that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is there for everyone who will respond to the invitation to ask, to seek, and to knock (see Matthew 7:7–8; Luke 11:9–10; 3 Nephi 14:7–8; D&C 88:63). I knew I would be all right. As the years have unfolded, so it has been.

### **Power of music**

I learned too what power there can be in music. When music is reverently presented, it can be akin to revelation. At times, I think, it cannot be separated from the voice of the Lord, the quiet, still voice of the Spirit.

Worthy music of all kinds has its place. And there are endless numbers of places where it can be heard. But the Tabernacle on Temple Square is different from them all.

For generations the Tabernacle Choir opened its weekly broadcast singing these words written by William W. Phelps:

Gently raise the sacred strain,  
For the Sabbath’s come again  
That man may rest, . . .

And return his thanks to God  
For his blessings to the blest.  
 (“Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,”  
*Hymns*, no. 146)

### **Influence of past leaders**

More than 100 years ago, President Wilford Woodruff, then 91 years of age, delivered what may have been his last sermon from this pulpit. In the audience was 12-year-old LeGrand Richards. His father, George F. Richards (later ordained an Apostle), brought his boys to the Tabernacle to hear the Brethren. LeGrand never forgot that experience.

For more than 20 years, I was very close to Elder LeGrand Richards. When he was 96 years old, that message still lingered in his heart. He could not remember the words President Woodruff said, but he could never forget how he felt when they were said.

On occasions, I have felt the presence of those who built and kept this Tabernacle. By music and the spoken word, those who came before maintained the simplicity of the gospel and the testimony of Jesus Christ. That testimony was the guiding light in their lives.

### **Historic events in the Tabernacle**

Great events which shaped the destiny of the Church have occurred in this Tabernacle at Temple Square.

Every President of the Church, except Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, has been sustained in a solemn assembly in this Tabernacle. And in similar manner, the sustaining procedure is repeated annually in general conference and duplicated in every stake and ward and branch as required by revelation.

The Lord said, “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority,

and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

In this way, no stranger can come among us and claim to have authority and attempt to lead the Church astray.

Here in 1880 the Pearl of Great Price was accepted as one of the standard works of the Church.

Here also two revelations were added to the standard works, now known as Doctrine and Covenants sections 137 and 138. Section 137 records a vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple, and section 138 is a vision given to President Joseph F. Smith concerning the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead.

Here in 1979, after years of preparation, the LDS version of the King James Bible was introduced to the Church.

The new editions of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price were announced to the Church here.

In 1908 in a general conference, President Joseph F. Smith read section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Word of Wisdom. Then he, both of his counselors, and the President of the Twelve all spoke to the same subject, the Word of Wisdom. Then a vote to accept it as binding upon the members of the Church was unanimously passed.

That revelation begins, "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

It is a shield and a protection unto our people, particularly to our youth. It becomes a part of that "whole armor" of God promised in the revelations to protect them from the "fiery darts" of the adversary (see D&C 27:15–18).

The Church and individual members of it have always been, are now, and ever will be under siege from the adversary. He

will cover, even erase the still, small voice through loud and dissonant music awash with lyrics that cannot be understood—or worse, by lyrics that can be understood. He will carefully lead us astray with every other temptation he could devise.

Here by revelation the Lord clarified the order of the priesthood, and this opened the doors to fulfill the commandment of the Savior to take the gospel to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (D&C 133:37) and to cause the Church to be established among them.

Here the Book of Mormon was given the subtitle "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." Thereafter, whoever opens the book will know from the very title what is offered within.

### **The Tabernacle is a house of God**

The teachings, the sermons, the music, and the feelings and Spirit in this sacred building transfer without being diminished to the great Conference Center nearby, where they are heard by tens of thousands, translated into dozens of languages, and sent to congregations across the world.

Even more, that Spirit enters into the homes of millions upon millions of Latter-day Saints. In the homes, parents pray for the well-being of their children. Men and women and, as the Book of Mormon promised, even little children can receive the testimony of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 24:22; Alma 32:23; 3 Nephi 17:25) and of the Restoration of His gospel.

This Tabernacle on Temple Square is "a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even [His] house" (D&C 109:16). Those called to speak or to perform words, music, and culture are obligated to present that which is worthy.

To seek after the praise of men, the scriptures caution us, is to be led carefully away from the only safe path to follow in life (see John 12:43; 1 Nephi 13:9; 2 Nephi



26:29; Helaman 7:21; Mormon 8:38; D&C 58:39). And the scriptures warn us plainly what follows when we “aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:35).

It is not so much what is heard in the sermons but what is felt. The Holy Ghost can confirm to all who come within that influence that the messages are true, that this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **A standard of the Restoration**

The Tabernacle stands here next to the temple as an anchor and has become symbolic of the Restoration. It was built by very poor and very, very ordinary people. It is now known worldwide.

The Tabernacle Choir, identified by the name of this building, has been a voice of the Church for many years. May they never drift from or allow themselves to be pulled away from the central mission which has been their place for generations.

For generation after generation the choir has opened and closed each broadcast with a message of inspiration, rich in principle and anchored in the doctrines of the Restoration, beginning with “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain” (*Hymns*, no. 146) and closing with “As the Dew from Heaven Distilling” (*Hymns*, no. 149).

The Tabernacle stands in the world as one of the great centers of worthy music and culture. But most of all, it stands as a standard of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That simple testimony was embedded deeply and permanently in me here in this building by those Primary children singing in reverent, revelatory tones.

God bless this sacred building and all that transpires within its walls. How grateful we are that it has been renewed and refurbished without losing its sacred character.

### **As the dew from heaven**

Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles read these words from section 121 in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

Deeply moved, Parley P. Pratt turned his thoughts to a hymn which is actually a prayer. For many years it was chosen by the choir to close its weekly broadcast:

As the dew from heav’n distilling  
Gently on the grass descends  
And revives it, thus fulfilling  
What thy providence intends,

Let thy doctrine, Lord, so gracious,  
Thus descending from above,  
Blest by thee, prove efficacious  
To fulfill thy work of love.

Lord, behold this congregation;  
Precious promises fulfill.  
From thy holy habitation  
Let the dews of life distill.

Let our cry come up before thee.  
Thy sweet Spirit shed around,  
So the people shall adore thee  
And confess the joyful sound.  
 (“As the Dew from Heaven Distilling,”  
*Hymns*, no. 149)

I add my testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that this is His house, on this sacred day of dedication, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Earl C. Tingey

### Prophets—pioneer and modern day

My brothers and sisters, as I stand at the pulpit of this old but new Tabernacle, I am overwhelmed with the sense of history I feel at this moment. As one foot is planted in the past and the other in the future, I give thanks for pioneer and modern-day prophets and apostles who have had and still have the vision to construct and extend into the future this remarkable building.

I wish to speak of two such men of vision: Brigham Young and his successor today.

### Brigham Young

Brigham Young was the second prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He led the Church for 33 years. He built this Tabernacle and presided at its dedication during the October general conference in 1875, more than 131 years ago.

His other accomplishments were many, and I can refer to only a few.

*He was a pioneer*, meaning someone who opens or prepares the way for others to follow. One writer said of Brigham Young: “He led a ragged and impoverished band, stripped of virtually all their earthly goods, into an unknown territory. His critics and biographers note that the man was unique among the leaders of modern history, for he alone, without any political and financial backing, established from scratch in the desert an ordered and industrious society, having no other authority than the priesthood and the spiritual strength with which he delivered his teachings. By constant exhortations and instructions, he drew his people together and inspired them in carrying out the divine mandate to build up the kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

When Brigham Young first entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake, he de-

clared, “This is the right place.”<sup>2</sup> He later said:

“God has shown me, that this is the spot to locate his people, and here is where they will prosper; he will temper the elements to the good of the Saints; he will rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful, . . . and we shall build a city and a temple to the most high God in this place.”<sup>3</sup>

Today, we can all attest to the truth of this prophecy. Truly, the desert land and the valleys of the Rocky Mountains are a fruitful and a productive land of promise and prophecy.

*He built temples.* He started the Salt Lake Temple, which took 40 years to complete. He also started the Manti and the Logan Temples. He presided at the dedication of the St. George Temple four and a half months before he died.

*He was one of America’s greatest colonizers.* By the time of his death, nearly 400 colonies had been established.

*He organized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund* to reach out to those in need, assisting those of limited means in emigrating from countries in Europe.

*He established universities.* The University of Deseret is now known as the University of Utah. Latter-day Saints’ College is now known as LDS Business College. And, of course, he also established Brigham Young University.

*He loved the Church and its members.* Brigham Young had a unique way in which he referred to the Church:

“God is at the helm. This is the mighty ship Zion. You stick to the ship and honor it, and see that you are in favor with the ship Zion and you need not worry about anything else. . . .

“ . . . He guides the ship, and will bring us safely into port. All we have to care about is to take care of ourselves and see that we do right. Let us man the ship manfully, everyone standing faithfully and

firmly to his post, and she will outlive every storm and safely bear us to the harbor of celestial bliss.”<sup>4</sup>

*He loved the youth of the Church*, as is evidenced by the experience of Heber J. Grant. Nine days after Heber’s birth, his father, Jedediah M. Grant, who was Second Counselor to President Brigham Young, died. For the next 21 years, Brigham Young took special interest in the boy Heber J. Grant.

Heber J. Grant wrote:

“I was almost as familiar in the homes of President Brigham Young as I was in the home of my own mother. In one home . . . if I was hungry I felt as free to go in and ask for something to eat there as in my own home. . . . I knelt down time and time again in his home in the Lion House at family prayers, as a child and as a young man.”<sup>5</sup>

*He loved the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Of this, he said:

“What I have received from the Lord, I have received by Joseph Smith.”<sup>6</sup>

“I love his doctrine. . . . I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Gordon B. Hinckley**

How I love Brigham Young. His modern-day successor is President Gordon B. Hinckley, also a beloved and revered prophet.

A beautiful painting shows President Hinckley looking forward to the future, a set of architectural drawings before him. In the background is a portrait of Brigham Young, making it appear that President Young looks over President Hinckley’s shoulder.

The portrait of Brigham Young shown in this painting actually hangs in President Hinckley’s office, and he has often spoken of it. In a recent general conference, he said:

“At the close of one particularly difficult day, I looked up at a portrait of

Brigham Young that hangs on my wall. I asked, ‘Brother Brigham, what should we do?’ I thought I saw him smile a little, and then he seemed to say, ‘In my day, I had problems enough of my own. Don’t ask me what to do. This is your watch. Ask the Lord, whose work this really is.’”<sup>8</sup>

These two great prophets, President Brigham Young and President Gordon B. Hinckley, are linked together in their shared prophetic vision that comes from seeing the future and having the faith to bring that vision into present reality.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, is a pioneer and a builder*. He has traveled the world, meeting kings, queens, and presidents. He has been interviewed by the world’s media. He continues to bring the Church “out of obscurity.”<sup>9</sup> More than 75 temples have been built in the last 12 years. And he had the inspiration to build the majestic Conference Center.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, spreads the gospel and values education*. Church membership now approaches 13 million in 176 nations, territories, and countries. More than 53,000 missionaries circle the globe. This conference is being translated into 90 languages. He continues to support Church universities and Church education. More than 26,000 members now enjoy the benefits of the Perpetual Education Fund.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, loves the youth and all members of the Church*. The youth of the Church especially reach out to President Hinckley for prophetic counsel.

*President Hinckley loves the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Several years ago, he said:

“I worship the God of heaven who is my Eternal Father. I worship the Lord Jesus Christ who is my Savior and my Redeemer. I do not worship the Prophet Joseph Smith, but I reverence and love this great seer through whom the miracle of this gospel has been restored. I am now growing old, and I know that in the natural course of events before many years, I will

step across the threshold to stand before my Maker and my Lord and give an accounting of my life. And I hope that I shall have the opportunity of embracing the Prophet Joseph Smith and of thanking him and of speaking of my love for him.”<sup>10</sup>

I bear my humble witness that both President Brigham Young and President Gordon B. Hinckley are prophets who have led the Church by inspiration and revelation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Hugh W. Nibley, in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 4:1611.
2. In B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224.
3. Quoted in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:265.
4. Quoted in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 293, 352.
5. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 223.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 345.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 458.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 82.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 509.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### The “old original Tabernacle”

President Gordon B. Hinckley said in an October 2004 press conference: “I respect this building. I love this building; I honor this building. I want it preserved. . . . I want the old original Tabernacle—its weak joints bound together . . . and strengthened and its natural and wonderful beauty preserved.”<sup>1</sup> Then he looked at me and said, “Don’t you do anything you shouldn’t do, but whatever you do, do well and do right.”

With those stirring but intimidating words, a charge was extended to preserve, strengthen, and return the old original Salt Lake Tabernacle, revitalized and ready for another period of distinguished service.

Today, dear President, we present this senior citizen of a building, all attired in a fresh new finish, fitly framed together in its historical elegance—although a bit more comfortable. The Presiding Bishopric, along with more than 2,000 craftsmen, proudly return the “old original Tabernacle,” along with a 100-year warranty.

President Hinckley’s request to return the “old original Tabernacle” became the

standard for making difficult architectural and construction decisions. The phrase was used to express the essence and objective of the project. It served as the equivalent of Captain Moroni’s title of liberty in that it was, in effect, “hoisted upon every tower” and raised in “whatsoever place”<sup>2</sup> was necessary.

### Renovations to the Tabernacle

If these old walls could talk, they would join in expressing sincere appreciation to FFKR Architects, Jacobsen Construction Company, and most important, the entire Church project team, along with the many whose skills have made a complex endeavor possible. One senior team member remarked, “As we counseled together, the Lord was able to give us capability beyond our own natural means.”

Project members felt great reverence for the beauty of the Tabernacle, for its original builders, and for the quality of their work. They marveled that for more than a century, words of the latter-day prophets, seers, and revelators have gone forth from this podium to the world.

If these old walls could talk, I'm confident they would express appreciation for their new firm foundation. These old walls would be delighted with their new steel belt, which holds them tall and erect. These old walls would say thank you for scraping 14 layers of paint from the ceiling, then patching and applying a beautiful new coat.

These old walls would express gratitude for the protection and beauty of a shiny new aluminum roof and would join with the benches in enjoying the smiles on faces of patrons as they discover the slightly modified seats and a few more inches of knee room.

New facilities to better accommodate the strains of inspirational music would be welcomed and appreciated by these old walls.

One can only imagine what these old walls could recall about the many sermons they carefully listened to over the years.

### **President Joseph F. Smith's vision**

These old walls, if they could talk, would shout, "We were here!" when President Joseph F. Smith rose from a prolonged illness to attend a session of general conference in October 1918. In the opening session, with a voice filled with emotion, he said, "I will not, I dare not, attempt to enter upon many things that are resting upon my mind this morning, and I shall postpone until some future time, the Lord being willing, my attempt to tell you some of the things that are in my mind, and that dwell in my heart." He continued: "I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously."<sup>3</sup> We later learned that on the day before conference started, President Smith received a manifestation recorded as the vision of the redemption of the dead, which later became section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

### **The Church welfare plan**

If these old walls could talk, they would remind us of the bleak, dark days of the Great Depression. They would recall the April 1936 general conference, when President Heber J. Grant announced the Church would inaugurate a Church security plan, later known as the Church welfare plan. Six months later he explained: "Our primary purpose was to set up . . . a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership."<sup>4</sup>

### **Family home evening**

In October 1964, by assignment from President David O. McKay, Elder Harold B. Lee spoke about parental responsibilities. These old walls remember Elder Lee stating he would read from a 1915 letter to the Church signed by the First Presidency. But before starting, he remarked, "I suppose it is something like Mark Twain said about the weather: 'We talk a lot about the weather, but we don't seem to do anything about it.'" Elder Lee then read from the 50-year-old letter:

"We advise and urge the inauguration of a 'Home Evening' throughout the Church, at which time father and mother may gather their boys and girls about them in the home, and teach them the word of the Lord."

And then this promise:

"If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them."<sup>5</sup>

### Elder Bruce R. McConkie's testimony

These old walls remember the profound silence that came over the Tabernacle in 1985 when it was announced that Elder Bruce R. McConkie would address the conference. These old walls felt a deep spirit of reverence as Elder McConkie concluded his remarks with these electrifying words:

"And now, as pertaining to this perfect atonement, wrought by the shedding of the blood of God—I testify that it took place in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, and as pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that he is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person.

"I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

"But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way."<sup>6</sup>

### The proclamation on the family

In 1995 President Gordon B. Hinckley said to the women of the Church, "With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn." He then proceeded to read:

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . .

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."<sup>7</sup>

### A monument and ensign

I'm grateful for this extraordinary building. It stands as a sacred monument to our past and a magnificent ensign of hope for the future. I testify to the divinity of our Father in Heaven and of our Savior's abundant love for each of us. We are greatly blessed to be led by a prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In "Tabernacle to Close for Renovation," *Church News*, Oct. 16, 2004, 4.
2. Alma 46:36; 62:4.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1964, 83–84.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 12; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 11.
7. "Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100–101.

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The choir sang "We Love Thy House, O God."

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### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, who was released this morning as Relief Society general president.

Following her remarks, Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy will speak to us, after which we shall hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and he will be followed by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency. Following

President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "This House We Dedicate to Thee."

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The choir and congregation sang  
"How Firm a Foundation."

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## Bonnie D. Parkin

### Privileges of women in the Church

This afternoon I am honored to represent those Relief Society leaders who, here in this very Tabernacle, shared the doctrines of the kingdom, emphasized the significance of women's roles in the home and family, called each other to charitable service, and reminded their sisters of the joy that comes from righteous living.

From this pulpit in 1870, Eliza R. Snow asked thousands of women a question that I'd like to repeat today: "Do you know of any place on the face of the earth, where [a] woman has more liberty, and where she enjoys such high and glorious privileges as she does here, as a Latter-day Saint?"<sup>1</sup> I bear witness that the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do enjoy grand and glorious privileges.

### Blessing basket

Let me share a sweet story with you. A family was going through a difficult time. It was hard for them not to focus on their challenges. The mother wrote: "Our world had completely crumpled, so we turned to Heavenly Father for guidance. Almost immediately we realized that we were surrounded by goodness and were being cheered on from every side. We began as a family to express our gratitude to each other as well as to the Lord daily. A close friend pointed out to me that our family's 'blessing basket' was overflowing. From that conversation came a sort of

game, which my children and I grew to love. Before family prayer each night we would talk about how our day had gone and then share with each other all of the many blessings that had been added to our 'blessing basket.' The more we expressed gratitude, the more there was to be grateful for. We felt the love of the Lord in a significant way as opportunities for growth presented themselves."<sup>2</sup>

What would a "blessing basket" add to your family?

### A Spirit-filled principle

Gratitude requires awareness and effort, not only to feel it but to express it. Frequently we are oblivious to the Lord's hand. We murmur, complain, resist, criticize; so often we are not grateful. In the Book of Mormon, we learn that those who murmur do not know "the dealings of that God who . . . created them."<sup>3</sup> The Lord counsels us not to murmur because it is then difficult for the Spirit to work with us.

Gratitude is a Spirit-filled principle. It opens our minds to a universe permeated with the richness of a living God. Through it, we become spiritually aware of the wonder of the smallest things, which gladden our hearts with their messages of God's love. This grateful awareness heightens our sensitivity to divine direction. When we communicate gratitude, we can be filled with the Spirit and connected to those around us and the Lord. Gratitude inspires happiness and carries divine influence.

“Live in thanksgiving daily,” said Amulek, “for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.”<sup>4</sup>

Mercies and blessings come in different forms—sometimes as hard things. Yet the Lord said, “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in *all* things.”<sup>5</sup> *All things* means just that: good things, difficult things—not just some things. He has commanded us to be grateful because He knows being grateful will make us happy. This is another evidence of His love.

How do you feel when someone expresses gratitude to you? One Sunday I sat next to a sister in Relief Society and got to know her a little better. A few days later I received an e-mail: “Thank you for sitting next to my daughter in Relief Society. You put your arm around her. You will never know how much that meant to her and to me.”<sup>6</sup> This mother’s words surprised me and brought me happiness.

How do you feel when you express gratitude to another? I’d like to express gratitude to someone who cares about my grandchildren. A few months ago, while visiting in Texas, I asked six-year-old Thomas to tell me about his bishop. He said, “Oh, Grandmother, you will know him. He wears a dark suit, a white shirt like Papa, and he has shiny shoes and a red tie. He wears glasses and always has a smile.” I recognized Thomas’s bishop as soon as I saw him. My heart was filled with gratitude for him. Thank you, Bishop Goodman, and thank you, all you wonderful bishops.

### An expression of faith

Luke chapter 17 records the experience of the Savior when He healed 10 lepers. As you recall, only one of the cleansed lepers returned to express his appreciation. Isn’t it interesting that the Lord did not say, “Your *gratitude* has made you whole”? Instead, He said, “Thy *faith* hath made thee whole.”<sup>7</sup>

The leper’s expression of gratitude was recognized by the Savior as an expres-

sion of his faith. As we pray and express gratitude to a loving but unseen Heavenly Father, we are also expressing our faith in Him. Gratitude is our sweet acknowledgment of the Lord’s hand in our lives; it is an expression of our faith.

### Gratitude in tribulations: hidden blessings

In 1832 the Lord saw the need to prepare the Church for coming tribulations. Tribulations are frightening. And yet the Lord said: “Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

“And he who receiveth *all* things with thankfulness shall be made glorious.”<sup>8</sup>

The kind of gratitude that receives even tribulations with thanksgiving requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit; humility to accept that which we cannot change; willingness to turn everything over to the Lord, even when we do not understand; thankfulness for hidden opportunities yet to be revealed. Then comes a sense of peace.

When was the last time you thanked the Lord for a trial or tribulation? Adversity compels us to go to our knees; does gratitude for adversity do that as well?

President David O. McKay observed, “We find in the bitter chill of adversity the real test of our gratitude . . . , which . . . goes beneath the surface of life, whether sad or joyous.”<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

To my remarkable, faithful sisters of the Church, I thank you for the ways you extend the Lord’s love through your service: your care for families at the death of a loved one, your watchcare as you visit teach, your willingness to build testimonies in children as you serve in Primary, your time preparing young women for womanhood. Thank you for your devotion. I have



experienced the love of the Lord through your faithfulness. I have been blessed to serve among you; my heart is brimming over with gratitude and love for each of you. I have deep gratitude for the priesthood brethren with whom I've served.

My most profound gratitude is for my Savior—an obedient Son, who did all that His Father asked and atoned for every one of us. As I remember Him and acknowledge His goodness, I desire to be like Him. May we be blessed to feel of His love in our lives daily. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”<sup>10</sup> In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Jill C. Mulvay, “Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, winter 1976, 251.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. 1 Nephi 2:12.
4. Alma 34:38.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:7; italics added.
6. Personal correspondence.
7. Luke 17:19; italics added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18–19; italics added.
9. *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 318.
10. 2 Corinthians 9:15.

## Elder Marlin K. Jensen

### Treasured memories

I feel honored to follow Sister Parkin. Her service and teachings as well as those of her counselors have blessed all of us. About this same hour 18 and a half years ago, I was standing near this pulpit waiting for the congregational singing to end, when I was to step forward and give my first general conference address. My anxiety at that moment must have been obvious. Elder L. Tom Perry, who was standing behind me, leaned forward and, in his positive and enthusiastic way, whispered in my ear. “Relax,” he said, “we haven’t lost anyone at that pulpit in years!”

Those encouraging words and the few minutes that followed in which I spoke for the first time to a worldwide audience of Latter-day Saints constitute a treasured memory for me. Like all of you, I am constantly accumulating a reservoir of memories which, when recalled, make up a very useful and often enjoyable part of my consciousness. And, despite resolutions I made as a young man never to weary others with reminiscing when I grew older, I now take great pleasure in sharing my own memories at almost every possible

occasion. Today, however, I wish to speak of a more profound role of memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ than the passive recall and enjoyment of information.

### Active remembering

If we pay close attention to the uses of the word *remember* in the holy scriptures, we will recognize that remembering in the way God intends is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel. This is so because prophetic admonitions to remember are frequently calls to action: to listen, to see, to do, to obey, to repent.<sup>1</sup> When we remember in God’s way, we overcome our human tendency simply to gird for the battle of life and actually engage in the battle itself, doing all in our power to resist temptation and avoid sinning.

King Benjamin called for such active remembering from his people:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your

thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”<sup>2</sup>

### Remembering Church history

Realizing the vital role remembering is to play in our lives, what else ought we to remember? In response, assembled as we are today to remember and rededicate this historic Tabernacle, I suggest that the history of the Church of Jesus Christ and its people deserves our remembrance. The scriptures give the Church’s history high priority. In fact, much of scripture is Church history. On the very day the Church was organized, God commanded Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”<sup>3</sup> Joseph acted on this command by appointing Oliver Cowdery, the second elder in the Church and his chief assistant, as the first Church historian. We keep records to help us remember, and a record of the Church’s rise and progress has been kept from Oliver Cowdery’s time to the present day. This extraordinary historical record reminds us that God has again opened the heavens and revealed truths that call our generation to action.

Of all that has been collected, preserved, and written by historians over those many years, nothing exemplifies the importance and power of the Church’s history more than Joseph Smith’s simple and honest story of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appearing to him in what our history books now call the First Vision. In words that generations of missionaries have committed to memory and shared with seekers of truth the world over, Joseph describes the miraculous way in which he received an answer to his question posed in prayer of which Church is right:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>4</sup>

Hear him, Joseph did! And millions have heard or read and believed his account and have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ he helped restore. I believe Joseph Smith and know he was a true prophet of God. Remembering his experience of the First Vision never fails to stir my soul to greater commitment and action.

### Keeping the past alive

No one has greater appreciation for the value of the Church’s history than President Gordon B. Hinckley. We love his delightful sense of humor, but his sense of history is equally keen. Inspiring stories and anecdotes from our past punctuate his writings and sermons. As our living prophet, he consciously emphasizes the past and the future to help us live more righteously in the present. Because of his teachings, we understand that remembering enables us to see God’s hand in our past, just as prophecy and faith assure us of God’s hand in our future. President Hinckley reminds us how members of the early Church faced their challenges so we, through the grace of God, can more faithfully face our own. By keeping our past alive, he connects us to the people, places, and events that make up our spiritual heritage and, in so doing, motivates us to greater service, faith, and kindness.

In an exemplary way President Hinckley also openly shares from his own personal and family histories. Scores of discouraged new missionaries have been comforted to learn that early in his own

mission, President Hinckley was also discouraged and admitted as much to his father. He even courageously shared his father's brief response: "Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work."<sup>5</sup> Over 70 years later, we are all witnesses to how earnestly President Hinckley took that counsel to heart. His sterling character and prophetic wisdom provide persuasive proof for the benefits of remembering the Church's history as well as our own.

### Remembering the Savior

There is much more to say about memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We often speak of remembering our sacred covenants and God's commandments and of remembering and performing saving ordinances for our deceased ancestors. Most importantly, we speak of the need to remember our Savior Jesus Christ and not just when convenient, but always, as He asks.<sup>6</sup> We witness always to remember Him as we partake of the sacrament. In return, we are promised His

Spirit will always be with us. Interestingly, this is the same Spirit sent by our Heavenly Father to "bring all things to [our] remembrance."<sup>7</sup> Thus, by worthily receiving the sacrament, we are blessed by the Spirit to enter into a wonderfully beneficial circle of remembering, returning again and again in our thinking and devotion to Christ and His Atonement.

Coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him is, I believe, the ultimate purpose of all remembering.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, I pray that God will bless us always to remember, especially His perfect Son, and perish not. I gratefully testify of Christ's divinity and saving power. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 1:12; Mosiah 6:3; Helaman 5:14.
2. Mosiah 4:29–30.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:1.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
5. In Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion* (1989), 115.
6. See 3 Nephi 18:7, 11.
7. John 14:26.
8. See Moroni 10:32–33.

## President James E. Faust

### Rededication of the Tabernacle

It is a great honor and privilege to be part of the rededication service of this great edifice, the Salt Lake Tabernacle, which stands west of the Salt Lake Temple. We acknowledge any and all who have had anything to do with the great work that has been done in this building. We especially thank the Presiding Bishopric—Bishop H. David Burton, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, and Bishop Keith B. McMullin—for their excellent leadership in directing the work of updating and restoring the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

I have fond memories as a boy coming to this Tabernacle. I was baptized

here. When I became a deacon, my father brought me here to attend general priesthood meeting. We came 15 minutes early and were easily able to get a seat in the balcony.

### Meeting places in early days of Church

In the early days of the Church, the only two buildings built specifically for worship were the temples in Kirtland and Nauvoo. Both were built according to revelation. The first recorded Church-constructed building designated as a meetinghouse was also intended to be used as a schoolhouse. It was built of logs in Missouri in 1831.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the Kirtland Temple was dedicated in 1836, it was already too small to hold all the Saints who wanted to attend the dedication. The Prophet Joseph Smith regretfully recorded that the building would not accommodate more.<sup>2</sup> However, as violence against the Saints and their leaders escalated in Kirtland, the main body of the Church moved to Missouri in 1838, leaving this precious building behind.

The Nauvoo Temple followed essentially the same pattern as the Kirtland Temple with respect to the assembly rooms on the first and second floors. However, before the Nauvoo Temple was completed in 1846, the Saints would meet outside, often near the temple, to hear Joseph and the other Church leaders speak. Sometimes thousands attended those meetings.

As George A. Smith observed in his humorous way, “In the days of the Prophet Joseph . . . Mormonism flourished best out of doors.” This was because “we failed to erect a building big enough to hold the Saints previous to the death of the Prophet.”<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally bad weather would interrupt those outdoor services, and both the speakers and congregation were uncomfortable. President Joseph F. Smith, who remembered well the discomfort of those outdoor meetings held near the temple in Nauvoo, said:

“My first recollection of a place of worship was in Nauvoo. It was in a little grove of trees near the site of the temple. In company with my mother I listened here to such men as Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, the Prophet Joseph and the Patriarch Hyrum. I remember quite well attending one meeting in this grove, that a wagon had been drawn up in front of the audience and the Prophet Joseph stood in the box speaking, when it began to rain. Some one or two persons got up and held umbrellas over him, to shield him from the wet. Many of the people had no umbrellas,

and it was very annoying and disagreeable to sit there, but I remember very well, though but a little boy, that there was no one went away from the ground while he spoke.”<sup>4</sup>

### Plans for a canvas tabernacle

Before his death, the Prophet Joseph directed that a canvas tabernacle be built to shelter the Saints during large meetings. In 1845, as the temple was nearing completion, Elder Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve was sent back East to raise funds and to buy “about four thousand yards” of canvas to build what Brigham Young referred to as “the Tabernacle of the congregation in Zion.”<sup>5</sup>

Brother Orson Pratt outlined the proposed location and design of the canvas tabernacle in a letter written on August 30, 1845:

“It is intended to erect a tabernacle of canvass in front of, and joining the Temple on the west. The form of this tabernacle will be that of an ellipse. . . . The area of its base will be sufficient to contain eight or ten thousand persons; its seats will gradually rise one above another in the form of an amphitheatre.”<sup>6</sup>

The brethren the next day began to clear the ground for the construction of the canvas tabernacle. However, because of the intense persecution from their enemies, the Saints had to leave Nauvoo, so the canvas tabernacle was never built. Orson Hyde “loaded the canvas into wagons in 1846 and headed west with it.”<sup>7</sup> Some have speculated that “the canvas was put to good use for such things as tents, tent ends and wagon covers” for the Saints in the exodus to the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>8</sup>

The finished Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City has dimensions roughly similar to the canvas tabernacle contemplated for Nauvoo, and like the proposed Nauvoo tabernacle, it also was situated just west of the temple. As with other matters, such as the great migration

to the West, Joseph Smith envisioned a great tabernacle, and Brigham Young made it a reality.

### Meeting the needs of members

So the tabernacle contemplated for Nauvoo, although never built, was a prototype for this historic building. When I was a boy, we listened to general conference on the radio; now with the use of satellites and modern electronic equipment, we broadcast from Salt Lake City to whole countries worldwide at one time—as we’re doing now—using downlinks to buildings all over the world. This came about because of the inspiration that came to the Brethren to meet the needs of the people in our day and time. This is a good example of how the Lord makes it possible to meet the needs of the members of the Church. I testify that the Lord will continue to reveal through His prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, the ways and means to meet the needs of all members in an ever-growing Church.

I am grateful this magnificent building has been strengthened and renewed so

it can continue to be used to instruct and edify the children of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Richard W. Jackson, *Places of Worship: 150 Years of Latter-day Saint Architecture* (2003), 16.
2. See *History of the Church*, 2:410–11.
3. *Deseret News*, Aug. 29, 1855, 194.
4. “The Spirit of Worship,” *Improvement Era*, June 1910, 749–50.
5. Brigham Young to the Saints Abroad, June 17, 1845, in *New York Messenger*, Aug. 16, 1845, 52; see also *History of the Church*, 7:427; Elden J. Watson, “The Nauvoo Tabernacle,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 416.
6. Orson Pratt to Reuben Hedlock, Aug. 20, 1845, in *New York Messenger*, Aug. 30, 1845, 67; see also *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 420.
7. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (2002), 480.
8. *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 421; see also William Smith claim in Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 754, note 86.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, both here in the Tabernacle and listening by various means throughout the world, it is a joy for me to stand before you once again in this magnificent building. In this setting one cannot help but feel the spirit of the early Saints who constructed this beautiful house of worship, as well as all those who over the years have labored to preserve and beautify it.

I have been thinking recently of the many significant events in my life which are associated with the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Although there are far too many for me to mention today, I would like to share just a few.

### Baptism in the Tabernacle

I recall the time I approached baptism, when I was eight years of age. My mother talked with me about repentance and about the meaning of baptism; and then, on a Saturday in September of 1935, she took me on a streetcar to the Tabernacle baptistry which, until recently, was here in this building. At the time it was not as customary as it is now for fathers to baptize their children, since the ordinance was generally performed on a Saturday morning or afternoon, and many fathers were working at their daily professions or trades. I dressed in white and was baptized. I remember that day as though it

were yesterday and the happiness I felt at having had this ordinance performed.

Over the years and particularly during the time I served as a bishop, I witnessed many other baptisms in the Tabernacle font. Each was a special and inspiring occasion, and each served to remind me of my own baptism.

### **A prophetic warning in 1950**

In April of 1950, my wife, Frances, and I were in attendance at the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, held in this building. President George Albert Smith was the President of the Church, and in closing the conference, he delivered an inspiring and powerful message concerning the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Before he concluded his remarks, however, he sounded a prophetic warning. Said he: "It will not be long until calamities will overtake the human family unless there is speedy repentance. It will not be long before those who are scattered over the face of the earth by millions will die . . . because of what will come" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 169). These were alarming words, for they came from a prophet of God.

Two and a half months after that general conference, on June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea—a war which would eventually claim an estimated 2.5 million lives. This event prompted me to reflect on the statement President Smith made as we sat in this building that spring day.

### **Call to the apostleship**

I attended many general conference sessions in the Tabernacle, always being edified and inspired by the words of the Brethren. Then, in October of 1963, President David O. McKay invited me to his office and extended to me a call to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles. He asked that I keep this sacred call confidential, revealing it to no one except my wife, and that I be present for general conference in the Tabernacle the next day, when my name would be read aloud.

The following morning I came into the Tabernacle not knowing exactly where to sit. Being a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee, I determined that I would be seated among the members of that committee. I noticed a friend of mine by the name of Hugh Smith, who was also a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee. He motioned for me to sit by him. I couldn't say a thing to him about my call, but I sat down.

During the session, the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were sustained and, of course, my name was read. I believe the walk from the audience to the stand was the longest walk of my life.

It has been nearly 44 years since that conference. Until the year 2000, when the Conference Center was dedicated, it was my privilege to deliver 101 general conference messages from the pulpit in this building, not including those given at general auxiliary conferences and other meetings held here. My remarks today bring the total to 102. I have had many spiritual experiences over the years as I have stood here.

### **A message for a little girl**

During the message I delivered at general conference in October 1975, I felt prompted to direct my remarks to a little girl with long blonde hair who was seated in the balcony of this building. I called the attention of the audience to her and felt a freedom of expression which testified to me that this small girl needed the message I had in mind concerning the faith of another young lady.

At the conclusion of the session, I returned to my office and found waiting for me a young child by the name of Misti White, together with her grandparents and

an aunt. As I greeted them, I recognized Misti as the one in the balcony to whom I had directed my remarks. I learned that as her eighth birthday approached, she was in a quandary concerning whether or not to be baptized. She felt she would like to be baptized, and her grandparents, with whom she lived, wanted her to be baptized, but her less-active mother suggested she wait until she was 18 years of age to make the decision. Misti had told her grandparents, "If we go to conference in Salt Lake City, maybe Heavenly Father will let me know what I should do."

Misti and her grandparents and her aunt had traveled from California to Salt Lake City for conference and were able to obtain seats in the Tabernacle for the Saturday afternoon session. This was where they were seated when my attention was drawn to Misti and my decision made to speak to her.

As we continued our visit after the session, Misti's grandmother said to me, "I think Misti has something she would like to tell you." This sweet young girl said, "Brother Monson, while you were speaking in conference, you answered my question. I want to be baptized!"

The family returned to California, and Misti was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through all the years since, Misti has remained true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fourteen years ago, it was my privilege to perform her temple marriage to a fine young man, and together they are rearing five beautiful children, with another one on the way.

My brothers and sisters, I feel privileged to be standing once again at the Tabernacle pulpit in this building which holds for me such wonderful memories. The Tabernacle is a part of my life—a part which I cherish.

## **A pledge of rededication**

I have been honored and pleased during my lifetime to raise my arm to the square in sustaining nine Church Presidents as their names have been read. This morning I joined you in sustaining once again our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. It is a joy and a privilege to serve by his side, along with President Faust.

As this building is rededicated today, may we pledge to rededicate our lives to the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who so willingly died that we might live. May we follow in His footsteps each day, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "This House We Dedicate to Thee."

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## **President Hinckley**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately.

We thank the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon and express our thanks to all who have participated.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks and dedicatory prayer, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Spirit of God." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

This afternoon, my brothers and sisters, we gather again in this historic Tabernacle, where we have met in conference so many times before.

### Changes in the Tabernacle

Now this building has undergone extensive renovation and remodeling to bring it up to the latest seismic code. With this undertaking, we hope and pray that its historical features have not been destroyed.

Some of the old benches have been saved and will continue to be used. But as you've already discovered, the new benches are just as hard as the old ones were!

Exits have been added to meet modern-day requirements. The great stone pillars, which constitute its outside walls, have been greatly strengthened and fortified. The roof has been strengthened with the addition of steel trusses, with new roofing applied.

Changes in this building, I remind you, are not new. Even shortly after the days of its creation, it was modified. Originally there was no balcony, and this had to be added.

### A centerpiece for the community

Through these many years, this has been a unique and wonderful place of assembly. Many men and women have spoken here, testifying of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the time of Brigham Young to the present, every prophet has spoken from this pulpit. Other men and women of note have spoken, including various presidents of the United States. It has been a home for the arts and culture of this community. The Utah Symphony first used this as a place to perform. Great artistic productions have been presented here, such as the *Messiah* and the Tanner Gift of Music.

Funeral services for men and women of prominence have been conducted here. It has truly been a centerpiece for this community through all of these many years.

This is a peculiar building, the only one of its kind in all the world. It was built almost a century and a half ago in the days of the poverty of our people. It was literally a Tabernacle built in the wilderness. The temple was far from finished at the time. Those who built the Tabernacle did so with faith, as well as their rudimentary architectural skills. Skeptics, of whom there are always many, predicted that when the scaffolding was removed, the roof would come down with it. This did not happen, and it has remained in place through sunshine and storm through all of these many years.

It has become known across the world as the home of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, whose weekly radio broadcast has been heard longer than any other network program, over a period of more than 75 years, since 1929.

Now each Sabbath day, *Music and the Spoken Word* will again go to the world from this Tabernacle at "the crossroads of the West." It will again be home to the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square and will also accommodate many other productions and undertakings. It will be used for stake and regional conferences, public lectures, musical concerts, and other entertainment.

The *Millennial Star*, published in England, recorded under date of Saturday, October 9, 1875, that John Taylor gave a lengthy and detailed prayer dedicating this sacred structure some years after its initial use.

And now, my brothers and sisters, as we conclude this meeting, I invite all of you to join with me in bowing your heads and closing your eyes as we offer a prayer of rededication.



### Dedicatory prayer

O God, our Eternal Father, with bowed heads we come before Thee in reverence on this historic occasion. We are met in this great Tabernacle, now renovated and refurbished after more than a century of use.

Acting in the authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ, we dedicate, rededicate, and consecrate this, the Salt Lake Tabernacle, to Thee and to Thy Beloved Son, that through many years yet to come it may serve as a place where Thy people may gather for many reasons.

As we contemplate this occasion, our thoughts return to the Prophet Joseph, who was an instrument in Thy hands in restoring the eternal gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with all of the gifts and authority and blessings that accompany this.

We thank Thee for the great faith of our people who were driven from Nauvoo and who, with great suffering, including the death of many, crossed Iowa to establish Winter Quarters and subsequently undertook the long march which carried them from Winter Quarters to this valley of the Great Salt Lake.

We thank Thee for the inspired leadership of President Brigham Young, who, having never previously seen this valley, except in vision, led our people here. He knew very little about the area. He was

not familiar with the soil or the climate, the water or other features. In this desert place those pioneers plowed and planted, irrigated, cultivated, and harvested the fruits of their labors. They laid out a city, which has now become large with many hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.

At one time most of the Latter-day Saints lived here in this valley and in other surrounding areas where settlements were established. Now Thy work has grown and spread over the earth until we have more members outside of this nation than we have in it.

Dear Father, please continue to prosper Thy work. Cause it to increase and grow. Bless the people as they contribute of their tithes and offerings to make possible its growth and spread. May it go forth and fill the whole earth as the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands was destined to roll forth and fill the earth. Wilt Thou raise up strong leaders through the generations to come, and may Thy people rejoice and find great happiness in their service in Thy work.

Accordingly, we dedicate, rededicate, and consecrate this sacred structure, and all of this we do and ask in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder R. Conrad Schultz offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 177th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University.

Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 177th An-

nual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald Staheli, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Rise Up, O Men of God.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Wayne S. Peterson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Wayne S. Peterson offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Peterson. The choir will now sing “Brightly Beams Our Father’s Mercy.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

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The choir sang “Brightly Beams Our Father’s Mercy.”

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## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Life-changing experiences during youth**

Lately I have reflected on many of the wonderful experiences I’ve had in my life. As I have expressed gratitude to my Heavenly Father for these marvelous blessings and opportunities, I have realized, perhaps more than ever before, how critical the formative years of my life were.

Many of the most important and life-changing moments of my life occurred when I was a young man. The lessons I learned then formed my character and shaped my destiny. Without them, I would be a very different man and in a very different place than I am today. This evening, I would like to talk for a few minutes about some of these experiences and what I learned from them.

### **“Keep your eye on the ball”**

I’ll never forget one high school football game against a rival school. I played

the wingback position, and my assignment was to either block the linebacker or try to get open so the quarterback could throw me the ball. The reason I remember this particular game so well is because the fellow on the other side of the line—the man I was supposed to block—was a giant.

I wasn’t exactly the tallest athlete in the world. But I think this other guy may have been. I remember looking up at him, thinking he probably weighed as much as two of me. Keep in mind, when I played we didn’t have the protective gear that players have today. My helmet was made of leather, and it didn’t have a face guard.

The more I thought about it, the more I came to a sobering realization: if I ever let him catch me, I could be cheering for my team the rest of the season from a hospital bed.

Lucky for me, I was fast. And for the better part of the first half, I managed to avoid him.

Except for one play.

Our quarterback dropped back to pass. I was open. He threw the ball, and it sailed toward me.

The only problem was that I could hear a lumbering gallop behind me. In a moment of clarity, I thought that if I caught the ball there was a distinct possibility I could be eating my meals through a tube. But the ball was heading for me, and my team was depending on me. So I reached out, and—at the last instant—I looked up.

And there he was.

I remember the ball hitting my hands. I remember struggling to hang on to it. I remember the sound of the ball falling to the turf. After that, I'm not exactly sure what happened, because the giant hit me so hard I wasn't sure what planet I was on. One thing I did remember was a deep voice coming from behind a dark haze: "Serves you right for being on the wrong team."

William McKinley Oswald was my high school football coach. He was a great coach and had a profound influence on my life. But I think he could have learned his method of motivating players from an army drill sergeant.

That day, during his halftime speech, Coach Oswald reminded the whole team about the pass I had dropped. Then he pointed right at me and said, "How could you do that?"

He wasn't speaking with his inside voice.

"I want to know what made you drop that pass."

I stammered for a moment and then finally decided to tell the truth. "I took my eye off the ball," I said.

The coach looked at me and said, "That's right; you took your eye off the ball. Don't ever do that again. That kind of mistake loses ball games."

I respected Coach Oswald, and in spite of how terrible I felt, I made up my mind to do what Coach said. I vowed to never take my eye off the ball again, even

if it meant getting pounded to Mongolia by the giant on the other side of the line.

We headed back onto the field and started the second half. It was a close game, and even though my team had played well, we were behind by four points late in the fourth quarter.

The quarterback called my number on the next play. I went out again, and again I was open. The ball headed toward me. But this time, the giant was in front of me and in perfect position to intercept the pass.

He reached up, but the ball sailed through his hands. I jumped high, never taking my eye off the ball, stabbed at it, and pulled it down for the game-winning touchdown.

I don't remember much about the celebration after, but I do remember the look on Coach Oswald's face.

"Way to keep your eye on the ball," he said.

I think I smiled for a week.

### **Working toward righteous goals**

I have known many great men and women. Although they have different backgrounds, talents, and perspectives, they all have this in common: they work diligently and persistently toward achieving their goals. It's easy to get distracted and lose focus on the things that are most important in life. I've tried to remember the lessons I learned from Coach Oswald and prioritize values that are important to me so that I can keep my eye focused on things that really matter.

I urge you to examine your life. Determine where you are and what you need to do to be the kind of person you want to be. Create inspiring, noble, and righteous goals that fire your imagination and create excitement in your heart. And then keep your eye on them. Work consistently toward achieving them.

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams," wrote Henry David

Thoreau, “and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, never take your eye off the ball.

### **Avoiding temptations**

Another lesson I learned on the football field was at the bottom of a pile of 10 other players. It was the Rocky Mountain Conference championship game, and the play called for me to run the ball up the middle to score the go-ahead touchdown. I took the handoff and plunged into the line. I knew I was close to the goal line, but I didn’t know how close. Although I was pinned at the bottom of the pile, I reached my fingers forward a couple of inches and I could feel it. The goal line was two inches away.

At that moment I was tempted to push the ball forward. I could have done it. And when the refs finally pulled the players off the pile, I would have been a hero. No one would have ever known.

I had dreamed of this moment from the time I was a boy. And it was right there within my reach. But then I remembered the words of my mother. “Joseph,” she had often said to me, “do what is right, no matter the consequence. Do what is right and things will turn out OK.”

I wanted so desperately to score that touchdown. But more than being a hero in the eyes of my friends, I wanted to be a hero in the eyes of my mother. And so I left the ball where it was—two inches from the goal line.

I didn’t know it at the time, but this was a defining experience. Had I moved the ball, I could have been a champion for a moment, but the reward of temporary glory would have carried with it too steep and too lasting a price. It would have engraved upon my conscience a scar that would have stayed with me the remainder of my life. I knew I must do what is right.

The Light of Christ helps us to discern right from wrong. When we allow temptations to drown out the still voice of our conscience—that is when decisions become difficult.

My parents taught me to react quickly when temptation comes and to say “No!” instantly and emphatically. I recommend that same counsel to you. Avoid temptations.

### **The joy of service**

Another lesson I learned was the joy of service to others. I have spoken before of how my father, who was the bishop of our ward, had me load up my wagon and deliver needed food and supplies to the homes of those families who were in need. He wasn’t alone in his desire to reach out to those in distress.

Seventy-five years ago, Bishop William F. Perschon presided over the Fourth Ward of the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City. He was a German immigrant, a convert to the Church, and he spoke with a thick accent. He was a fine businessman, but what most distinguished him was his great compassion for others.

Each week during priesthood meeting, Bishop Perschon had the Aaronic Priesthood bearers recite the following phrase: “Priesthood means service; bearing the priesthood, I will serve.”

It wasn’t merely a slogan. When widows needed assistance, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there to help. When a chapel was being built, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there. When the sugar beets and potatoes at the welfare farm needed weeding or harvesting, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there.

Later, William Perschon served in the stake presidency, where he influenced a young bishop by the name of Thomas S. Monson. In the 1950s, Bishop Perschon was called to preside over the Swiss-Austrian Mission and played an instru-

mental role in building the first “overseas” temple, located in Bern, Switzerland.

You could scarcely think of Bishop Perschon without thinking of his concern and compassion for others and his untiring commitment to teach that same quality to others. Of the young men in the Aaronic Priesthood over whom he presided as bishop, 29 went on to become bishops themselves. Ten served in stake presidencies. Five became mission presidents, three accepted calls as temple presidents, and two served as General Authorities.<sup>2</sup>

That is the power of a great leader, brethren. That is the power of service.

Although I didn’t fully understand it at the time, it is clear to me now that these lessons—and many others I learned as a youth—served as the foundation upon which the rest of my life has been built.

### **An obedient spirit**

We all possess spiritual gifts. Some are blessed with the gift of faith, others the gift of healing. In the body of the Church, all of the spiritual gifts are present. In my case, perhaps one of the spiritual gifts for which I am most grateful is that I have been blessed with an obedient spirit. When I heard wise counsel from my parents or Church leaders, I listened and tried to make it part of my thoughts and actions.

Brethren of the priesthood, I urge you to cultivate the gift of an obedient spirit. The Savior taught that “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man. . . . And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man.”<sup>3</sup>

How do we know if we are wise or foolish? When we hear inspired counsel, we obey. That is the test of wise or foolish.

What does it profit us if we listen to wise counsel and do not heed the words? Of what use is experience if we do not learn from it? What good are the scriptures if we do not cherish the words and incorporate them into our lives?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has promised that “[Heavenly Father] will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments.”<sup>4</sup>

I add my voice to his.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind. I testify that God is close at hand. He cares about us and loves us, His children. Prophets, seers, and revelators guide the progress of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands as a latter-day prophet to the Church and to the world.

I give thanks to my Creator for this wonderful life where each of us has the opportunity to learn lessons we could not fully comprehend by any other means.

My dear brethren, may we set righteous goals and work to achieve them, do what is right, and reach out in love to those around us. This is my prayer and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *Walden* (1965), 240.
2. Letter from Elder Glen L. Rudd to President Thomas S. Monson, Feb. 5, 1987.
3. Matthew 7:24, 26.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.

## **Elder Robert D. Hales**

What a joy to be in your presence, brethren, as you are gathered across this world. I am reminded of the words of the hymn: “Behold! A royal army, with banner,

sword, and shield, is marching forth to conquer on life’s great battlefield.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, you are the royal army of God, faithful and true.

## Message to the Aaronic Priesthood

Tonight I wish to speak to the youngest members of this royal army—the Aaronic Priesthood: deacons, teachers, and priests venturing forth upon the battlefield of life. Although you do not remember it, you enlisted in this cause with a single decision, made long ago in our premortal existence. There, in the Grand Council in Heaven, you decided to obey the will of your Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Remember this: you are a son of God who decided to follow the Savior when it mattered most, and that makes you a great man indeed.

Because of that divine decision which determined your eternal progression, you received a physical body, gained the agency to choose good over evil, and are now growing and preparing to take upon yourselves the attributes of our Savior. You have been baptized and have received the Holy Ghost. You are learning who you are, why you are here, and where you are going. And now you have received the Aaronic Priesthood!

The Aaronic Priesthood is the preparatory priesthood, given for this preparatory time in your life. *How* you bear that priesthood now will *prepare* you to make the most important decisions in the future. These decisions include receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, going to the temple, serving a mission, getting an education, selecting an occupation, and choosing a companion and being sealed for time and for all eternity in the holy temple. There is a time and season for all of our decisions. Make sure you make decisions in the proper time and season. All of these life-altering decisions will be made in a very busy, relatively short period during your 20s—during what I call the “Decade of Decision.”

## The time for preparation

While training to be a jet fighter pilot, I prepared to make such vital decisions in a

flight simulator. For example, I practiced deciding when to bail out of an airplane if the fire warning light came on and I began to spin out of control. I remember one dear friend who didn’t make these preparations. He would find a way out of simulator training and then go to play golf or swim. He never learned his emergency procedures! A few months later, fire erupted in his plane, and it spun toward the ground in flames. Noting the fire warning light, his younger companion, having developed a preconditioned response, knew when to bail out of the plane and parachuted to safety. But my friend who had not prepared to make that decision stayed with the plane and died in the crash.

In the decade ahead, your time for preparation will be limited. As you are Aaronic Priesthood bearers, it is important that you prepare now. You must develop your own preconditioned responses for the important decisions you will make in the next decade of your life. You must know what to do and when to do it when each decision presents itself. Remember that making no decision at all could be just as deadly as making the wrong decision. Many of the decisions you make or don’t make will have eternal consequences.

## Now is the time

*Now is the time* to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, which means accepting His invitation to “come, follow me.”<sup>2</sup> This is the decision we made in our premortal lives. Now we must make it again here in mortality, every day, in every situation by taking the Savior’s name upon us, remembering His atoning sacrifice, and keeping His commandments. This we covenanted to do when we were baptized, and we have the opportunity to renew those covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament.

*Now is the time* to organize and prepare ourselves to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. This means doing what your parents and leaders have

taught you to do—study the scriptures; pray morning and night; keep a neat, well-groomed appearance; follow a schedule; set and achieve goals; be honest in your dealings; keep commitments; and be worthy of the priesthood you bear. Always, always live the standards, revealed by prophets, in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*.

*Now is the time* to decide who your friends are and to become worthy of a righteous eternal companion. It is very simple, brethren. As my mother taught me, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Your peer group can inspire you to do great things or tempt you into strange and miserable paths. True friends make it easier to live the gospel. They never make us choose between their ways and the Lord’s ways. They help us be the kind of person that attracts other true friends. And they help us *become* the kind of person a righteous companion can choose to be with forever. If you want those kinds of friends, ask yourself: “Am I that kind of friend to others? Am I the kind of person I want my eternal companion to be?”

*Now is the time* to prepare for your mission. Depending upon your individual circumstance, you may be able to serve a full-time proselyting mission. While this is important, remember that even more important is going to the temple *on the way* to your mission. A mission is a priceless opportunity to keep temple covenants by living the law of consecration—giving all of your time, gifts, and talents to the Lord and serving Him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. I have always felt that the two years you serve will be a tithing of time on the first 20 years of your life. But even if you are not able to serve a full-time mission, you can prepare for one day in the future, when the time is right, to go to the temple to make sacred covenants so that you can receive your eternal blessings.

*Now is the time* to prepare for training, education, and an occupation. As young men of the Aaronic Priesthood,

you are in the internship of life. Your diligence in school now will qualify you to keep President Hinckley’s counsel in the future—to get all of the education you can.<sup>3</sup> Decide now to do your best in school and at work. Then, when opportunities knock, you will be ready to open the door and take advantage of them. We should all remember: “To every man is given a gift.”<sup>4</sup> Develop your gifts and talents. Young men, prayerfully select classes, training programs, and jobs that will prepare you for greater opportunities and more responsibility in the future.

*Now is the time* to obey. In the premortal existence, ours was not a selective obedience. We did not pick and choose which parts of the eternal plan to follow. I learned that lesson on our first night flying solo in pilot training when all of us were given the instruction: “Don’t fly acrobatic patterns at night. You are beginning pilots without instrument flight training.” Some time later, an otherwise good pilot and a great friend chose to disobey that command. As he flew loops and barrel rolls through the night sky over Texas, he looked through the cockpit canopy and thought he saw stars above him, but he was really seeing the lights of oil rigs below. He was experiencing vertigo: the g-forces on his plane made it seem he was right side up, yet he was upside down. As he pulled up on the stick to climb higher into the night sky, he dove toward the earth and crashed into the twinkling lights of the oil field below.

When you are flying an airplane, if you change your position by just one degree at a time, your inner ear cannot detect the change. Brethren young and old, when we practice selective obedience, we change our position relative to the Lord—and usually by only one degree at a time. As the deceptive forces of the adversary work on us, we cannot detect them, and we experience spiritual vertigo. While it may *seem* like we are going in a safe direction, we are in fact headed for disaster. In the

preexistence, our decision to follow the Lord was all-or-nothing. Following that pattern through our mortal probation will get each of us back to our Heavenly Father.

*Now is the time* to use our time properly. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God.”<sup>5</sup> I testify that your time on earth will be sufficient if you learn to use it wisely in your youth. “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.”<sup>6</sup>

*Now is the time* to safeguard your birthright. Nearing the end of his life, the Old Testament prophet Jacob gave a father’s blessing to each of his sons. Reuben was the firstborn and had the birthright—special blessings intended just for him. But in his blessing to Reuben, his father said, “Thou art . . . unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”<sup>7</sup> Think for a moment about what the phrase *unstable as water* means. When water gets hot, it evaporates. When it gets cold, it freezes. When it is unchanneled, it causes erosion and destroys whatever may be in its path.

As bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, you too have a birthright. I challenge you to be obedient and strong. I challenge you not to let your resolve dribble out and your commitment to follow the Savior evaporate. Be firm as a rock in living the gospel. None of us know all the blessings that await us. The only way we lose those blessings is to give them up through disobedience. Don’t give up your eternal heritage for the things of this world. Let us be obedient and prepare now to honor, protect, and receive our glorious birthright.

### The law of the harvest

Young men, you are the vital strength of the Lord’s army, the stripling warriors of these latter days.<sup>8</sup> “Whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap.”<sup>9</sup> Contemplating the glorious harvest ahead, I invite you to ponder how you will make decisions during the coming decade.

The law of the harvest offers a pattern for making decisions. Prepare the soil through prayer, knowing that you are a son of God. Plant the seeds by counseling with those who will give sound advice; then seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let the seeds of inspiration grow. The budding ideas need tending. They need time to mature. The light of inspiration will bring the spiritual harvest which will come when we ask our Heavenly Father in prayer if we have made a correct decision. As we follow that light, the darkness will vanish and the light will grow “brighter and brighter until the perfect day”<sup>10</sup>—that day when we are in the presence of our Father in Heaven.

### Be there

Finally, *be there*. Each of us was *there* in the Council in Heaven to choose the great plan of happiness we now enjoy. Young men, when you have made a commitment to yourself, your family, your bishop, your employer, *be there*. When it is time to be in church, at Mutual, or fulfilling a priesthood assignment, *be there*. When it is time to graduate from school or training programs, *be there*. When it is time to serve a mission, *be there*. When the young woman you love most kneels at the altar of God’s holy temple, *be there* (and not as a witness). When your family is gathered in the celestial kingdom, *be there*. When the Savior waits to greet you as you return with honor from your life on this earth and your Heavenly Father wants to encircle you about in the arms of His love, *be there*.

After your decade of decision, go onward and upward. “Rise up, O [ye] men of God!”<sup>11</sup> Be faithful husbands and fathers. Be true. Rise up and be worthy of the worthy daughters of God who support and sustain us. May we honor them as we honor the Lord.

I testify that your Heavenly Father knows you are here tonight. You are part of His mighty, royal army whose “ranks



are filled with soldiers, united, bold, and strong, who follow their Commander and sing their joyful song: Victory, victory, thru him that redeemed us! Victory, victory, thru Jesus Christ, our Lord!”<sup>12</sup> He is there, He wants us to be with Him, He leads us, and our victory is in Him, I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Behold! A Royal Army,” *Hymns*, no. 251.

2. Luke 18:22.
3. See “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.
5. Alma 34:32.
6. Alma 37:35.
7. Genesis 49:3–4.
8. See Alma 53.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 6:33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
11. *Hymns*, no. 323.
12. *Hymns*, no. 251.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### You are in charge of your world

My dear brethren, how blessed we are to be assembled together with the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles. Each priesthood bearer present, be he 12 or 112, can, because of our Savior Jesus Christ, inherit the celestial order of life “by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> This is wonderful to contemplate, and I know it is true. You are in charge of your world!

With this prospect before us, consider the following story. A young man, full of ambition and energy, enrolled in a fine university. At the time, he was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. His goal was lofty—he wanted to become a doctor. His aim was ambitious—he wanted to be rich. He wanted to play football, so he sought out the coaches and eventually made the team. Now he could have the recognition and bragging rights unique in the world of university sports. Such were the notions in his head.

But he had given little thought to something that would ultimately dismantle his lofty and vain ambitions—he had failed to lay up in store. He had overlooked the importance of adequate preparation, the requirements of regular attendance and disciplined study, and the college chem-

istry class. The consequence was swift and merciless. It took less than 90 days. It happened this way:

The day he found his 5-foot 8-inch, 170-pound body on the line of scrimmage opposite a mammoth lineman from the varsity squad, he knew he was in the wrong sport.

Unaccustomed to rigorous study, his eyes and mind refused to function after a brief time in the books.

The capstone of defeat was the final chemistry exam. Suffice it to say that his random answers to multiple-choice questions did not even approximate the law of averages. He failed miserably.

Hard work, a mission that awakened in him a correct vision of life’s purposes, and unrelenting preparation eventually overcame the consequence of this brief period of foolishness. Even today, however, I still have nightmares about that chemistry class.

Fortunately, the Lord has shown us how to avoid similar foolishness. He said:

“Hearken, O ye people of my church. . . . Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together. . . .

“Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh.”<sup>2</sup>

### **“If ye are prepared ye shall not fear”**

The doctrine of the Second Coming of the Messiah provides one of the great incentives to prepare and live right. Heavenly Father knows that promised rewards encourage His children to do works of righteousness and promised penalties create a dread of doing evil. Such are the revelations pertaining to the Second Coming of our Lord.<sup>3</sup>

These revelations speak of signs and wonders on earth and in the heavens. They point to troublesome times and pending events vast in scope and duration. And most important, we receive these supernal promises:

“The Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst.”<sup>4</sup>

“Through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, . . . the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world.”<sup>5</sup>

And “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>6</sup>

Priesthood bearers are led by these promises to prepare themselves and their families for the Lord’s appearing.<sup>7</sup> There is no need to be anxious about events leading up to the Second Coming. Let us instead be filled with gratitude for our understanding of what lies ahead. Let us appreciate that we are in charge of our own world, being the Lord’s agents over that which He has entrusted to us.<sup>8</sup> The formula is simple: Be faithful. Unencumber your life. Lay up in store.

*Be faithful.* As priesthood bearers, we cultivate a gentle touch and kindly word. We are men who pray, who keep the Sabbath day holy, and who know the word of God. We tithe, fast, and give a generous fast offering. We keep our covenants and consecrate our lives to the building up of God’s kingdom.

And, brethren, we *lay up in store!* As we do these things, “the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in [our] midst.”<sup>9</sup>

*Unencumber your life.* As men of God, we turn from excess to that which edifies, for “that which doth not edify is not of God.”<sup>10</sup> If dealings or involvements or pursuits or schedules detract from putting God first, we must pare back and unencumber our lives.<sup>11</sup> If we have debts, we pay them and live debt free to the extent possible.

And, brethren, we *lay up in store!* Then, “through [the Lord’s] providence, notwithstanding the tribulation . . . the church [and its people will] stand independent.”<sup>12</sup>

*Lay up in store.* Wives are instrumental in this work, but they need husbands who lead out in family preparedness. Children need parents who instill in them this righteous tradition. They will then do likewise with their children, and their stores will not fail.

A cardinal principle of the gospel is to prepare for the day of scarcity. Work, industry, frugality are part of the royal order of life. Remember these words from Paul: “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Counsel from the First Presidency**

Seated before us are the three presiding high priests who constitute the First Presidency of the Church.

From President James E. Faust, Second Counselor, we hear: “Every father and mother are the family’s storekeepers. They should store whatever their own family would like to have in the case of an emergency . . . [and] God will sustain us through our trials.”<sup>14</sup>

From President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor, we hear: “Many more people could ride out the storm-tossed waves in their economic lives if they had their year’s supply of food . . . and were debt-free. Today we find that many have followed this counsel in reverse: they have

at least a year's supply of debt and are food-free."<sup>15</sup>

From President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord's prophet, we hear:

"The best place to have some food set aside is within our homes. . . .

"We can begin ever so modestly. We can begin with a one week's food supply and gradually build it to a month and then to three months. . . . I fear that so many feel that a long-term food supply is so far beyond their reach that they make no effort at all.

"Begin in a small way . . . and gradually build toward a reasonable objective."<sup>16</sup>

### Members should begin to store and save

Inspired preparation rests on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, obedience, and a provident lifestyle. Members should not go to extremes, but they should begin.

We call upon priesthood bearers to store sufficient so that you and your family can weather the vicissitudes of life. Please see to it that those entrusted to your watchcare receive these two pamphlets entitled *All Is Safely Gathered In*. Exhort them to prepare now for rainy days ahead.

Priesthood leaders, enlist the Relief Society in promoting family preparedness and homemaking. The women of the Church need your backing and will respond to your leadership.

Encourage our members to regularly put into their home storage a few wholesome, basic food items and some water that is safe to drink. They should save some money, if only a few coins each week. This modest approach will soon enable them to have several months' reserve. Over time they can expand these modest efforts into a longer-term supply by adding such essentials as grains, legumes, and other staples that will keep them alive in case they do not have anything else to eat.<sup>17</sup>

As we do our very best, we can be confident that "the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail."<sup>18</sup>

We shall enjoy greater wisdom, security, peace of mind, and personal well-being. We shall be prepared, and because we are prepared, we "shall not fear."<sup>19</sup>

### One family's preparation

In closing, I introduce to you the Luca and Patrizia Vaccarone family. They live in a small town near Rome, Italy. In a recent letter, they wrote:

"We decided after some experience that it is important to store the items we use. Sometimes we have to modify our habits in eating certain kinds of foods. . . .

"The feeling of peace and the desire to be faithful to the commandment given by the Lord through the modern prophet helps us feel the Holy Spirit, . . . to not be afraid, and to see that the signs of the time for the Second Coming of the Lord is a blessing and not something to fear. We rejoice in it. . . . It gives us the motivation to be faithful and endure to the end and to be saved and obtain eternal life."

As a final thought, Brother Vaccarone writes: "I'm sorry for my English. I hope you understand what I tried to explain to you."<sup>20</sup>

Brother and Sister Vaccarone, we understand, for it is written in scripture: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>21</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:1, 12.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 1:677–78.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
7. See 2 Timothy 4:8; Doctrine and Covenants 133:50, 52.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:13–17.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:23.
11. See *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:675–76; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
13. 1 Timothy 5:8; see also 1 Timothy 6:19; Doctrine and Covenants 29:34; “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1900, 46; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (1979–81), 2:155.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 22.
15. “That Noble Gift—Love at Home,” *Church News*, May 12, 2001, 7.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 58.
17. See *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 314.
18. 1 Kings 17:14; see also vv. 8–16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
20. Letter dated Mar. 3, 2007.
21. Proverbs 3:5–6.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us, and following his remarks, it will be my privilege to speak to you.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## President James E. Faust

### A message for young priesthood holders

Brethren, tonight I would like to talk to you as I would to my grandsons. I hope that what I have to say will apply to all young priesthood holders everywhere. As I think of this large congregation and also the many thousands more who have joined us by satellite, I am reminded that the great blessing of holding the priesthood of God is one that is reserved for the relatively few, considering the billions of people in the world. To hold the priesthood is a signal honor; yet any worthy man or boy over the age of 12 in the Church may receive it.

Priesthood is the authority delegated to man to minister in the name of God. It is a power that no one can assume on his own initiative. As Paul said, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”<sup>1</sup> It is an authority beyond all human power to create.

### The reality of priesthood power

Peter, a young priest, wrote of an experience that taught him that priesthood

power is very real. A young convert in his ward in Ontario, Canada, was sustained as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter was asked to be the “voice” in the ordination. Peter wrote: “I had never laid my hands on anybody’s head before, and I felt so inadequate. But then the Spirit reassured me that it would be fine for me to do it. . . .

“The young man to be ordained sat down in the chair, and I stood directly behind him. [Our Young Men president] guided me through the ordinance prayer and I repeated every word he said. After we had finished the ordination and said, ‘. . . and we wish to pronounce a blessing on your head at this time . . .’ [the Young Men president] looked at me and indicated that I was on my own.

“At that point, the priesthood entirely changed its meaning for me. It was no longer just a title, but the actual authority to act in God’s name, and I was giving that authority to someone else. I paused and waited for the Spirit to whisper to me what I was to say. It is difficult for me to

describe the feelings I had that day during the blessing, but I can say that I now have a stronger testimony that the power of the priesthood is real.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Becoming a man of God**

You young men are no doubt looking forward to receiving the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Of this higher priesthood the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “Its institution was prior to ‘the foundation of this earth, or the morning stars sang together, or the Sons of God shouted for joy,’ and is the highest and holiest Priesthood, and is after the order of the Son of God.”<sup>3</sup>

As priesthood holders we are agents of the Lord. The Lord spoke of this sacred agency to the elders of the Church in Kirtland in 1831: “Wherefore, as ye are agents, ye are on the Lord’s errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord’s business.”<sup>4</sup>

President Hinckley has often reminded us that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. It is a great honor and responsibility to be called to serve the Lord in missionary work. This service brings lasting joy, even though it also can be challenging and discouraging at times. My mission changed the course of my life. It was one of the greatest experiences I have ever had. Serving a mission prepares us for the rest of our life’s work and our eternal work.

I hope each one of you becomes a man of God. You will become a man of God through righteous works. You will honor and magnify your priesthood and, as the Apostle Paul said, “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Guarding against all forms of evil**

It is not always easy to follow a righteous plan and be obedient to the laws of society and the laws of the Lord. In the long run, however, following the rules is

still the best pathway to obtaining all the things the Lord has promised.

We are all accountable for our actions. My experience as a lawyer taught me that those who follow a life of crime frequently blame their father or mother or society when they are imprisoned. Yet they willfully chose to act “contrary to the nature of God” and consequently are “in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.”<sup>6</sup> Some of them even claim, “The devil made me do it!” The truth in that statement is that the devil entices us to do evil.<sup>7</sup> The falsehood is because we have agency. The devil can’t make us do anything we choose not to do.<sup>8</sup>

Snares and pitfalls can come to all of us, whether in our youth, middle age, or old age. As someone once observed, “In youth we run into difficulties, in old age difficulties run into us.”<sup>9</sup> The increased permissiveness of our society will require us to hold very tightly to the iron rod of righteousness in order to receive the blessings and protection of the Lord. There is great danger in trifling with Satan’s temptations. We will need to guard against all forms of evil all of the days of our lives.

All you young men who hold the priesthood have the duty to respect womanhood. As you date the lovely young women of the Church, you have a duty to protect their physical safety and virtue. The priesthood you hold gives you the greater responsibility to see that the high moral standards of the Church are always maintained. You know better than to approach the edge of sexual enticement. You will lose part of that which is sacred about yourself if you go beyond the edge and abuse the great powers of procreation. How can any of us hope to play a great role in time or eternity if we have no power of self-control? To be married to a righteous woman who loves the Lord, loves you, and respects the priesthood is one of the greatest of blessings of life and eternity. I have learned this from over 60 years of marriage to my wife, Ruth.

## Importance of family life

Friends and acquaintances add much to the richness of life, but these relationships can be temporary. No one loves you more or has greater concern for your welfare than your parents. You may question what they tell you, but you cannot question their love for you and interest in your well-being.

The time will come when you young men will have the responsibility of caring for a wife and children, who will depend upon you. When you marry, you will be responsible for your wife's welfare and ultimately for the welfare of your children as you start a family. Marriage and fatherhood can bring great eternal happiness and joy. As President Joseph F. Smith said, it is "family life, on which the government of the Church is based and perpetuated."<sup>10</sup> To find sublime fulfillment in the home, both partners need to be fully committed to the marriage. President David O. McKay once said, "When one puts business or pleasure above his home, he that moment starts on the downgrade to soul-weakness."<sup>11</sup>

## Get training and education

Some of you are well on your way to successfully meeting some of your goals in life. We are proud of you. My father once told me that he thought he would have it made when he graduated from law school. He said that really in a sense his graduation was only the beginning of greater challenges. We do not have it made, nor will we be free from worldly challenges in this life.

We live in an age of specialization. When I was a boy, many people had Model T Fords. Compared to modern cars, they were relatively simple mechanically. Many people were able to fix their own cars by grinding the valves, changing the rings on the pistons, putting in new brake bands, and using a generous supply of baling wire. Nowadays automobiles are

so sophisticated that the average person knows very little about how to repair them. The mechanics of today use a computer to diagnose engine problems. I mention this example to encourage you young men to get training and education in order to keep up. Technical education is very important, and the same thing is true in fields of higher education. Any kind of skill requires specialized learning.

## "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"

I do not care what vocation you choose to follow in life so long as it is honorable. How you provide for your family is your decision. Acquiring a skill is a good way to pay the bills, but there really ought to be something more in terms of personal involvement. Do not become so preoccupied with the material things of life that you lose the essence of your humanity. You may recall Dickens's character Jacob Marley, who lamented his obsession with work when he exclaimed: "Business? . . . Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business." Each of us ought to play some role in strengthening society, especially in doing the work of God.

I have learned that for those of us who hold the priesthood, the best formula for success is "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>13</sup> Success will not come immediately, because it requires preparation and hard work. There really are no shortcuts to success.

## Increasing our talents and using them

Each of us is a unique creation of our Heavenly Father. No two of us are completely alike. No one else has exactly the same gifts and talents that we have been given. We should increase those talents and gifts and use them to leverage our uniqueness. For example, when I was growing up, there was a fine young man in our neighborhood who was not a scholar

but made beautiful furniture with his hands. He and I were drafted into the military the same day. He could not learn to make his bed so it would pass inspection, but he could make pieces of wood into exquisite art. As President Howard W. Hunter said: "Some persons have the idea that talent, creativity, moral stability, or greatness are not in the realm of youth, but are reserved to those who are older. This is not so."<sup>14</sup>

You young men have a future with great promise. You are the beneficiaries of knowledge the world has never known before. This knowledge will allow you to contribute to the future of modern business, industry, agriculture, and the professions. You may be among those who will defend a way of life on the battlefields. You will be among those who spread the principles of the gospel in the world and help the Church grow.

### **Go forward in faith and righteousness**

Now, my dear grandsons and all special young men within the sound of my voice, go forward. Go forward in faith and righteousness, following the leadership of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. If you do, the Lord will strengthen and magnify you so that you will accom-

plish great things. I testify of the great and profound influence the priesthood has been in my life. In all my long years of life I have tried not to hide who I am and what I believe. I cannot recall a single instance when it hurt my career or I lost valued friends by humbly acknowledging that I was a member of this Church. I leave my testimony and blessing with you today in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Hebrews 5:4.
2. Peter Pomart, "The Power Is Real," *New Era*, Oct. 1996, 10.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:207.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
5. 1 Timothy 6:11.
6. Alma 41:11.
7. See Moroni 7:12.
8. See James 1:12–15; 4:7.
9. Josh Billings, in Evan Esar, ed., *The Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1949), 35.
10. "Parents Should Be Consulted," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1902, 308–9.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5.
12. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, in *The Best Short Stories of Charles Dickens* (1947), 435.
13. Matthew 6:33.
14. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 117.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brethren, we are assembled this evening as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. I am honored by the privilege to speak to you. I pray that the inspiration of the Lord will guide my thoughts and inspire my words.

### **The gift of the priesthood**

During the past several weeks, as I have contemplated what I might say to you tonight, I have thought repeatedly of the

blessing which is ours to be bearers of the sacred priesthood of God. When we look at the world as a whole, with a population of over six and a half billion people, we realize that we comprise a very small, select group. We who hold the priesthood are, in the words of the Apostle Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."<sup>1</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith defined the priesthood as "the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, . . . by which [men] may speak the will of

God as if the angels were here to speak it themselves; by which men are empowered to bind on earth and it shall be bound in heaven, and to loose on earth and it shall be loosed in heaven.” President Smith added, “[The priesthood] is sacred, and it must be held sacred by the people.”<sup>2</sup>

My brethren, the priesthood is a gift which brings with it not only special blessings but also solemn responsibilities. It is our responsibility to conduct our lives so that we are ever worthy of the priesthood we bear. We live in a time when we are surrounded by much that is intended to entice us into paths which may lead to our destruction. To avoid such paths requires determination and courage.

### **The call for courage**

Courage counts. This truth came to me in a most vivid and dramatic manner many years ago. I was serving as a bishop at the time. The general session of our stake conference was being held in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Our stake presidency was to be reorganized. The Aaronic Priesthood, including members of bishoprics, were providing the music for the conference. As we concluded singing our first selection, President Joseph Fielding Smith, our conference visitor, stepped to the pulpit and read for sustaining approval the names of the new stake presidency. He then mentioned that Percy Fetzer, who became our new stake president, and John Burt, who became the first counselor—each of whom had been counselors in the previous presidency—had been made aware of their new callings before the conference began. However, he indicated that I, who had been called to be second counselor in the new presidency, had no previous knowledge of the calling and was hearing of it for the first time as my name was read for sustaining vote. He then announced, “If Brother Monson is willing to respond to this call, we will be pleased to hear from him now.”

As I stood at the pulpit and gazed out on that sea of faces, I remembered the song we had just sung. It pertained to the Word of Wisdom and was titled “Have Courage, My Boy, to Say No.” That day I selected as my acceptance theme “Have Courage, My Boy, to Say Yes.” The call for courage comes constantly to each of us—the courage to stand firm for our convictions, the courage to fulfill our responsibilities, the courage to honor our priesthood.

### **Living worthy to bear the priesthood**

Wherever we go, our priesthood goes with us. Are we standing in “holy places”?<sup>3</sup> Said President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who served for many years as a counselor in the First Presidency: “The Priesthood is not like a suit of clothes that you can lay off and take back on. . . . Depending upon ourselves [it is] an everlasting endowment.” He continued: “If we really had that . . . conviction . . . that we could not lay [the priesthood] aside, and that God would hold us responsible if we [de-meant] it, it would save us from doing a good many things, save us from going a good many places. If, every time we started a little detour away from the straight and narrow, we would remember, ‘I am carrying my Priesthood here. Should I?’ it would not take us long to work back into the straight and narrow.”<sup>4</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “There is no limit to the power of the priesthood which you hold. The limit comes in you if you do not live in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord and you limit yourselves in the power you exert.”<sup>5</sup>

My brethren of the priesthood—from the youngest to the oldest—are you living your life in accordance with that which the Lord requires? Are you worthy to bear the priesthood of God? If you are not, make the decision here and now, muster the courage it will take, and institute whatever changes are necessary so that



your life is what it should be. To sail safely the seas of mortality, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah. If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help.

### **A request for a blessing**

His help has come to me on countless occasions throughout my life. During the final phases of World War II, I turned 18 and was ordained an elder—one week before I departed for active duty with the navy. A member of my ward bishopric was at the train station to bid me farewell. Just before train time, he placed in my hand a book which I hold before you tonight. Its title: *The Missionary's Hand Book*. I laughed and commented, "I'll be in the navy—not on a mission." He answered, "Take it anyway. It may come in handy."

It did. During basic training our company commander instructed us concerning how we might best pack our clothing in a large seabag. He then advised, "If you have a hard, rectangular object you can place in the bottom of the bag, your clothes will stay more firm." I thought, "Where am I going to find a hard, rectangular object?" Suddenly I remembered just the right rectangular object—*The Missionary's Hand Book*. And thus it served for 12 weeks at the bottom of that seabag.

The night preceding our Christmas leave, our thoughts were, as always, on home. The barracks were quiet. Suddenly I became aware that my buddy in the adjoining bunk—a member of the Church, Leland Merrill—was moaning in pain. I asked, "What's the matter, Merrill?"

He replied, "I'm sick. I'm really sick."

I advised him to go to the base dispensary, but he answered knowingly that such a course would prevent him from being home for Christmas. I then suggested he be quiet so that we didn't awaken the entire barracks.

The hours lengthened; his groans grew louder. Then, in desperation, he whis-

pered, "Monson, aren't you an elder?" I acknowledged this to be so, whereupon he pleaded, "Give me a blessing."

I became very much aware that I had never given a blessing. I had never received such a blessing; I had never witnessed a blessing being given. My prayer to God was a plea for help. The answer came: "Look in the bottom of the seabag." Thus, at 2:00 a.m. I emptied on the deck the contents of the bag. I then took to the night-light that hard, rectangular object, *The Missionary's Hand Book*, and read how one blesses the sick. With about 120 curious sailors looking on, I proceeded with the blessing. Before I could stow my gear, Leland Merrill was sleeping like a child.

The next morning, Merrill smilingly turned to me and said, "Monson, I'm glad you hold the priesthood!" His gladness was only surpassed by my gratitude—gratitude not only for the priesthood but for being worthy to receive the help I required in a time of desperate need and to exercise the power of the priesthood.

### **Visit to a dying father**

Brethren, our Lord and Savior said, "Come, follow me."<sup>6</sup> When we accept His invitation and walk in His footsteps, He will direct our paths.

In April of 2000, I felt such direction. I had received a phone call from Rosa Salas Gifford, whom I did not know. She explained that her parents had been visiting from Costa Rica for a few months and that just a week prior to her call, her father, Bernardo Augusto Salas, had been diagnosed with liver cancer. She indicated that the doctors had informed the family that her father would live just a few more days. Her father's great desire, she explained, was to meet me before he died. She left her address and asked if I could come to her home in Salt Lake City to visit with her father.

Because of meetings and obligations, it was rather late when I left my office.

Instead of going straight home, however, I felt impressed that I should drive further south and visit Brother Salas that very evening. With the address in hand, I attempted to locate the residence. In rather heavy traffic and with dimming light, I drove past the location where the road to the house should have been. I could see nothing. However, I don't give up easily. I drove around the block and came back. Still nothing. One more time I tried and still no sign of the road.

I began to feel that I would be justified in turning toward home. I had made a gallant effort but had been unsuccessful in finding the address. Instead, I offered a silent prayer for help. The inspiration came that I should approach the area from the opposite direction. I drove a distance and turned the car around so that I was now on the other side of the road. Going in this direction, the traffic was much lighter. As I neared the location once again, I could see, through the faint light, a street sign that had been knocked down—it was lying on its side at the edge of the road—and a nearly invisible, weed-covered track leading to a small apartment building and a single, tiny residence some distance from the main road. As I drove toward the buildings, a small girl in a white dress waved to me, and I knew that I had found the family.

I was ushered into the home and then to the room where Brother Salas lay. Surrounding the bed were three daughters and a son-in-law, as well as Sister Salas. All but the son-in-law were from Costa Rica. Brother Salas's appearance reflected the gravity of his condition. A damp rag with frayed edges—not a towel or a washcloth but a damp rag with frayed edges—rested upon his forehead, emphasizing the humble economic circumstances of the family.

With some prompting, Brother Salas opened his eyes, and a wan smile graced his lips as I took him by the hand. I spoke the words, "I have come to meet you." Tears welled up in his eyes and in mine.

I asked if a blessing would be desired, and the unanimous answer from the family members was affirmative. Since the son-in-law did not hold the priesthood, I proceeded by myself to provide a priesthood blessing. The words seemed to flow freely under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord. I included the Savior's words found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 84, verse 88: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up." Following the blessing, I offered a few words of comfort to the grieving family members. I spoke carefully so they could understand my English. And then, with my limited Spanish language ability, I let them know that I loved them and that our Heavenly Father would bless them.

I asked for the family Bible and directed their attention to 3 John, verse 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." I said to them, "This is what your husband and father would have you remember as he prepares to depart this earthly existence."

With tears streaming down her face, Brother Salas's sweet wife then asked if I would write down the references for the two scriptures I had shared with them so that the family might read them again. Not having anything handy on which I could write, Sister Salas reached into her purse and drew from it a slip of paper. As I took it from her, I noticed it was a tithing receipt. My heart was touched as I realized that, despite the extremely humble circumstances in which the family lived, they were faithful in paying their tithes.

After a tender farewell, I was escorted to my car. As I drove homeward, I reflected on the special spirit we had felt. I experienced, as well, as I have many times before, a sense of gratitude that my Heavenly Father had answered another person's prayer through me.

## Honoring the priesthood

My brethren, let us ever remember that the priesthood of God which we bear is a sacred gift which brings to us and to those we serve the blessings of heaven. May we, in whatever place we may be, honor and protect that priesthood. May we ever be on the Lord's errand, that we might ever be entitled to the Lord's help.

There is a war being waged for men's souls—yours and mine. It continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you and to me and to priesthood holders everywhere: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>7</sup>

May we each have the courage to do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 1 Peter 2:9.
2. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139–40.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32; 87:8; 101:22.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1951, 169.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 498.
6. Luke 18:22.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.

## President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they provided this evening.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "I Love the Lord." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren of the priesthood, what an inspiration it is to look into the faces of the 21,000 here in the Conference Center, with the knowledge that millions are gathered in church halls and other locations throughout the world. I regret that I am so old at a time when life is increasingly exciting.

## Developments in the Church

As all of you know, I was ordained and set apart as President of the Church 12 years ago, specifically on March 12, 1995. Elder Ballard has pulled together some figures concerning those 12 years. I quote from his statement:

- 387,750 missionaries have entered the mission field, which represents almost 40 percent of the missionaries who have

ever served in this dispensation—that is, 40 percent in the 12 most recent years of the 177 years since the Church was organized.

- 3,400,000 converts have been baptized, which is the equivalent of over one-fourth of the total current membership of the Church.

- The total number of missions in the Church has increased from 303 to 344, with three more to be added soon.

- Retention as measured by sacrament meeting attendance, priesthood ordinations, and tithing faithfulness has increased significantly.

Now, while all of this has been tremendously significant, I am convinced that with a little more dedication this wonderful recent past can be but prologue to a greater future.

Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel and push along, do our duty with a heart full of song. This cause needs work; let no one shirk. Put your shoulder to the wheel and push along. (See “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252.)

### Joseph F. Smith’s dream

Now, I wish to move to a different matter. I spoke of this same thing many years ago. I repeat it because those who heard it then have long since forgotten, and those who did not hear it need to hear it. It concerns President Joseph F. Smith, who served as President of the Church from 1901 to 1918, altogether 17 years.

Joseph F. Smith was the son of Hyrum Smith, who was the brother of the Prophet Joseph and was martyred with him in Carthage. Joseph F. was born at Far West, Missouri, on November 13, 1838. He came out of Missouri as an infant. As a lad not yet six years of age, he heard a knock on the window of his mother’s home in Nauvoo. It was a man who had hurriedly ridden from Carthage and who told Sister Smith that her husband had been killed that afternoon.

When he was nine, he drove an ox team with his mother across the plains to this valley. At the age of 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He made his way to San Francisco and there worked in a shingle mill to earn enough money to buy passage to the islands.

Hawaii was not a tourist center then. It was populated by the native Hawaiians, who were, for the most part, poor but generous with what they had. He learned to speak their language and to love them. While serving there he experienced a remarkable dream. I quote from his narrative concerning this. Said he:

“I was very much oppressed [when I was] on a mission. I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except [for] the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of

poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look a . . . man in the face.

“While in that condition I dreamed [one night] that I was on a journey, and I was impressed that I ought to hurry—hurry with all my might, for fear I might be too late. I rushed on my way as fast as I possibly could, and I was only conscious of having just a little bundle, a handkerchief with a small bundle wrapped in it. I did not realize . . . what it was, when I was hurrying as fast as I could; but finally I came to a wonderful mansion. . . . I thought I knew that was my destination. As I passed towards it, as fast as I could, I saw a notice [which read *B-A-T-H*], ‘Bath.’ I turned aside quickly and went into the bath and washed myself clean. I opened up this little bundle that I had, and there was [some] white, clean [clothing], a thing I had not seen for a long time, because the people I was with did not think very much of making things exceedingly clean. But my [clothing was] clean, and I put [it] on. Then I rushed to what appeared to be a great opening, or door. I knocked and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: ‘Joseph, you are late.’ Yet I took confidence and [replied]:

“‘Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!’

“He clasped my hand and drew me in, then closed the great door. I felt his hand just as tangible as I ever felt the hand of man. I knew him, and when I entered I saw my father, and Brigham [Young] and Heber [C. Kimball], and Willard [Richards], and other good men that I had known, standing in a row. I looked as if it were across this valley, and it seemed to be filled with a vast multitude of people, but on the stage were all the people that I had known. My mother was there, and she sat with a child in her lap; and I could name over as many as I remember of their names, who sat there, who seemed to be among the chosen, among the exalted. . . .

“[When I had this dream,] I was alone on a mat, away up in the mountains of Hawaii—no one was with me. But in this vision I pressed my hand up against the Prophet, and I saw a smile cross his countenance. . . .

“When I awoke that morning I was a man, although only [still] a boy. There was not anything in the world that I feared [after that]. I could meet any man or woman or child and look them in the face, feeling in my soul that I was a man every whit. That vision, that manifestation and witness that I enjoyed at that time has made me what I am, if I am anything that is good, or clean, or upright before the Lord, if there is anything good in me. That has helped me out in every trial and through every difficulty” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 542–43).

### “I am clean”

The core of that meaningful dream is found in the reproof given by Joseph Smith to young Joseph F. Said the Prophet, “Joseph, you are late.”

Replied Joseph F., “Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!”

The result of that dream was that a boy was changed into a man. His declaration “I am clean” gave him self-assurance and courage in facing anyone or any situation. He received the strength that comes from a clear conscience fortified by the approbation of the Prophet Joseph.

This prophetic dream holds something for every man and boy assembled in this vast congregation tonight. It is an old saying among us that “cleanliness is next to godliness.”

Said Isaiah the prophet:

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

“Learn to do well; . . .

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:16–18).

In modern revelation the Lord has said: “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 133:5).

### Be clean

In a world that wallows in filth, be clean—in language, in thought, in body, in dress.

#### *In language*

To each of you I say, be clean in your language. There is so much of filthy, sleazy talk these days. Failure to express yourself in language that is clean marks you as one whose vocabulary is extremely limited. When Jehovah wrote on the tablets of stone, He said to the children of Israel, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

The Lord has reinforced that commandment in words of modern revelation: “Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit” (D&C 63:64).

#### *In thought*

Be clean in thought. Said the Lord, “Let all things be done in cleanliness before me” (D&C 42:41).

A filthy mind expresses itself in filthy and profane language. A clean mind expresses itself in language that is positive and uplifting and in deeds that bring happiness to the heart.

#### *In body, dress, and manner*

Be clean in body and dress and manner. Do not permit yourself to be tattooed. If you do, someday you will regret it. Only a painful and costly procedure can remove the tattoo.

Be clean and neat and orderly. Sloppy dress leads to sloppy manners. I am not so concerned about what you wear as I am that it be neat and clean. Remember Joseph F. Smith's dream. As he was hurrying toward the mansion, he had a little bundle wrapped in a handkerchief. When he bathed himself and opened it, he found that it contained clean clothing. Whenever you administer or pass the sacrament, look your very best. Be sure of your personal cleanliness.

### **Living above the ways of the world**

And so, my dear brethren, I might go on. I might discuss with you what is happening on the Internet and with the use of the computer that leads to degrading thoughts and actions. Suffice it to say it is totally unbecoming you as one who holds the priesthood of God. You are His chosen servant; you have been ordained to something holy and wonderful. You cannot live

in the world and partake of the ways of the world. You must be above all of that.

Now, my dear brethren, may the Lord bless you. To you boys I say, get on with your education. When you marry, yours will be the obligation to provide for your family. The world of opportunity lies ahead of you, and education is the key that will unlock that door. It will be the door of the mansion of which Joseph F. Smith dreamed when he was a boy sleeping on a mountain in Hawaii.

God bless you, my beloved brethren. Speak with the Lord in prayer. Cultivate kinship with Him. He is the Almighty, who has power to lift and help. I pray that it may be so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Love the Lord."

Elder Paul V. Johnson offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 1, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, televi-

sion, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are in attendance.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" and will now favor us with "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Delenbach of the Seventy, followed by the choir singing "I Am a Child of God."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be

our first speaker at this session. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy will then speak to us, followed by Sister Vicki F. Matsumori, second counselor in the Primary general presidency.

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The choir sang “The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Am a Child of God.”

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## President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I come before you humbly and prayerfully. I wish to speak on the healing power of forgiveness.

### The Amish people’s forgiveness

In the beautiful hills of Pennsylvania, a devout group of Christian people live a simple life without automobiles, electricity, or modern machinery. They work hard and live quiet, peaceful lives separate from the world. Most of their food comes from their own farms. The women sew and knit and weave their clothing, which is modest and plain. They are known as the Amish people.

A 32-year-old milk truck driver lived with his family in their Nickel Mines community. He was not Amish, but his pickup route took him to many Amish dairy farms, where he became known as the quiet milkman. Last October he suddenly lost all reason and control. In his tormented mind he blamed God for the death of his first child and some unsubstantiated memories. He stormed into the Amish school without any provocation, released the boys and adults, and tied up the 10 girls. He shot the girls, killing five and wounding five. Then he took his own life.

This shocking violence caused great anguish among the Amish but no anger. There was hurt but no hate. Their forgiveness was immediate. Collectively they began to reach out to the milkman’s suffering family. As the milkman’s family gathered in his home the day after the

shootings, an Amish neighbor came over, wrapped his arms around the father of the dead gunman, and said, “We will forgive you.”<sup>1</sup> Amish leaders visited the milkman’s wife and children to extend their sympathy, their forgiveness, their help, and their love. About half of the mourners at the milkman’s funeral were Amish. In turn, the Amish invited the milkman’s family to attend the funeral services of the girls who had been killed. A remarkable peace settled on the Amish as their faith sustained them during this crisis.

One local resident very eloquently summed up the aftermath of this tragedy when he said, “We were all speaking the same language, and not just English, but a language of caring, a language of community, [and] a language of service. And, yes, a language of forgiveness.”<sup>2</sup> It was an amazing outpouring of their complete faith in the Lord’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you.”<sup>3</sup>

### Healing brought by forgiveness

The family of the milkman who killed the five girls released the following statement to the public:

“To our Amish friends, neighbors, and local community:

“Our family wants each of you to know that we are overwhelmed by the forgiveness, grace, and mercy that you’ve extended to us. Your love for our family has helped to provide the healing we so

desperately need. The prayers, flowers, cards, and gifts you've given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you.

"Please know that our hearts have been broken by all that has happened. We are filled with sorrow for all of our Amish neighbors whom we have loved and continue to love. We know that there are many hard days ahead for all the families who lost loved ones, and so we will continue to put our hope and trust in the God of all comfort, as we all seek to rebuild our lives."<sup>4</sup>

How could the whole Amish group manifest such an expression of forgiveness? It was because of their faith in God and trust in His word, which is part of their inner beings. They see themselves as disciples of Christ and want to follow His example.

Hearing of this tragedy, many people sent money to the Amish to pay for the health care of the five surviving girls and for the burial expenses of the five who were killed. As a further demonstration of their discipleship, the Amish decided to share some of the money with the widow of the milkman and her three children because they too were victims of this terrible tragedy.

### **Importance of not delaying forgiveness**

Forgiveness is not always instantaneous as it was with the Amish. When innocent children have been molested or killed, most of us do not think first about forgiveness. Our natural response is anger. We may even feel justified in wanting to "get even" with anyone who inflicts injury on us or our family.

Dr. Sidney Simon, a recognized authority on values realization, has provided an excellent definition of forgiveness as it applies to human relationships:

"Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves."<sup>5</sup>

Most of us need time to work through pain and loss. We can find all manner of reasons for postponing forgiveness. One of these reasons is waiting for the wrongdoers to repent before we forgive them. Yet such a delay causes us to forfeit the peace and happiness that could be ours. The folly of rehashing long-past hurts does not bring happiness.

Some hold grudges for a lifetime, unaware that courageously forgiving those who have wronged us is wholesome and therapeutic.

### **Faith enables people to forgive**

Forgiveness comes more readily when, like the Amish, we have faith in God and trust in His word. Such faith "enables people to withstand the worst of humanity. It also enables people to look beyond themselves. More importantly, it enables them to forgive."<sup>6</sup>

All of us suffer some injuries from experiences that seem to have no rhyme or reason. We cannot understand or explain them. We may never know why some things happen in this life. The reason for some of our suffering is known only to the Lord. But because it happens, it must be endured. President Howard W. Hunter said that "God knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see."<sup>7</sup>

President Brigham Young offered this profound insight that at least some of our suffering has a purpose when he said: "Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered to come upon the few, to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. . . . Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation."<sup>8</sup>



If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and well-being. Some recent studies show that people who are taught to forgive become “less angry, more hopeful, less depressed, less anxious and less stressed,” which leads to greater physical well-being.<sup>9</sup> Another of these studies concludes “that forgiveness . . . is a liberating gift [that] people can give to themselves.”<sup>10</sup>

In our day the Lord has admonished us, “Ye ought to forgive one another,” and then makes it requisite when He says, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>11</sup>

A sister who had been through a painful divorce received some sound advice from her bishop: “Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes, welcome it in.”<sup>12</sup> For the Amish, it was already there because “forgiveness is a ‘heartfelt’ component of [their] religion.”<sup>13</sup> Their example of forgiveness is a sublime expression of Christian love.

### **Other examples of forgiveness**

Here in Salt Lake City in 1985, Bishop Steven Christensen, through no fault of his own, was cruelly and senselessly killed by a bomb intended to take his life. He was the son of Mac and Joan Christensen, the husband of Terri, and the father of four children. With his parents’ consent, I share what they learned from this experience. After this terrible deed, the news media followed members of the Christensen family around relentlessly. On one occasion this media intrusion offended one of the family members to the point that Steven’s father, Mac, had to restrain him. Mac then thought, “This thing will destroy my family if we don’t forgive. Venom and hatred will never end if we do not get it out of our system.” Healing and peace came as the family cleansed their hearts from anger and were able to forgive the man who took their son’s life.

We recently had two other tragedies here in Utah which demonstrate faith and the healing power of forgiveness. Gary Ceran, whose wife and two children were killed on Christmas Eve when their vehicle was hit by a truck, immediately expressed his forgiveness and concern for the alleged drunk driver. Last February, when a car crashed into Bishop Christopher Williams’s vehicle, he had a decision to make, and it was to “unconditionally forgive” the driver who had caused the accident so that the healing process could take place unhampered.<sup>14</sup>

### **Receiving help and comfort**

What can we all learn from such experiences as these? We need to recognize and acknowledge angry feelings. It will take humility to do this, but if we will get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father for a feeling of forgiveness, He will help us. The Lord requires us “to forgive all men”<sup>15</sup> for our own good because “hatred retards spiritual growth.”<sup>16</sup> Only as we rid ourselves of hatred and bitterness can the Lord put comfort into our hearts, just as He did for the Amish community, the Christensens, the Cerans, and the Williams family.

Of course, society needs to be protected from hardened criminals, because mercy cannot rob justice.<sup>17</sup> Bishop Williams addressed this concept so well when he said, “Forgiveness is a source of power. But it does not relieve us of consequences.”<sup>18</sup> When tragedy strikes, we should not respond by seeking personal revenge but rather let justice take its course and then let go. It is not easy to let go and empty our hearts of festering resentment. The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge. For all of us who forgive “those who trespass against us,”<sup>19</sup> even those who have committed serious crimes, the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort.

Let us remember that we need to forgive to be forgiven. In the words of one of my favorite hymns, “Oh, forgive as thou wouldst be e’en forgiven now by me.”<sup>20</sup> With all my heart and soul, I believe in the healing power that can come to us as we follow the counsel of the Savior “to forgive all men.”<sup>21</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Joan Kern, “A Community Cries,” *Lancaster New Era*, Oct. 4, 2006, p. A8.
2. In Helen Colwell Adams, “After That Tragic Day, a Deeper Respect among English, Amish?” *Sunday News*, Oct. 15, 2006, p. A1.
3. Matthew 5:44.
4. “Amish Shooting Victims,” <http://www.800padutch.com/amishvictims.shtml>.
5. With Suzanne Simon, *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get On with Your Life* (1990), 19.
6. Marjorie Cortez, “Amish Response to Tragedy Is Lesson in Faith, Forgiveness,” *Deseret Morning News*, Jan. 2, 2007, p. A13.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 60.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 345.
9. Fred Luskin, in Carrie A. Moore, “Learning to Forgive,” *Deseret Morning News*, Oct. 7, 2006, p. E1.
10. Jay Evensen, “Forgiveness Is Powerful but Complex,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 4, 2007, p. G1.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9, 10.
12. In “My Journey to Forgiving,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 43.
13. Donald Kraybill, in Colby Itkowitz, “Flowers, Prayers, Songs: Families Meet at Roberts’ Burial,” *Intelligence Journal*, Oct. 9, 2006, p. A1.
14. See Pat Reavy, “Crash Victim Issues a Call for Forgiveness,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 13, 2007, p. A1.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
16. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes* (1914), 144.
17. See Alma 42:25.
18. In *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 13, 2007, p. A8.
19. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13.
20. “Reverently and Meekly Now,” *Hymns*, no. 185.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I have felt impressed to speak about divorce. This is a sensitive subject because it evokes such strong emotions from persons it has touched in different ways. Some see themselves or their loved ones as the *victims* of divorce. Others see themselves as its *beneficiaries*. Some see divorce as evidence of failure. Others consider it an essential escape hatch from marriage. In one way or another, divorce touches most families in the Church.

Whatever your perspective, please listen as I try to speak plainly about the effects of divorce on the eternal family relationships we seek under the gospel plan. I speak out of concern, but with hope.

### Perspectives on marriage and divorce

We live in a world in which the whole concept of marriage is in peril and where divorce is commonplace.

The concept that society has a strong interest in preserving marriages for the common good as well as the good of the couple and their children has been replaced for many by the idea that marriage is only a private relationship between consenting adults, terminable at the will of either.<sup>1</sup>

Nations that had no divorce law have adopted one, and most nations permitting divorces have made them easier to obtain. Unfortunately, under current no-fault

divorce laws, it can be easier to sever a marriage relationship with an unwanted spouse than an employment relationship with an unwanted employee. Some even refer to a first marriage as a “starter marriage,” like a small home one uses for a while before moving on.

The weakening of the concept that marriages are permanent and precious has far-reaching consequences. Influenced by their own parents’ divorce or by popular notions that marriage is a ball and chain that prevents personal fulfillment, some young people shun marriage. Many who marry withhold full commitment, poised to flee at the first serious challenge.

In contrast, modern prophets have warned that looking upon marriage “as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure . . . and severed at the first difficulty . . . is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where children are made to suffer.<sup>2</sup>

In ancient times and even under tribal laws in some countries where we now have members, men have power to divorce their wives for any trivial thing. Such unrighteous oppression of women was rejected by the Savior, who declared:

“Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:8–9).

The kind of marriage required for exaltation—eternal in duration and godlike in quality—does not contemplate divorce. In the temples of the Lord, couples are married for all eternity. But some marriages do not progress toward that ideal. Because “of the hardness of [our] hearts,” the Lord does not currently enforce the consequences of the celestial standard. He permits divorced persons to marry again without the stain of immorality specified in

the higher law. Unless a divorced member has committed serious transgressions, he or she can become eligible for a temple recommend under the same worthiness standards that apply to other members.

### **To those who have been divorced**

There are many good Church members who have been divorced. I speak first to them. We know that many of you are innocent victims—members whose former spouses persistently betrayed sacred covenants or abandoned or refused to perform marriage responsibilities for an extended period. Members who have experienced such abuse have firsthand knowledge of circumstances worse than divorce.

When a marriage is dead and beyond hope of resuscitation, it is needful to have a means to end it. I saw examples of this in the Philippines. Two days after their temple marriage, a husband deserted his young wife and has not been heard from for over 10 years. A married woman fled and obtained a divorce in another country, but her husband, who remained behind, is still married in the eyes of the Philippine law. Since there is no provision for divorce in that country, these innocent victims of desertion have no way to end their married status and go forward with their lives.

We know that some look back on their divorces with regret at their own partial or predominant fault in the breakup. All who have been through divorce know the pain and need the healing power and hope that come from the Atonement. That healing power and that hope are there for them and also for their children.

### **To those who may be considering divorce**

Now I speak to married members, especially to any who may be considering divorce.

I strongly urge you and those who advise you to face up to the reality that for most marriage problems, the remedy is

not divorce but repentance. Often the cause is not incompatibility but selfishness. The first step is not separation but reformation. Divorce is not an all-purpose solution, and it often creates long-term heartache. A broad-based international study of the levels of happiness before and after “major life events” found that, on average, persons are far more successful in recovering their level of happiness after the *death* of a spouse than after a *divorce*.<sup>3</sup> Spouses who hope that divorce will resolve conflicts often find that it aggravates them, since the complexities that follow divorce—especially where there are children—generate new conflicts.

Think first of the children. Because divorce separates the interests of children from the interests of their parents, children are its first victims. Scholars of family life tell us that the most important cause of the current decline in the well-being of children is the current weakening of marriage, because family instability decreases parental investment in children.<sup>4</sup> We know that children raised in a single-parent home after divorce have a much higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, poor school performance, and various kinds of victimization.

#### *Making efforts to preserve marriages*

A couple with serious marriage problems should see their bishop. As the Lord’s judge, he will give counsel and perhaps even discipline that will lead toward healing.

Bishops do not counsel members to divorce, but they can help members with the consequences of their decisions. Under the law of the Lord, a marriage, like a human life, is a precious, living thing. If our bodies are sick, we seek to heal them. We do not give up. While there is any prospect of life, we seek healing again and again. The same should be true of our marriages, and if we seek Him, the Lord will help us and heal us.

Latter-day Saint spouses should do all within their power to preserve their marriages. They should follow the marriage enrichment counsel in the First Presidency’s message in the April 2007 *Ensign* and *Liahona*.<sup>5</sup> To avoid so-called “incompatibility,” they should be best friends, kind and considerate, sensitive to each other’s needs, always seeking to make each other happy. They should be partners in family finances, working together to regulate their desires for temporal things.

Of course, there can be times when one spouse falls short and the other is wounded and feels pain. When that happens, the one who is wronged should balance current disappointments against the good of the past and the brighter prospects of the future.

Don’t treasure up past wrongs, reprocessing them again and again. In a marriage relationship, festering is destructive; forgiving is divine (see D&C 64:9–10). Plead for the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord to forgive wrongs (as President Faust has just taught us so beautifully), to overcome faults, and to strengthen relationships.

If you are already descending into the low state of marriage-in-name-only, please join hands, kneel together, and prayerfully plead for help and the healing power of the Atonement. Your humble and united pleadings will bring you closer to the Lord and to each other and will help you in the hard climb back to marital harmony.

#### *An experienced bishop’s observations*

Consider these observations of a wise bishop with extensive experience in counseling members with marriage problems. Speaking of those who eventually divorced, he said:

“Universally, every couple or individual said they recognized that divorce was not a good thing, but they all insisted that their situation was different.

“Universally, they focused on the fault of the spouse and attributed little responsibility to their own behavior. Communication had withered.

“Universally, they were looking back, not willing to leave the baggage of past behavior on the roadside and move on.

“Part of the time, serious sin was involved, but more often they had just ‘fallen out of love,’ saying, ‘He doesn’t satisfy my needs anymore,’ or, ‘She has changed.’

“All were worried about the effect on the children, but always the conclusion was ‘it’s worse for them to have us together and fighting.’”

In contrast, the couples who followed this bishop’s counsel and stayed together emerged with their marriages even stronger. That prospect began with their mutual commitment to keep the commandments, stay active in their Church attendance, scripture reading, and prayer, and to work on their own shortcomings. They “recognized the importance and power of the Atonement for their spouse and for themselves,” and “they were patient and would try again and again.” When the couples he counseled did these things, repenting and working to save their marriages, this bishop reported that “healing was achieved 100 percent of the time.”

Even those who think their spouse is entirely to blame should not act hastily. One study found “no evidence that divorce or separation typically made adults happier than staying in an unhappy marriage. Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce reported being happily married five years later.”<sup>6</sup> A woman who persisted in an intolerable marriage for many years until the children were raised explained: “There were three parties to our marriage—my husband and I and the Lord. I told myself that if two of us could hang in there, we could hold it together.”

The power of hope expressed in these examples is sometimes rewarded with repentance and reformation, but sometimes

it is not. Personal circumstances vary greatly. We cannot control and we are not responsible for the choices of others, even when they impact us so painfully. I am sure the Lord loves and blesses husbands and wives who lovingly try to help spouses struggling with such deep problems as pornography or other addictive behavior or with the long-term consequences of childhood abuse.

Whatever the outcome and no matter how difficult your experiences, you have the promise that you will not be denied the blessings of eternal family relationships if you love the Lord, keep His commandments, and just do the best you can. When young Jacob “suffered afflictions and much sorrow” from the actions of other family members, Father Lehi assured him, “Thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2). Similarly, the Apostle Paul assured us that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).

### **To those contemplating marriage**

In conclusion, I speak briefly to those contemplating marriage. The best way to avoid *divorce* from an unfaithful, abusive, or unsupportive spouse is to avoid *marriage* to such a person. If you wish to marry well, inquire well. Associations through “hanging out” or exchanging information on the Internet are not a sufficient basis for marriage. There should be dating, followed by careful and thoughtful and thorough courtship. There should be ample opportunities to experience the prospective spouse’s behavior in a variety of circumstances. Fiancés should learn everything they can about the families with whom they will soon be joined in marriage. In all of this, we should realize that a good marriage does not require a perfect man or a perfect woman. It only requires a man and a woman committed to strive together toward perfection.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage . . . means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.”<sup>7</sup>

From personal experience, I testify to the sweetness of the marriage and family life that the family proclamation describes as founded upon a husband and wife’s “solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children” and “upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup> I testify of Him as our Savior and pray in His name for all who strive for the supreme blessings of an eternal family, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts* (2005), 37–39; Allan Carlson, *Fractured Generations* (2005), 1–13; Bryce Christensen, *Divided We Fall* (2006), 44–45.
2. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 8–9; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 5.
3. See Richard E. Lucas, “Adaptation and the Set-Point Model of Subjective Well-Being: Does Happiness Change after Major Life Events?” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Apr. 2007, 75–79.
4. See Jean Bethke Elshtain and David Popenoe, *Marriage in America* (1995), quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, “Marriage and the State’s Legal Posture toward the Family,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Oct. 15, 1995, 18; see also *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles* (Witherspoon Institute, 2006), 24.
5. James E. Faust, “Enriching Your Marriage,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2007, 4–8; *Liahona*, Apr. 2007, 2–6.
6. Linda J. Waite and others, *Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages* (Institute for American Values, 2002), 6; see also scholarly studies cited in *Marriage and the Law: A Statement of Principles* (Institute for American Values, 2006), 21.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 194.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### A naval officer’s testimony

I take as my subject today something President Hinckley said in general conference in April of 1973.

I had just returned home from my mission. So much seemed ahead of me. Would I be able to consistently make the right choices throughout my life?

At that conference, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of meeting a young naval officer from Asia. The officer had not been a Christian, but during training in the United States, he had learned about the Church and was baptized. He was now preparing to return to his native land.

President Hinckley asked the officer: “Your people are not Christians. . . . What will happen when you return home a Christian and, more particularly, a Mormon Christian?”

The officer’s face clouded, and he replied: “My family will be disappointed. . . . As for my future and my career, . . . all opportunity [may] be foreclosed against me.”

President Hinckley asked, “Are you willing to pay so great a price for the gospel?”

With his dark eyes moistened by tears, he answered with a question: “It’s true, isn’t it?”

President Hinckley responded, “Yes, it’s true.”

To which the officer replied, “Then what else matters?”<sup>1</sup>

### Putting things in proper perspective

Through the years, I have reflected on these words: “It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?” These questions have helped me put difficult issues in proper perspective.

The cause in which we are laboring is true. We respect the beliefs of our friends and neighbors. We are all sons and daughters of God. We can learn much from other men and women of faith and goodness, as President Faust taught us so well.

Yet we know that Jesus is the Christ. He is resurrected. In our day, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the priesthood of God has been restored. We have the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Book of Mormon is what we claim it to be. The promises of the temple are certain. The Lord Himself has declared the unique and singular mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be “a light to the world” and “a messenger . . . to prepare the way before [Him]”<sup>2</sup> even as “the gospel roll[s] forth unto the ends of the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?

Of course, for all of us, there *are* other things that matter. When I heard President Hinckley’s talk as a 21-year-old, I needed to be serious about my studies; I needed employment to keep me in school; somehow I had to figure out how to convince a special young lady that she should take a chance on me; and I enjoyed other worthy activities.

How do we find our way through the many things that matter? We simplify and purify our perspective. Some things are evil and must be avoided; some things are nice; some things are important; and some things are absolutely essential. The Savior said, “This is life eternal, that they

might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>4</sup>

### The lens of faith

Faith is not only a feeling; it is a decision. With prayer, study, obedience, and covenants, we build and fortify our faith. Our conviction of the Savior and His latter-day work becomes the powerful lens through which we judge all else. Then, as we find ourselves in the crucible of life, as Elder Oaks explained, we have the strength to take the right course.

President Hinckley said it this way: “When [an individual] is motivated by great and powerful convictions of truth, then he disciplines himself, not because of demands made . . . by the Church but because of the knowledge within his heart.”<sup>5</sup>

Are we sufficiently motivated by “great and powerful convictions of truth”? Do our choices reflect this motivation? Are we becoming who we want to become? It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?

We know what is right. A few years ago my wife, Kathy, was with our grandchildren while their parents were away. Our four-year-old grandson gave his little brother a strong push. After consoling the crying child, she turned to the four-year-old and thoughtfully asked, “Why would you push your little brother?” He looked at his grandmother and responded, “Mimi, I’m sorry. I lost my CTR ring, and I cannot choose the right.” We need to be careful because excuses can impede our progress.

### Examples of faith and conviction

“Great and powerful convictions of truth” are found in the hearts of Latter-day Saints in nations across the world. This strength of faith carries the work of the kingdom forward.

Many years ago my wife and I stood by a courageous sister in France as her husband, still in his 30s, passed through the veil. The responsibility to righteously

teach and guide her four young children alone seemed overwhelming. Yet 16 years later, her three sons have returned from missions, and her daughter is sealed in the temple.

I know a brother in Brazil who joined the Church as a 16-year-old, the only member in his family. When it was time for his mission, his parents objected. He heard nothing from them during his mission and returned home to his bishop's house. The story, however, has a happy ending, as he now has a beautiful family and works as a dental surgeon, and his parents wish he could interest his brothers in the Church.

I know a brother in a Latin American country who, after his baptism, determined he would not only be honest in his tithing but would also fully pay his taxes, something his competitors did not do. The Lord blessed him for his honesty.

Many sacrifices are quietly accomplished: returned missionaries not delaying the responsibility of finding their eternal companion; righteous women desiring children and investing their lives in rearing them in love and truth; families carefully restricting the media and Internet influences that would tarnish their spirits; husbands and wives finding more time to be in the temple together.

Children can also develop this lens of faith. I recently met youth in Seoul, Korea, who, because of a rigorous school schedule, do not arrive home until very late each night yet attend early-morning seminary at 6:00 a.m. five days a week. I know an eight-year-old baseball player, a star of the team, who on his own explained to his coach that he could not participate in the final playoff game because it was to be held on Sunday.

Many of the quiet acts of deep faith are known only to God. But they are recorded in heaven. It's true, isn't it? Then what else matters?

The Savior said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>6</sup>

I testify that it is true and that it does matter. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 72; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 48.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 45:9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
4. John 17:3.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 73; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 49.
6. Matthew 6:33.

## Vicki F. Matsumori

### A message for first-generation members

I love the Book of Mormon. It has wonderful stories for children of all ages, but more importantly it teaches timeless lessons, which are often retold in Primary songs.

For example, a great lesson can be found in the song about the army of Helaman. We sing: "We are as the army of Helaman. We have been taught in our youth." There are many of us who also feel like "we have been born, as Nephi of old, to goodly parents."<sup>1</sup>

My message today is for you first-generation members who may have been born to goodly parents and yet were not taught the gospel in your homes. Instead of being like the army of Helaman, who "had been taught by their mothers [that] God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47), you may be like their parents, the people of Ammon, who grew up as nonbelievers.

It may be helpful to review the story about the people of Ammon. They were Lamanites who had been taught the gospel by Ammon, Aaron, and others (see



Alma 23:1–4). When they accepted the gospel, these Lamanites were called the Anti-Nephi-Lehies and later called the people of Ammon (see Alma 23:16–17; 27:23–26). The sons of these people of Ammon were the army of Helaman, who helped fight the nonconverted Lamanites (see Alma 56:3–6).

So the strength of the army of Helaman really began with their parents, who were the people of Ammon. They were the ones who first learned the gospel from the scriptures. They were the ones who learned about the power of prayer. And they were the ones who first made and kept covenants with the Lord. And just as it began with them, it begins with you. As first-generation members, you are the ones who begin the cycle of teaching and strengthening the next generation.

## Scriptures

Aaron, who was a great missionary, used the scriptures to teach the Lamanite king and the people of Ammon about faith and repentance and about Jesus Christ and the plan of happiness (see Alma 22:12–14; 23:4–5). Today, reading and studying the scriptures continues to build our faith, helps us resist temptation, and allows us to grow closer to Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

However, reading scriptures can present a challenge for everyone. President Boyd K. Packer shares his first attempts as a teenager at reading the Book of Mormon. He says: “I opened it and read, ‘I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents’ (1 Nephi 1:1). . . . It was interesting, and I could follow it until I got over to the Isaiah chapters. . . . So a few months later I decided to try again to read the Book of Mormon. I read, ‘I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents,’ but every time I’d hit the barrier of those Isaiah chapters. . . . Finally I decided I was even going to read them.”<sup>2</sup>

And of course President Packer did read them. Persistence is the key. With

every reading of the scriptures, unfamiliar words will take on meaning. You can read about heroes and great acts of courage. You can learn of the tender mercies of the Lord. And above all, you can feel the love of God and know that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

## Prayer

Prayer is another means to build faith. When the Lamanite king wanted to know what he should do in order to receive the joy of the gospel, he prayed to the Lord (see Alma 22:16–17). We too are promised that if we ask, it shall be given us.

Stanley was a 19-year-old investigator in Hong Kong. He was excited about the gospel and wanted to be baptized until his friends criticized the Church. He met with the missionaries. They testified that God cared enough about him to answer his prayer. They invited him to kneel and ask Heavenly Father if the teachings were true. First one companion and then the other offered a short prayer. Then Stanley prayed. When he finished his humble prayer, they asked him, “Stanley, how do you feel?” He slowly raised his head and in almost a whisper replied, “Baptism, baptism.”<sup>3</sup>

## Covenants

Finally, making and keeping covenants also increases faith. The people of Ammon covenanted “that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives” (Alma 24:18).

We covenant when we are baptized and take upon us the name of Christ. We are reminded of those covenants when we partake of the sacrament. And when we keep those covenants, we can have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, who teaches us “all things” (John 14:26).

A sister in Mexico City was 16 years old when the missionaries came to her door. She says that as they taught with the

Spirit, “it seemed like they had taken the bandages off my eyes and that the Lord was clearing my understanding. . . . The word of God and my prayers strengthened [me] to overcome my next trial, to face my father. When I met rejection from my family because of my baptism, the Spirit of the Lord strengthened me by whispering: ‘Keep on. Go on. Some of your relatives will become members of the Church.’”<sup>4</sup>

The scriptures, prayer, and making and keeping covenants have not only helped the people of Ammon but also first-generation members everywhere—including me. You see, while I was born of goodly parents, I was not taught the gospel at home. However, my parents did teach me moral values and ethical conduct. I remember my nonmember father helping me write the first talk I gave at church. The assigned topic was honesty, and instead of quoting the thirteenth article of faith, we used an example of a man whose nickname was Honest Abe.

It was left to Primary teachers, Young Women leaders, and priesthood leaders to provide me with gospel instruction. When I was seven years old, my junior Sunday School teacher taught us about prayer, and I wanted to pray. She taught us about tithing, and I wanted to pay tithing. She taught us about fasting, and, well, I was only seven years old, so I didn’t want to fast. But when she taught us about baptism, I wanted to be baptized. I am grateful for my goodly parents, who supported me in my decision and who later also became members of the Church.

### It begins with us

The people of Ammon lived the gospel, and “they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27).

It began with them. And it begins with us. As first-generation members who have gained testimonies, we now have a responsibility to teach the children of today. We must teach them in our homes and in our classes. We must teach them the word of God from the scriptures. We must teach them the power of prayer, and we must teach them the blessings that come from making and keeping covenants. And if we teach them, they will be able to say:

We are as the army of Helaman.  
We have been taught in our youth.  
And we will be the Lord’s missionaries  
To bring the world his truth.<sup>5</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “We’ll Bring the World His Truth,” *Children’s Songbook*, 172–73.
2. “Principles of Teaching and Learning,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 85.
3. Personal correspondence.
4. Personal correspondence.
5. *Children’s Songbook*, 173.

### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy and Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “For He Shall Give His Angels to Watch Over Thee,” followed by “When Faith Endures.”

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## Elder Glenn L. Pace

### Do you know?

Some time ago I had a delightful conversation with an impressive 16-year-old young woman. I discovered she was the only member of the Church in her high school. I asked her, “What is the most difficult challenge you face being the only member?”

She was thoughtful and gave a very astute answer: “It is believing something is true when everyone else believes it is false, and believing something is wrong when everyone else believes it’s all right.”

I asked her a second question: “Do you know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God?” Her response was, “I think so, but I’m not sure.”

This morning I would like to ask the youth throughout the Church, “Do you know?”

### A witness of the Spirit

The first time I knew I had a testimony of Joseph Smith was when I was just 11 years old and my parents took me to Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

My favorite activity was to collect all the free stuff. I became very adept at working the system. I would ask, “Is this free?” After a positive response I would reach out my 11-year-old hand and say, “Thank you. Is that free too? Thank you!” On occasion someone might say, “No, I’m sorry; those cost five cents.” Undeterred, I would lower my head and, showing much disappointment, say, “Oh, I always wanted to read that pamphlet, but I don’t have any money. Thank you!” It worked every time. The truth is, I never read it. I just collected it.

However, on this particular trip, I was alone in our 1948 Chevrolet, waiting for my parents, when I became inescapably bored. In desperation I looked down at the seat and spotted my stack of free stuff. I picked up a pamphlet entitled *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* and began to read it.

I was riveted, and my heart was filled with joy. After completing it, I caught my reflection in the rearview mirror, and much to my surprise, I was crying. I didn’t understand then, but I understand now. I had felt a witness of the Spirit. My parents weren’t there. My sister wasn’t there. My Primary teacher wasn’t there. It was just me and the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.

Now, this can happen to you, and something similar probably already has.

When seeking a testimony, those of you born into the Church may be looking for some spectacular spiritual feeling different than anything you have ever felt before. You may have heard converts testify of their conversion and wonder if you’re missing something. One reason it seems so spectacular to them is that it is new.

You have had the same feelings your whole life during family home evenings, youth testimony meetings, seminary classes, scripture reading, and on many other occasions.

### Learning to recognize the Spirit

Our missionaries are trained to help investigators recognize when they are feeling the Spirit. I remember on numerous occasions stopping in the middle of an intense, spiritual discussion and saying, “Let’s pause for a moment and talk about what you are feeling right now. You’re feeling like we’ve reminded you of things you had forgotten. You’re feeling that we are telling you the truth. You’re feeling peace. You’re feeling the Holy Ghost.”

I remember teaching an extremely intelligent woman who had a hard time accepting anything until she had nailed down every intellectual loose end. However, at long last we heard her say, “I cannot deny this feeling any longer.”

She joined the Church and was very happy for the next few years, but she

gradually let her intellectual doubts creep back in and ultimately left the Church.

Fifteen years went by, and she came to visit our family. We took her to Temple Square. As we started up the circular ramp leading to the statue of the Savior, she paused and tearfully said, “Here comes that feeling again. My heart still yearns for what my mind won’t accept!”

Once you have felt it, you can never forget it.

Spiritual witnesses come at a young age to those who are exposed to spiritual experiences. As parents, teachers, and leaders, we are good at making certain you understand the rules and commandments. We could improve on helping you gain a testimony of the principles and doctrine. Perhaps we could pause more often and help you learn to recognize the Spirit.

Once you recognize those feelings for what they are, your faith in them will increase. Soon you will find that you have developed a spiritual sixth sense which cannot be misled.

### **Feelings activated by the Holy Ghost**

At 11 years of age, I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I didn’t hear voices, see angels, or anything like that. What I felt was much more certain. My spiritual sense had been touched. I felt elation springing forth from the innermost part of my being, which is protected from all deceit. This spiritual sense vibrates only when activated by the Holy Ghost.

How does this spiritual witness feel? It is as difficult to describe as the scent of a rose or the song of a bird or the beauty

of a landscape. Nevertheless, you know it when you feel it.

The scriptures give us some insights into these feelings:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; and then shall ye know” (D&C 11:13–14).

Sometimes the feeling is like a memory. We first learned the gospel in our heavenly home. We have come to this earth with a veil of forgetfulness. And yet lingering in each of our spirits are those dormant memories. The Holy Ghost can part the veil and bring those things out of their dormancy. Often my reaction to a supposedly newfound truth is, “Oh, I remember that!”

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost . . . [will] bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).

### **Invitation to read Joseph Smith story**

My young brothers and sisters, I invite you to “experiment upon my words” (Alma 32:27). Will you read and pray about the Joseph Smith story?

The wonderful thing about knowing it is true is that you know simultaneously that God the Father and Jesus Christ live and stand at the head of this Church today. I gained that knowledge when I was 11, and now I stand before you as an ordained especial witness of Jesus Christ and testify it is true. I also testify that the Lord wants you to know it is true, and He “will [reveal] the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder M. Russell Ballard**

### **The miracle of the Holy Bible**

My brothers and sisters, the Holy Bible is a miracle! It is a miracle that the

Bible’s 4,000 years of sacred and secular history were recorded and preserved by the prophets, apostles, and inspired churchmen.

It is a miracle that we have the Bible's powerful doctrine, principles, poetry, and stories. But most of all, it is a wonderful miracle that we have the account of the life, ministry, and words of Jesus, which was protected through the Dark Ages and through the conflicts of countless generations so that we may have it today.

It is a miracle that the Bible literally contains within its pages the converting, healing Spirit of Christ, which has turned men's hearts for centuries, leading them to pray, to choose right paths, and to search to find their Savior.

The Holy Bible is well named. It is holy because it teaches truth, holy because it warms us with its spirit, holy because it teaches us to know God and understand His dealings with men, and holy because it testifies throughout its pages of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham Lincoln said of the Bible: "This Great Book . . . is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong" (*Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865* [1989], 628).

### **Translators, martyrs, and reformers**

It is not by chance or coincidence that we have the Bible today. Righteous individuals were prompted by the Spirit to record both the sacred things they saw and the inspired words they heard and spoke. Other devoted people were prompted to protect and preserve these records. Men like John Wycliffe, the courageous William Tyndale, and Johannes Gutenberg were prompted against much opposition to translate the Bible into language people could understand and to publish it in books people could read. I believe even the scholars of King James had spiritual promptings in their translation work.

The Dark Ages were dark because the light of the gospel was hidden from the people. They did not have the apostles or

prophets, nor did they have access to the Bible. The clergy kept the scriptures secret and unavailable to the people. We owe much to the many brave martyrs and reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Huss who demanded freedom to worship and common access to the holy books.

William Tyndale gave his life because he believed so deeply in the power of the Bible. He said, "The nature of God's word is, that whosoever read it, or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man" (in S. Michael Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones: William Tyndale—Martyr, Father of the English Bible* [2004], xv).

Honest, diligent study of the Bible does make us better and better, and we must ever remember the countless martyrs who knew of its power and who gave their lives that we may be able to find within its words the path to the eternal happiness and the peace of our Heavenly Father's kingdom.

Although these early Christian reformers agreed on many things, they ultimately disagreed on many points of doctrine. This resulted in the organization of numerous Christian denominations. Roger Williams, an early champion of religious liberty, concluded that there was "no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking" (see William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. [1872–74], 1:502).

Tens of millions of individuals have come to a faith in God and in Jesus Christ through seeking truth in the Holy Bible. Countless numbers of them had nothing *but* the Bible to feed and guide their faith.

Because of the efforts of the reformers, "the Bible became a household possession. The word of God was read around

the family fireside of the lowly as well as the parlors of the great” (John A. Widtsoe, in Conference Report, Apr. 1939, 20).

### **The Bible and the Church of Jesus Christ**

Millions of families have come together seeking to find the Church of Jesus Christ through their study of the Bible. One of those families, in the early 1800s in upstate New York, was the family of Joseph Smith Sr. One of his sons was Joseph Smith Jr., who searched the Bible, seeking to know which of the many denominations was the same as the Church that Jesus Christ organized. He was prompted by the words of the Bible to pray for further spiritual light and knowledge from God. Determined to seek the wisdom promised in the holy scriptures, Joseph knelt in humble prayer early in the spring of 1820. Oh, what marvelous light and truth were shed upon him that day as he beheld the glorious manifestation of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Once again God called a prophet as He did in the days of Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

How grateful we should be for the Holy Bible. In it we learn not only of the life and teachings and doctrines of Christ, we learn of His Church and of His priesthood and of the organization which He established and named the Church of Jesus Christ in those former days. We believe in that Church, and we believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that same Church, restored to earth, complete, with the same organization and the same priesthood.

Without the Bible, we would not know of His Church then, nor would we have the fulness of His gospel now.

### **The value of the Bible**

I love the Bible, its teachings, its lessons, and its spirit. I love the Old Testament’s compelling, profound stories and its great prophets testifying of the coming of Christ. I love the New Testament’s

apostolic travels and miracles and the letters of Paul. Most of all, I love its eyewitness accounts of the words and the example and the Atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ. I love the perspective and peace that come from reading the Bible.

Brothers and sisters, I am sure many of you have had the experience of hearing people say that “Mormons are not Christians because they have their own Bible, the Book of Mormon.” To anyone harboring this misconception, we say that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and the author of our salvation and that we believe, revere, and love the Holy Bible. We do have additional sacred scripture, including the Book of Mormon, but it supports the Bible, never substituting for it.

Jesus taught that we should “search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). These words provide insight and inspiration to all who sincerely seek to know and understand the truth about Jesus Christ. The scriptures are rich in history, doctrine, stories, sermons, and testimonies, all of which ultimately focus on the eternal Christ and His physical and spiritual mission to Heavenly Father’s children.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16). We love the Bible and other scriptures. That may be surprising to some who may not be aware of our belief in the Bible as the revealed word of God. It is one of the pillars of our faith, a powerful witness of the Savior and of Christ’s ongoing influence in the lives of those who worship and follow Him. The more we read and study the Bible and its teachings, the more clearly we see the doctrinal underpinnings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We tend to love the scriptures that we spend time with. We may need to balance our study in order to love and understand all scripture.

You young people especially, do not discount or devalue the Holy Bible. It is

the sacred, holy record of the Lord's life. The Bible contains hundreds of pages more than all of our other scripture combined. It is the bedrock of all Christianity. We do not criticize or belittle anyone's beliefs. Our great responsibility as Christians is to share all that God has revealed with all of His sons and daughters.

Those who join this Church do not give up their faith in the Bible—they strengthen it. The Book of Mormon does not dilute nor diminish nor de-emphasize the Bible. On the contrary, it expands, extends, and exalts it. The Book of Mormon testifies of the Bible, and both testify of Christ.

### **Testaments of Christ**

The first testament of Christ is the Bible's Old Testament, which predicted and prophesied of the coming of the Savior, His transcendent life, and His liberating Atonement.

The second Bible testament of Christ is the New Testament, which records His birth, His life, His ministry, His gospel, His Church, His Atonement, and His Resurrection, as well as the testimonies of His Apostles.

The third testament of Christ is the Book of Mormon, which also foretells Christ's coming, confirms the Bible's account of His saving Atonement, and then reveals the resurrected Lord's visit to the earth's other hemisphere. The subtitle of the Book of Mormon, the clarifying purpose statement printed on the cover of every copy, is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

Each of these three testaments is a part of the great, indivisible whole of the Lord's revealed word to His children. They contain the words of Christ, which we have been admonished to feast upon as a means of qualifying for eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:20). Those who think that one part is more important or more true than the other parts are missing some of the beauty

and completeness of the canon of ancient scripture.

And those who think that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not believe in Jesus Christ or in the Bible should take time to understand the Church, the significance of its name, and the power of its message.

### **The Church's belief in the Bible**

I am puzzled by any who would question this Church's belief in the Bible and our position as Christians. The name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In our last general conference, here in this building, our Church leaders quoted from the Bible nearly 200 times. This Church is organized and functions like the Church that Christ and His Apostles established in the New Testament. Seated on the stand today are the prophet and the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I bear solemn witness that we are true and full believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His revealed word through the Holy Bible. We not only believe the Bible—we strive to follow its precepts and to teach its message. The message of our missionaries is Christ and His gospel and His Atonement, and the scriptures are the text of that message. We say to all people, "We extend our love to you and invite you to come. Let us share all that God has revealed."

My brothers and sisters, we must help all people, including our own members, understand the power and importance of the Holy Bible. The Bible is scripture that leads us and all mankind to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. May God grant us the desire and capacity to accept and live His teachings is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "For He Shall Give His Angels to Watch Over Thee" and "When Faith Endures."

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The things of which I know

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am pleased with the opportunity to speak to you. I thank each of you for your prayers in my behalf. I am so very deeply grateful to you. In my 49 years as a General Authority, I have spoken well over 200 times in general conference. I am now in my 97th year. The wind is blowing, and I feel like the last leaf on the tree.

Actually my health is quite good, despite all the rumors to the contrary. Skillful doctors and nurses keep me on the right track. Some of you may go before I do. However, with my age in mind, I wish to give you my testimony of the basic truths of this work.

I confess that I do not know everything, but of some things I am certain. Of the things of which I know, I speak to you this morning.

### The nature of Deity

When the emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity, he became aware of the divisiveness among the clergy concerning the nature of Deity. In an attempt to overcome this, he gathered the eminent divines of the day to Nicaea in the year 325. Each participant was given opportunity to state his views. The argument only grew more heated. When a definition could not be reached, a compromise was made. It came to be known as the Nicene Creed, and its basic elements are recited by most of the Christian faithful.

Personally I cannot understand it. To me the creed is confusing.

How deeply grateful I am that we of this Church do not rely on any man-made statement concerning the nature of Deity. Our knowledge comes directly from the personal experience of Joseph Smith, who, while yet a boy, spoke with God the Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the

Risen Lord. He knelt in Their presence, he heard Their voices, and he responded. Each was a distinct personality. Small wonder that he told his mother that he had learned that her church was not true. And so, one of the great overarching doctrines of this Church is our belief in God the Eternal Father. He is a being, real and individual. He is the great Governor of the universe, yet He is our Father, and we are His children.

We pray to Him, and those prayers are a conversation between God and man. I am confident that He hears our prayers and answers them. I could not deny that. I have had too many experiences of answered prayers.

Alma instructed his son Helaman, saying, "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

### Jesus is the living Christ

The second great certitude of which I am sure also has its foundation in the vision of the Prophet Joseph. It is that Jesus lives. He is the living Christ. He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Messiah of the New. Under His Father's direction, He was the Creator of the earth. The Gospel of John opens with these remarkable words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).



Note particularly that last verse, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

He was the great Creator. It was His finger that wrote the commandments on the mount. It was He who left His royal courts on high and came to earth, born under the most humble of circumstances. During His brief ministry, He healed the sick, caused the blind to see, raised the dead, and rebuked the scribes and Pharisees. He was the only perfect man ever to walk the earth. All of this was part of His Father’s plan. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He suffered so greatly that he sweat drops of blood as He pleaded with His Father. But this was all a part of His great atoning sacrifice. He was taken by the mob and appeared before Pilate with the mob crying for His death. He carried the cross, the instrument of His death. On Golgotha He gave His life, crying out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

His body was tenderly laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. But three days later, on that first Easter morning, the tomb was emptied. Mary of Magdala spoke to Him, and He spoke to her. He appeared to His Apostles. He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. And, we are told, He was seen by some 500 others (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

He had said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Accordingly, He appeared to those assembled in the land Bountiful in the Western Hemisphere. Here, He taught the people as He had taught them in the Old World. This is all recorded in detail in the Book of Mormon, which stands as a second witness of the divinity of our Lord.

And to repeat, both He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph, the Father introducing the Son, saying: “This is

My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

### **The Atonement**

Now, the next thing of which I am certain, and of which I bear witness, is the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without it, life is meaningless. It is the keystone in the arch of our existence. It affirms that we lived before we were born in mortality. Mortality is but a stepping-stone to a more glorious existence in the future. The sorrow of death is softened with the promise of the Resurrection. There would be no Christmas if there were no Easter.

### **Restoration of the priesthood**

I speak next of the great certitudes that have come with the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is the restoration of the priesthood, or the authority given man to speak in the name of God. This priesthood is of two orders: the lesser, also known as the Aaronic, was restored under the hands of John the Baptist. The higher order of priesthood, the Melchizedek, was restored under the hands of Peter, James, and John.

In restoring the Aaronic Priesthood, the resurrected John the Baptist laid his hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and said, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1).

President Wilford Woodruff in his old age spoke to the young men of the Church and said: “I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord

than while holding the office of a Priest” (in *Millennial Star*, Oct. 5, 1891, 629).

The Melchizedek or Higher Priesthood empowers men to lay their hands upon the heads of others and give blessings. They bless the sick. As James declared in the New Testament: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

### Temple blessings

Now finally, I mention the blessings of the house of the Lord, which have come of the Restoration of the ancient gospel.

These temples, which we have greatly multiplied in recent years, offer blessings that are had nowhere else. All that occurs in these sacred houses has to do with the eternal nature of man. Here, husbands and wives and children are sealed together as families for all eternity. Marriage is not “until death do ye part.” It is forever, if the parties live worthy of the blessing. Most remarkable of all is the authority to do vicarious work in the house of the Lord. Here, ordinances are performed in behalf of the dead who did not have opportunity to receive them while in life.

I was recently told of a woman in Idaho Falls, a widow. Over a period of 15 years she acted as proxy in giving the tem-

ple endowment to 20,000 individuals in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple. She completed her 20,000th endowment on a Friday and returned on Saturday to do five more. She passed away the following week.

Just think of what this one little woman did. She performed these vicarious endowments for as many people as are assembled in this Conference Center this morning. Think of the reception she must have received on the other side.

Now, my brothers and sisters, this is my testimony, which I solemnly bear before you.

God bless you, every one, you faithful Latter-day Saints. May there be peace and love in your homes and faith and prayer to guide you in all that you undertake is my humble prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided and also express sincere thanks to all who participated in any way.

The choir will sing “O My Father.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Won Yong Ko of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

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The choir sang “O My Father.”

Elder Won Yong Ko offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 1, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "From All That Dwell below the Skies." The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Ross Workman of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders L. Tom Perry and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Brother Charles W. Dahlquist, Young Men general president.

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The choir sang "From All That Dwell below the Skies."

Elder H. Ross Workman offered the invocation.

The choir sang "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### A young man's priesthood service

In one of my stake conference assignments in the Salt Lake Valley, I invited a young deacons quorum president to join me to talk about the keys of the priesthood. I wanted him to understand that he held a very special office that included the keys to preside over a quorum of the priesthood. We talked about the great responsibility it is to hold keys and how special it is to belong to a quorum. At the conclusion of the little presentation, I asked him how many members he had in his quorum. His answer was 14.

Then the question: "How many are active?"

The answer: "Twelve."

Then I asked, "What about the other two?"

His response was, "I need to get to work and make them an active part of our quorum."

I asked him how long that would take. He thought maybe three months. I encouraged him in his efforts.

Three months later, almost to the day, I received a letter from him informing me that all the members of his quorum were now active. He said he had befriended them, and one was now attending deacons quorum meetings, and the other had been ordained a teacher by the bishop. I was overwhelmed with his response. What an example of one honoring his priesthood and using priesthood keys to carry out an assignment the Lord has given him to fulfill. I could not help but marvel at the design the Lord has established for the administration of His work here on earth using the powers of the priesthood.

### The message of the Restoration

This young man, not yet 14 years of age, is receiving valuable training to prepare him for a lifetime of service. Can you see him in the next five or six years continuing this service with a badge on his suit coat indicating that he is giving two years of his life as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

In addition to the experience he is gaining exercising his priesthood in service to others, this young man's preparation must also include a solid understanding of the message of the Restoration—the message that thousands of missionaries today are declaring to the world. It is the message that in our day, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the gospel has been restored for the blessing of all who will listen and obey.

### The First Vision

The dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in by a very special vision to another young man not quite 15 years of age who went to the woods to pray for answers to the questions he had in his mind concerning religion. Joseph Smith describes the glorious vision that was unfolded to his view, in these words:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

This vision revealed unto us that God our Father and Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son, are two separate personages. Each has a body of flesh and bones that is glorified and perfected, thus clearing up the misconception that had been in existence for many centuries concerning the concept of God. Is it any wonder that when Joseph Smith wrote the Articles of Faith, in the first one he declared, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost”? (Articles of Faith 1:1).

### The Book of Mormon

Knowing that doubt, disbelief, and misinformation would immediately follow the Prophet as he recounted the First Vision, the Lord brought forth the Book of Mormon, another testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. This ancient volume of holy scriptures is a sacred companion to the Bible, containing the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. It also provides convincing evidence to the world that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. The Doctrine and Covenants contains the following declaration about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

“[God] gave unto [Joseph Smith] commandments which inspired him;

“And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

“Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

“Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—

“Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old” (D&C 20:7–11).

The translation of the Book of Mormon is a miracle in itself and gives further proof of the book's divine origin. When Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on April 5, 1829, to serve as the Prophet's scribe, only a few pages of the final text had been translated. That evening Joseph and Oliver sat down together and discussed the Prophet's experiences long into the night. Two days later, on April 7, they commenced the translation of the work. Over the next three months, Joseph translated at an amazing rate—approximately 500 printed pages in about 60 working days.

Oliver wrote of this remarkable experience: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the *inspiration* of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the *Urim and Thummim*, . . . the history, or record, called ‘The book of Mormon’” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 14; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

### The priesthood

As they proceeded, Joseph and Oliver were thrilled with the doctrines contained in this book. They were particularly impressed with the doctrine of baptism as taught by the resurrected Savior during His visit to the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. The importance of the doctrine of baptism was clearly unfolded to their minds. They determined that they must seek the Lord in mighty prayer that they might learn how they could obtain the blessing of being baptized themselves.

On May 15, 1829, they went to the woods near the Susquehanna River and knelt in prayer. Oliver describes what happened next: “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance!—What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world [was] racked and distracted—while millions were [groping] as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld—our ears heard” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 15; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The angel introduced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. He laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph and Oliver and said:

*“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”*

“He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

“Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded” (Joseph Smith—History 1:69–71).

A short time later, the Apostles Peter, James, and John appeared, placed their hands on the heads of these two fellow servants, and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood.

### The Church of Jesus Christ

Now that the power to act in the name of the Lord was again on the earth, Joseph was commanded to formally organize the Church. On April 6, 1830, at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, six men who had previously been baptized voted unanimously to organize, according to the commandments of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. At this meeting a revelation was received:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God

the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

“Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

“Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1–5).

Thus the Church of Jesus Christ was again in existence on the earth to bless mankind with the doctrines and teachings of the Savior. This Church was organized according to the plan the Lord had established anciently.

In the Bible, in the book of Ephesians, Paul declared:

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–15).

## A unique and glorious message

President Hinckley has said concerning the Restoration: “After many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 83).

Our message is unique. We declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. We declare with boldness that the keys of the priesthood have been restored to man, with the power to seal on earth and in the heavens. The saving ordinances pronounced by the Lord as requirements for entering into eternal life with Him can now be performed with binding authority by those who worthily exercise the power of His holy priesthood. We declare to the world that this is the day referred to by biblical prophets as the latter days. It is the final time, before the coming of Jesus Christ to rule and reign over the earth.

We invite all to listen to the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from us. Then you can compare the glorious message with what you may hear from others, and you can determine which is from God and which is from man.

My witness to you is that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, established in the latter days. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### The danger of procrastination

There is a danger in the word *someday* when what it means is “not this day.” “Someday I will repent.” “Someday I will forgive him.” “Someday I will speak to my friend about the Church.” “Someday I will start to pay tithing.” “Someday I will return to the temple.” “Someday . . .”

The scriptures make the danger of delay clear. It is that we may discover that we have run out of time. The God who gives us each day as a treasure will require an accounting. We will weep, and He will weep, if we have intended to repent and to serve Him in tomorrows which never came or have dreamt of yesterdays where the opportunity to act was past. This day is a precious gift of God. The thought “Someday I will” can be a thief of the opportunities of time and the blessings of eternity.

There is solemn warning and counsel in the words recorded in the Book of Mormon:

“And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

“Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>1</sup>

Then Amulek warns that procrastinating your repentance and service can cause the Spirit of the Lord to withdraw from you.

But with the warning he gives this hope: “And this I know, because the Lord

hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>2</sup>

### Serving the Lord without delay

The scriptures are filled with examples of wise servants of God who treasured the day they were in and chose to do what they could to bring cleansing. Joshua was one: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . .,” he said, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Serving Him invites the Holy Ghost to be with us. And the Holy Ghost is a cleanser of sin.

Even the Savior, who was without sin, set an example of the need not to procrastinate. He said:

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

As the risen Savior, He is this day and forever the Light of the World. It is He who invites us to come unto Him and serve Him, without delay. His encouragement to you and to me is this: “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.”<sup>5</sup>

That is as true of a day as it is of a life. A morning prayer and an early search in the scriptures to know what we should do for the Lord can set the course of a day. We can know which task, of all those we might choose, matters most to God and therefore to us. I have learned such a prayer is always answered if we ask and ponder with childlike submission, ready to act without delay to perform even the most humble service.

### The test of faithful obedience

On many days, doing what matters most will not be easy. It is not supposed to be. God's purpose in creation was to let us prove ourselves. The plan was explained to us in the spirit world before we were born. We were valiant enough there to qualify for the opportunity to choose against temptation here to prepare for eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God. We rejoiced to know the test would be one of faithful obedience even when it would not be easy: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."<sup>6</sup>

Hard as we knew the test would be, we felt joy because we had confidence that we could pass it. Our confidence came from knowing that Jesus Christ would come into the world as our Savior. He would overcome death. He would make it possible for us to be cleansed of our sins by qualifying for the effects of His Atonement.

We also knew some reassuring facts about what it would take to receive the purifying which we would need. Everything that cleansing would require—baptism by authority, receiving the Holy Ghost under the hands of authorized priesthood bearers, remembering Him and therefore having His Spirit to be with us, and then keeping His commandments—all would be possible for the humblest of us. It would not take superior intellect, nor would it take wealth, nor long life. And we knew that the Savior would draw us to Him and would have the power to help us when the test would be hard and the temptation to procrastinate great. Alma, the great prophet, described how Christ gained that ability:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>7</sup>

All of us will need His help to avoid the tragedy of procrastinating what we must do here and now to have eternal life. For most of us the temptation to delay will come from one or both of two feelings. They are polar opposites: one is to be complacent about what we have already done, and the other is to feel overwhelmed by the need to do more.

### The danger of complacency

Complacency is a danger for us all. It can come to naive youth who feel that there will be plenty of time in the future for spiritual things. They might think that they have already done enough, considering the brief time they have lived. I know from experience how the Lord can help such a youth to see that he or she is in the midst of spiritual things now. He can help you see that classmates are watching you. He can help you see that their eternal future is shaped by what they observe you do or not do. Your simple thanks for their influence for good on you can lift them more than you imagine. When you ask God, He can and will reveal to you the opportunities to lift others for Him, which He has placed around you from your infancy.

Complacency can affect even the seasoned adult. The better and the longer you serve, the more likely that the tempter can place this lie in your mind: "You have earned a rest." You may have been the Primary president in your little branch twice. Or you may have worked long and hard on your mission and sacrificed so much to serve. Or perhaps you were the pioneer in the Church where you live. The thought may come: "Why not leave the service to



the new people. I have done my part.” The temptation will be to believe that you will return to serve again, someday.

The Lord can help you see the danger in taking a rest because you feel you have done enough. He helped me by letting me have a conversation with one of His aged servants. He was feeble, his body weakened by decades of faithful labor and by illness. His doctors no longer allowed him to leave his home. At his request, I reported a trip I had taken in the Lord’s service, across several nations, in dozens of meetings, and in many private interviews, helping individuals and families. I told him of the gratitude people expressed to me for him and his many years of service. He asked me if I had another assignment soon. I told him about another long trip soon to come. He surprised me, and he gave me an inoculation against complacency which I hope will last forever, when he grabbed my arm and said, “Oh, please, take me with you.”

### **Praying to know what we can do**

It is hard to know when we have done enough for the Atonement to change our natures and so qualify us for eternal life. And we don’t know how many days we will have to give the service necessary for that mighty change to come. But we know that we will have days enough if only we don’t waste them. Here is the good news:

“And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men.”<sup>8</sup>

That assurance from the Master can help those of us feeling overwhelmed by our circumstances. In the hardest trials, as long as you have the power to pray, you can ask a loving God: “Please let me serve, this day. It doesn’t matter to me how few

things I may be able to do. Just let me know what I *can* do. I will obey this day. I know that I can, with Thy help.”

The quiet invitation to you may be to do so simple a thing as to forgive someone who has offended you. You can do that from a hospital bed. It may be to go to help someone who is hungry. You may feel overwhelmed by your own poverty and the labors of the day. But if you decide not to wait until you have more strength and more money, and if you pray for the Holy Spirit as you go, you will when you arrive know what to do and how to help someone even poorer than you are. You may find when you get there that they were praying and expecting that someone like you would come, in the name of the Lord.

### **Blessings of choosing to serve this day**

For those who are discouraged by their circumstances and are therefore tempted to feel they cannot serve the Lord this day, I make you two promises. Hard as things seem today, they will be better in the next day if you choose to serve the Lord this day with your whole heart. Your circumstances may not be improved in all the ways which you desire. But you will have been given new strength to carry your burdens and new confidence that when your burdens become too heavy, the Lord, whom you have served, will carry what you cannot. He knows how. He prepared long ago. He suffered your infirmities and your sorrows when He was in the flesh so that He would know how to succor you.

The other promise I make to you is that by choosing to serve Him this day, you will feel His love and grow to love Him more. You may remember the scripture:

“I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, . . . that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”<sup>9</sup>

By serving Him this day, you will come to know Him better. You will feel His love and appreciation. You would not want to delay receiving that blessing. And feeling His love will draw you back to His service, wiping away both complacency and discouragement.

As you serve Him, you will come to know better the voice by which you shall be called. When you go to sleep at the end of a day, the words may come back in memory: “Well done, thou hast been faithful over a few things.”<sup>10</sup> I pray for that benediction on this day, on every day, and on our lives.

I know that Heavenly Father lives and answers our prayers. I know that Jesus is the living Christ, the Savior of the world, and that we can choose to feel joy and peace in His service this day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Alma 34:33–34.
2. Alma 34:36.
3. Joshua 24:15.
4. John 9:4–5.
5. Proverbs 8:17.
6. Abraham 3:25.
7. Alma 7:11–12.
8. 2 Nephi 2:21.
9. Mosiah 5:12–13.
10. Matthew 25:21; see also v. 23.

## Elder Gary J. Coleman

### “Are we Christians?”

Christianity celebrates the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. Christian churches with great variations of doctrine dot the land the world over. When 14-year-old Cortnee, a daughter of a mission president, entered a new high school as a freshman, she was asked by classmates if she was a Christian. They scoffed at her response that she was a Mormon, a common reference to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon arriving home, she asked her mother, “Mom, are we Christians?”

Growing up in my family, we lived as devout members of another Christian faith. I was baptized a member of that church shortly after my birth. Our family went to church each week. For many years my brothers and I assisted the pastors who conducted our Sunday services. I was taught the importance of family prayer as our family prayed together each day. I thought that someday I would enter the

full-time ministry in my church. There was no question in our minds that we could define ourselves as devout Christians.

When I was a university student, however, I became acquainted with the members and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Christian faith centered on the Savior. I began to learn about the doctrine of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I learned truths that I had not known before that changed my life and how I viewed the gospel. After much studying, prayer, and faith, I chose to embrace beautiful restored truths found only in this Church.

### The nature of the Godhead

The first restored truth that I learned was the nature of the Godhead. The true Christian doctrine that the Godhead consists of three separate beings was known in biblical times. God bore witness of Jesus, His Only Begotten Son, on several occasions. He spoke at Jesus’s baptism: “This is

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself testified of God, His Father, when He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup> After Jesus’s death and Resurrection, we learn that Stephen, “he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>3</sup> What a dramatic testimony of the Godhead from that disciple of Christ.

The knowledge of God and His physical separateness from His Son and the Holy Ghost was lost after the death of Christ and His Apostles. Confusion and false doctrines about the Godhead were fashioned out of the Nicene Creed and Constantinople councils, where men declared that instead of three separate beings, the Godhead was three persons in one God, or the Trinity. Just as Christian Protestant reformers struggled with these creeds of men, I did as well. The teachings about the Trinity that I learned in my youth were incomprehensible to me.

However, when I was introduced to the glorious truths of the First Vision experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was a stunning awakening for me to finally understand the truth about the nature of God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son. Joseph declared: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>4</sup> This heavenly vision restored the wondrous yet plain and precious knowledge of God and His Son to the earth again, dispelling at once the teachings I had learned about the Trinity.

I know that heaven-sent revelations have replaced the gross errors of man-made doctrines concerning the Godhead.

I know that God is our Heavenly Father. His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior. The Holy Ghost testifies of the Father and the Son. I express my profound gratitude to God for introducing the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to mankind in these last days. The Savior lives; He has been seen; He has spoken; He directs the work of His Church through apostles and prophets today. What magnificent truths He has taught as the Good Shepherd who continues to look after His sheep.

### **The Book of Mormon**

The second restored truth I learned as an investigator of this Church was the reality of additional scripture and revelation. The prophet Isaiah saw in vision a book that he proclaimed was part of “a marvelous work and a wonder.”<sup>5</sup> I testify that the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is that book. It is a sacred record written by prophets of God to persuade all people to come unto Christ, and it helps to reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. The Book of Mormon tells of prophets and other faithful members of the Church who took upon themselves the name of Christ, even before the Savior’s birth.<sup>6</sup> This book tells of the resurrected Christ teaching men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the world to come. What could be more Christian than seeking to take His name upon ourselves and follow His counsel to become like Him?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, “I cannot understand why the Christian world does not accept this book.”<sup>7</sup> I first read the Book of Mormon at the age of 21. I then asked God if it was true. The truth of it was manifested unto me by the comforting power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup> I know that the Book of Mormon is a second testament of Jesus Christ. I join my testimony with the prophets of this sacred book to declare that “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we

prophecy of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> I am deeply grateful for every word that He has spoken and for every word He continues to speak as He quenches our thirst with living water.

### Restoration of priesthood authority

Another restored truth of the gospel I became acquainted with was the restoration of priesthood authority, or the power to act in God’s name. Former prophets and apostles, such as Elijah, Moses, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, have been sent by God and Christ in our day to restore the holy priesthood of God. Every priesthood holder in this Church can trace his priesthood authority directly to Jesus Christ. Men now possess the keys to establish the Church so that we can come unto Christ and partake of His eternal ordinances of salvation.<sup>10</sup> I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ—the only church authorized with true priesthood authority to exercise the keys of salvation through sacred ordinances.

Cortnee asked, “Mom, are we Christians?” As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a

Christian, and I am too. I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true “doctrine of Christ”<sup>11</sup> since my conversion to the restored Church. These truths define this Church as having the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like other members of the Church, I now understand the true nature of the Godhead, I have access to additional scripture and revelation, and I can partake of the blessings of priesthood authority. Yes, Cortnee, we are Christians, and I testify of these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 3:17.
2. John 17:3.
3. Acts 7:55–56.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Isaiah 29:14; see also vv. 11–12, 18.
6. See Alma 46:14–16.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.
8. See Moroni 10:4–5.
9. 2 Nephi 25:26.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 2; 13; 110; 112:32.
11. 2 Nephi 31:2; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–36.

## Charles W. Dahlquist II

My dear brethren and sisters, I am grateful that we live in a day and age when apostles and prophets walk the earth and provide inspiration and guidance for us. I bear my witness that President Hinckley is indeed a prophet of God—just as was Moses, Abraham, and all the other prophets since the world began. I am grateful for his counsel this morning and for the opportunity we will have at the conclusion of this conference to hear from him once again.

### A chosen generation

Today I speak particularly to the young men and young women of the

Church, as well as to their parents and leaders. I speak also to the great young single adults, who have such marvelous talents and capabilities and potential for service in the kingdom.

President Hinckley has said of this generation: “There never was a time such as this. What a season in the history of the world to be alive! Never before has there been such a generation of youth. . . . You really are ‘a chosen generation’ ” (*Way to Be!* [2002], 3).

*You*, as the youth of Zion, have a great work to do and have been given all the talents and opportunities, regardless of where you live, to do just exactly what

your Father in Heaven expects of you. I pray that my comments this afternoon will help you in that quest.

### **“Who’s on the Lord’s side?”**

In February 1852, a young woman by the name of Hannah Last Cornaby was baptized in Yarmouth, England. It was not the quiet, reverent experience most have but was described by her in these words: “We found the house surrounded by a mob, through which we with difficulty made our way. . . . Before we reached the water’s edge, the whole horde was upon us; and my husband baptized me amid a shower of stones, and shouts . . . and, although the stones whizzed around us thick as hail, not one touched us, and we reached home in safety, thanking God for our miraculous deliverance” (Hannah Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems* [1881], 24–25).

Her life that followed was not an easy one. Years later, she wrote these words:

Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
Now is the time to show.  
We ask it fearlessly:  
Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
 (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*,  
no. 260)

Although these are the words of a song we do not sing very often, it has become one of my favorite hymns because of the commitment to truth and right. In fact, it is a question that should be in the mind of each young man and each young woman the world over: “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” And our resounding answer should be, “*I am!*”

### **Examples of Nephi and David**

It was the question that was in the mind of Nephi when the Lord, through Nephi’s father, Lehi, directed Nephi and his brothers to go back to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. When Laman and Lemuel murmured, the question came to

Nephi, “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” to which he responded, “*I am!*” in the words, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

It was the same with young David in the Old Testament. Remember how, as a young shepherd, he visited his brothers on the battlefield. While there he heard the taunts of the giant Philistine, Goliath, to the men of Israel—challenging them to battle. And all Israel’s warriors were afraid to face the giant. Their response to the question “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” was not “*I am!*” but rather “Who me?”

But not the boy David. Taking only stones and a simple shepherd’s sling, he approached the giant, saying: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. . . .

“This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:45–46). And at that point David did not timidly walk but *ran* to meet the giant. And because of David’s faith in God, Goliath was slain and Israel prevailed.

My young brethren and sisters, wherever I travel, I meet noble youth just like you who are faced constantly with modern-day Goliaths in the form of temptations that would cause us to violate our covenants and the standards the Lord has given us. This becomes even more important when you are surrounded daily with profanity, socially accepted immorality, immodesty, pornography, and other inappropriate material in the media, including television and the Internet, and widespread availability of drugs and alcohol. In a word, not a day goes by that we are not asked, in one form or another, “Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?” I have two simple

suggestions to help you prepare your answer to that question.

### **Do not forget who you are**

First, never forget who you are. The simple truth is in the children's hymn many of us learned in Primary: "I am a child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). And our wise and kind Heavenly Father has not just sent us here and then left us alone. He has given us specific guides to help us accomplish that which He expects of us. He has given us families to help, to love, and to teach. He has given us living prophets to lead us. He has given us, through the First Presidency, the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* brochure, with this promise: "We promise that as you keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life's work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost" ([2001], 2).

I always keep my small copy of the brochure with me—*always!* I challenge you to do the same. Then, when you are waiting for a bus or have a spare moment, pull it out, read it, and recommit to live the standards in that brochure. I promise you that as you do, happiness, peace, and deep feelings of courage and self-worth will follow.

As you exercise your agency, remember, you are not alone. In addition to a kind and wise Heavenly Father, there are others who are praying for you to make wise choices. As a youth, when I would go out on a date or with my friends, I would always check in with my parents when I came home. Usually I would just knock on their door, open it and say, "I'm home," and then go to bed. One night I came home from a date, knocked as usual, and then opened the door. As I did so, the light from the hall fell on my angel mother on her knees in prayer. And as I saw her there, I knew whom she was praying for. I have never forgotten that experience. And

the knowledge that my mother still prays for me today bears me up and reminds me who I am and that I am not alone.

### **"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts"**

My second suggestion: learn to control your thoughts. A part of the plan of happiness that our Heavenly Father has given us is that we were sent here to be tested. Therefore, there will always be temptations. Our work as Latter-day Saints is to keep the commandments of God, in spite of the temptations that Satan sends our way. In my life, I have found that this is much easier to do when we can control our thoughts—and especially when we have memorized music, scriptures, and good poetry to replace the evil thoughts that come into our minds.

President Boyd K. Packer has counseled us to have a hymn memorized so that when an inappropriate thought comes into our minds, we can replace it with a hymn. In applying this instruction, a friend of mine explained: "One day I left my office for lunch. After I had walked for about two blocks, I noticed that I had been humming 'my song': 'I Am a Child of God.' As I chained my thoughts back several hundred yards, I realized that as I had crossed the street from my office, a young woman, inappropriately clothed, had crossed in front of me. Immediately, subconsciously, the words and music of 'I Am a Child of God' began to roll through my mind—to displace inappropriate thoughts." That day my friend learned a great lesson about his ability to control his thoughts.

President George Albert Smith gave wonderful counsel on this subject when he said: "There is a line of demarcation well defined between the Lord's territory and the devil's territory. If you will remain on the Lord's side of the line, the adversary cannot come there to tempt you. . . . But . . . if you cross onto the devil's side of the line, you are in his territory . . . and he will work on you to get you just as far from

that line as he possibly can, knowing that he can only succeed in destroying you by keeping you away from the place where there is safety” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 118).

The Mutual theme for 2007 provides a promise for those who heed this wise counsel: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God . . . [and] the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion” (D&C 121:45–46).

I testify to you that God lives. I know that we are His children, that He knows us by name, and that we are not alone as we make these important decisions. Each day of your life you will make choices, the result of which will land you either on one side of that line or on the other. And so I issue the challenge to all youth within the sound of my voice, to the youth of the noble birthright throughout the world: live

your life in such a way that when you are faced with a choice between good and evil and when deep inside you can hear the question “Who’s on the Lord’s side?”—you will be prepared to answer with all your strength, “*I am!*” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy will address us, and he will be followed by Elders Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

### Tithing is holy unto the Lord

I would like to discuss the law of tithing. In the book of Malachi, the Lord asks:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>1</sup>

Tithing is such an important commandment that when the Lord appeared on the American continent after His Resurrection, He repeated those same exact words.<sup>2</sup> And the Lord said in our day,

“Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually.”<sup>3</sup>

In the book of Leviticus, the Lord stated three different times that tithing is “holy unto the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord said, “Prove me now [or test me now] . . . , if I will not open you the windows of heaven.”<sup>5</sup> Many of us test the Lord in the right way; however, some do not.

Consider, for example, ten apples. Now, all ten of these apples actually belong to the Lord, but He asks us to return to Him only one-tenth, or one apple.

Are you offering only a small bite of that apple and keeping 90 percent? Are you willing to offer the Lord such a small portion?

Are you ashamed, or do you try to patch up and hide the bitten portion of the apple and then offer that to the Lord?

We want our offerings to be full and clean. We have been taught: “Behold, the

Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Experience of a stake in Idaho**

A few years ago I received the assignment to reorganize the Carey Idaho Stake. The plane landed at Twin Falls, and President Roy Hubert, who had served so well, met me there and drove me to his home. While we were driving, I asked him, “Is there anything I can do for you and your Saints?”

He said: “Oh, we have had a terrible drought for the last few years. This year it is particularly severe, and many farmers have left town to find employment elsewhere.”

I was so disturbed for our faithful members who love the Lord and the Church yet were losing their farms.

A young bishop, R. Spence Ellsworth, was called to serve as the new stake president. During the Sunday general session, results of the drought weighed heavily on my mind. As I was speaking, a strong prompting came. I asked them to do the following:

1. Faithfully pay an honest tithe, both young and old.
2. Humbly hold regular individual and family prayers.
3. Devotedly have daily personal and family scripture study.
4. Thankfully keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Gratefully go to the temple often, there offering thanksgiving.
6. Willingly sustain and follow the new leaders.
7. Hold a stakewide fast, including everyone in the affected communities who would like to participate.

For the next couple of days following the stake conference, many members planted their crops with complete faith, even though there was no forecast of rain.

On Wednesday, under the direction of President Ellsworth, the whole stake fasted. That same week many members, the leaders, and their spouses went to the Boise Idaho Temple and offered their thanksgiving. While these faithful Saints were in the temple, rain began to fall on the entire community, though the weather forecast indicated no moisture for the next few weeks. The following Saturday, good rain fell again and continued for a few days. This happened late in the month of April. Significant snow fell in the mountains, providing enough moisture. In the Dietrich and Richfield communities, their reservoir had been under 30 percent, but after the people fasted, the reservoir was nearly full. The Carey water supply increased from about 44 percent to more than 100 percent of normal. Through the rest of the growing season, as members of the Carey stake increased their faith by fasting a few more times, paying honest tithes, and attending the temple more frequently, the Lord heard and answered their prayers. Frost came late that year, so the farmers were able to harvest grain, sugar beets, alfalfa, potatoes, and other crops. From that day, and each year since, they have offered their thanksgiving prayers, and “because of . . . his tender mercies,”<sup>7</sup> the Lord continues to bless them.

In the book of Chronicles, the Lord said, “If my people, . . . called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”<sup>8</sup>

### **A matter of faith**

Paying a full and honest tithe leads us to the temple. Tithing, I believe, is one of President Hinckley’s prophetic priorities.

Last week in the Young Women meeting, President Hinckley said, “While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith.”<sup>9</sup>



Another time he said: "This is not so much a matter of money as it is a matter of faith. . . . I urge you, . . . every one of you, to take the Lord at His word in this important matter."<sup>10</sup>

It is a matter of commitment. The earth belongs to the Lord, and this includes our own lives. He allows us to use *everything* on this earth. He only asks us to return one-tenth. Tithing is a token of gratitude, obedience, and thanksgiving—a token of our willingness and dedication. Paying tithing, willingly, develops an honest and pure heart. Paying tithing increases our love for the Lord.

The Lord said, "It is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people."<sup>11</sup>

Brothers and sisters, let us demonstrate our faith. Let us show our willingness to obey. I promise you, in the name of Jesus Christ, when you and I pay honest, true tithes to the Lord, the Lord will open the windows of heaven.

I know that Heavenly Father lives. Therefore, He will bless you. Jesus Christ is our Savior. Joseph saw Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is His Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is a living oracle of God. He asks you to come often to the temple. This is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Malachi 3:8–10.
2. See 3 Nephi 24:8–10.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 119:4.
4. Leviticus 27:30; see also vv. 32–33.
5. 3 Nephi 24:10.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
7. Ether 6:12.
8. 2 Chronicles 7:14.
9. "Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly," *Ensign*, May 2007, 117.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 110; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 85.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Point of no return

During my training to become an airline captain, I had to learn how to navigate an airplane over long distances. Flights over huge oceans, crossing extensive deserts, and connecting continents need careful planning to ensure a safe arrival at the planned destination. Some of these nonstop flights can last up to 14 hours and cover almost 9,000 miles.

There is an important decision point during such long flights commonly known as the *point of safe return*. Up to this point the aircraft has enough fuel to turn around and return safely to the airport of departure. Having passed the point of safe return, the captain has lost this option and has to continue on. That is why this point is often referred to as the *point of no return*.

*Are there points of no return in our lives?* Satan, "the father of all lies" (2 Nephi 2:18), "the father of contention" (3 Nephi 11:29), "the author of all sin" (Helaman 6:30), and the "enemy unto God" (Moroni 7:12), uses the forces of evil to convince us that this concept applies whenever we have sinned. The scriptures call him the "accuser" because he wants us to feel that we are beyond forgiveness (see Revelation 12:10). Satan wants us to think that when we have sinned we have gone past a "point of no return"—that it is too late to change our course. In our beautiful but also troubled world, it is a sad reality that this attitude is the source of great sorrow, grief, and distress to families, marriages, and individual lives.

Satan tries to counterfeit the work of God, and by doing this he may deceive many. To make us lose hope, feel miserable like himself, and believe that we are

beyond forgiveness, Satan might even misuse words from the scriptures that emphasize the justice of God, in order to imply that there is no mercy.

### The plan for our safe return

*What is the Lord's plan for our safe return?* Protection against the influence of the devil comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the good news that Jesus Christ has made a perfect Atonement for mankind. It is the message of love, hope, and mercy that there is a reconciliation of man with God.

Sin is the willful transgression of divine law. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the gift of God to His children to correct and overcome the consequences of sin. God loves all of His children, and He will never cease to love and to hope for us. The plan of our Heavenly Father is clear, and His promises are great: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world . . . might be saved" (John 3:17).

Christ came to save us. If we have taken a wrong course, the Atonement of Jesus Christ can give us the assurance that sin is *not* a point of no return. A safe return is possible if we will follow God's plan for our salvation.

We have received this plan from the highest authority in the universe, even God, our Heavenly Father. This plan was prepared before the foundation of the earth. It is a great plan of happiness, a plan of mercy, a plan of redemption, a plan of salvation. This plan enables us to experience a physical existence, including mortality, a time of probation, and to return to the presence of God and live in eternal happiness and glory. It is explained in the doctrines of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Following this plan has beautiful eternal consequences for us individually, for our families, for generations to come, and even for generations who went before.

The plan includes divine reconciliation and forgiveness.

### Repentance and forgiveness

*How is divine forgiveness possible?* We acknowledge that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but we also declare with firmness that repentance and forgiveness can be as real as sin.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ causes each person to be accountable for his or her individual sins. We will overcome the consequences of individual sin by claiming the blessings and benefits of the Atonement.

President David O. McKay said, "Every principle and ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ is significant and important . . . , but there is none more essential to the salvation of the human family than the divine and eternally operative principle [of] repentance" (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 13).

"For salvation cometh to none . . . except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:12).

It is not repentance per se that saves man. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves us. It is not by our sincere and honest change of behavior alone that we are saved, but "by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). True repentance, however, is the condition required so that God's forgiveness can come into our lives. True repentance makes "a brilliant day [out] of the darkest night" (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 362).

*What does true repentance consist of?* We need a strong faith in Christ to be able to repent. Our faith has to include a "correct idea of [God's] character, perfections, and attributes" (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 38; italics in original). If we believe that God knows all things, is loving, and is merciful, we will be able to put our trust in Him for our salvation without wavering. Faith in Christ will change our thoughts,

beliefs, and behaviors that are not in harmony with God's will.

True repentance brings us back to doing what is right. To truly repent we must recognize our sins and feel remorse, or godly sorrow, and confess those sins to God. If our sins are serious, we must also confess them to our authorized priesthood leader. We need to ask God for forgiveness and do all we can to correct whatever harm our actions may have caused. Repentance means a change of mind and heart—we stop doing things that are wrong, and we start doing things that are right. It brings us a fresh attitude toward God, oneself, and life in general.

### Fruits of forgiveness

*What are the fruits of forgiveness?* True repentance blesses our lives with the effects of the Atonement: we feel God's forgiveness and His peace, and our guilt and sorrow are lifted away; we enjoy the influence of the Spirit in greater abundance; and we are better prepared to live with our Heavenly Father.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. . . . God will wipe away . . . the tears of anguish, and remorse, . . . and fear, and guilt" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 363, 368).

Jesus promised, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The prophet Alma, who was reclaimed from sin to happiness by God's forgiveness, declared, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). He had witnessed the bitter pains of sin, but he also spoke with excitement about the happiness that accompanies true repentance and forgiveness: "Yea, I say unto you, . . . there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (Alma 36:21). Alma concluded with

powerful and wise counsel to all who seek forgiveness: "And now, . . . I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance" (Alma 42:29).

### How to know we are forgiven

*How can we know that God has forgiven us?* President Harold B. Lee said, "When you have done all within your power to overcome your mistakes, and have determined in your heart that you will never repeat them again, then . . . peace of conscience [can come to you] by which you will know that your sins have been forgiven" (in "Law of Chastity Vital, Girls Told," *Church News*, Sept. 2, 1972, 7).

Once we have truly repented, Christ will take away the burden of guilt for our sins. We can know for ourselves that we have been forgiven and made clean. The Holy Ghost will verify this to us; He is the Sanctifier. No other testimony of forgiveness can be greater.

The Lord said, "He that repents and *does the commandments* of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:32; italics added). And He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Be faithful and diligent . . . , and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love" (D&C 6:20).

And He declared, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

Satan will try to make us believe that our sins are not forgiven because *we* can remember them. Satan is a liar; he tries to blur our vision and lead us away from the path of repentance and forgiveness. God did not promise that *we* would not remember our sins. Remembering will help us avoid making the same mistakes again. But if we stay true and faithful, the memory of our sins will be softened over time. This will be part of the needed healing and

sanctification process. Alma testified that after he cried out to Jesus for mercy, he could still remember his sins, but the memory of his sins no longer distressed and tortured him, because he knew he had been forgiven (see Alma 36:17–19).

It is our responsibility to avoid anything that would bring back old sinful memories. When we continue to have a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 12:19), we may trust that God will “remember [our sins] no more.”

### Extending forgiveness to others

*How does extending forgiveness help us to receive God’s forgiveness?* Jesus taught us eternal truth when He taught us to pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . . For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not . . . neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (3 Nephi 13:11, 14–15).

Therefore, extending forgiveness is a precondition to receiving forgiveness.

For our own good, we need the moral courage to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Never is the soul nobler and more courageous than when we forgive. This includes forgiving ourselves.

Each of us is under a divinely spoken obligation to reach out with pardon and mercy and to forgive one another. There is a great need for this Christlike attribute in our families, in our marriages, in our wards and stakes, in our communities, and in our nations.

We will receive the joy of forgiveness in our own lives when we are willing to extend that joy freely to others. Lip service is not enough. We need to purge our hearts and minds of feelings and thoughts of bitterness and let the light and the love of Christ enter in. As a result, the Spirit of the Lord will fill our souls with the joy accompanying divine peace of conscience (see Mosiah 4:2–3).

### Always a point of safe return

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear young friends, when the captain of a long-range jet passes the point of safe return, and the headwinds are too strong or the cruising altitudes too low, he might be forced to divert to an airport other than his planned destination. This is not so in our journey through life back to our heavenly home. Wherever you find yourselves on this journey through life, whatever trials you may face, there is *always* a point of safe return; there is always hope. You are the captain of your life, and God has prepared a plan to bring you safely back to Him, to your divine destination.

The gift of the Atonement of Jesus Christ provides us at all times and at all places with the blessings of repentance and forgiveness. Because of this gift, the opportunity to make a safe return from the disastrous course of sin is available to all of us.

For this I give thanks to our Heavenly Father, and of this I bear testimony with all my heart and soul in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### The doctrine of repentance

Last year while Elder David S. Baxter and I were driving to a stake conference, we stopped at a restaurant. Later when returning to our car, we were approached by a woman who called out to us. We were

startled by her appearance. Her grooming (or lack of it) was what I might politely call “extreme.” She asked if we were elders in the Church. We said yes. Almost unrestrained, she told the story of her tragic life, swamped in sin. Now, only 28 years old, she was miserable. She felt

worthless, with nothing to live for. As she spoke, the sweetness of her soul began to emerge. Pleading tearfully, she asked if there was any hope for her, any way up and out of her hopelessness.

“Yes,” we responded, “there is hope. Hope is linked to repentance. You can change. You can ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.’”<sup>1</sup> We urged her not to procrastinate.<sup>2</sup> She sobbed humbly and thanked us sincerely.

As Elder Baxter and I continued our journey, we pondered that experience. We recalled the counsel given to a hopeless soul by Aaron, who said, “If thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, . . . then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, at this closing session of general conference, I too speak on repentance. I do so because the Lord has commanded His servants to cry repentance unto all people.<sup>4</sup> The Master has restored His gospel to bring joy to His children, and repentance is a crucial component of that gospel.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine of repentance is as old as the gospel itself. Biblical teachings from the books of Genesis<sup>6</sup> to Revelation<sup>7</sup> teach repentance. Lessons from Jesus Christ during His mortal ministry include these warnings: “The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”<sup>8</sup> and “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”<sup>9</sup>

References to repentance are even more frequent in the Book of Mormon.<sup>10</sup> To the people of ancient America, the Lord gave this commandment: “Again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>11</sup>

With the Restoration of the gospel, our Savior has again stressed this doctrine. The word *repent* in any of its forms appears in 47 of the 138 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants!<sup>12</sup>

## Repent from sin

What does it mean to repent? We begin with a dictionary’s definition that to repent is “to turn from sin . . . to feel sorrow [and] regret.”<sup>13</sup> To repent from sin is not easy. But the prize is worth the price. Repentance needs to be done one step at a time. Humble prayer will facilitate each essential step. As prerequisites to forgiveness, there must first be recognition, remorse, then confession.<sup>14</sup> “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”<sup>15</sup> Confession is to be made to the person who has been wronged. Confession should be sincere and not merely an admission of guilt after proof is evident. If many persons have been offended, confession should be made to all offended parties. Acts that may affect one’s standing in the Church or the right to its privileges should be confessed promptly to the bishop, whom the Lord has called as a common judge in Israel.<sup>16</sup>

The next step is restitution—to repair damage done—if possible. Then come steps to resolve to do better and refrain from relapse—to repent “with full purpose of heart.”<sup>17</sup> Thanks to the ransom paid by the Atonement of Jesus Christ, full forgiveness is given to the sinner who repents and remains free from sin.<sup>18</sup> To the repentant soul, Isaiah said, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>19</sup>

The Lord’s imperative emphasis on repentance is evident as we read from section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I.”<sup>20</sup>

While the Lord insists on our repentance, most people don’t feel such a compelling need.<sup>21</sup> They include themselves among those who try to be good. They have no evil intent.<sup>22</sup> Yet the Lord is clear in His message that *all* need to repent—not only from sins of *commission* but from sins of *omission* as well. Such is the case in His warning to parents: “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . that teach them *not* to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . , the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”<sup>23</sup>

### Broader meaning of the word *repent*

The doctrine of repentance is much broader than a dictionary’s definition. When Jesus said “repent,” His disciples recorded that command in the Greek language with the verb *metanoeo*.<sup>24</sup> This powerful word has great significance. In this word, the prefix *meta* means “change.”<sup>25</sup> The suffix relates to four important Greek terms: *nous*, meaning “the mind”;<sup>26</sup> *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”;<sup>27</sup> *pneuma*, meaning “spirit”;<sup>28</sup> and *phoe*, meaning “breath.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, when Jesus said “repent,” He asked us to change—to change our mind, knowledge, and spirit—even our breath. A prophet explained that such a change in one’s breath is to breathe with grateful acknowledgment of Him who grants each breath. King Benjamin said, “If ye should serve him who has created you . . . and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath . . . from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.”<sup>30</sup>

Yes, the Lord has commanded us to repent, to change our ways, to come unto Him, and be more like Him.<sup>31</sup> This requires a total change. Alma so taught his son: “Learn wisdom in thy youth,” he said. “Learn in thy youth to keep the command-

ments of God. . . . Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.”<sup>32</sup>

To repent fully is to convert completely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy work. Alma taught that concept when he posed these questions: “I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?”<sup>33</sup> That change comes when we are “born again,” converted and focused upon our journey to the kingdom of God.<sup>34</sup>

### Fruits of repentance

The fruits of repentance are sweet. Repentant converts find that the truths of the restored gospel govern their thoughts and deeds, shape their habits, and forge their character. They are more resilient and able to deny themselves of all ungodliness.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, uncontrolled appetite,<sup>36</sup> addiction to pornography or harmful drugs,<sup>37</sup> unbridled passion,<sup>38</sup> carnal desire,<sup>39</sup> and unrighteous pride<sup>40</sup> are diminished with complete conversion to the Lord and a determination to serve Him and to emulate His example.<sup>41</sup> Virtue garnishes their thoughts, and self-confidence grows.<sup>42</sup> Tithing is seen as a joyful and protective blessing, not as a duty or a sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> Truth becomes more attractive, and things praiseworthy become more engaging.<sup>44</sup>

Repentance is the Lord’s regimen for spiritual growth. King Benjamin explained that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child

doth submit to his father.”<sup>45</sup> Brothers and sisters, that means conversion! Repentance is conversion! A repentant soul is a converted soul, and a converted soul is a repentant soul.

### Repentance for those who are dead

Each living person can repent. But what about those who have died? They also have opportunities to repent. Scripture declares that “the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance . . . among those who are . . . under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, [they] shall receive a reward according to their works.”<sup>46</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith further revealed that “the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children. . . . We without [our dead] cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. . . . [This] dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place.”<sup>47</sup>

“Jesus wants me for a sunbeam”?<sup>48</sup> Yes! And you too! He also wants us as bonding blacksmiths—creating celestial welding links—to curb the curse<sup>49</sup> of family fragmentation. The earth was created and temples provided so that families can be together forever.<sup>50</sup> Many, if not most, of us could repent and be converted to more temple and family history work for our ancestors. Thus, our repentance is necessary and essential for their repentance.

For all our kindred dead, to the 28-year-old woman mired in the swamp of

sin, and to each one of us, I declare that the sweet blessing of repentance is possible. It comes through complete conversion to the Lord and His holy work.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. His prophet today is President Gordon B. Hinckley. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moroni 10:32.
2. See Alma 13:27; 34:33. President Spencer W. Kimball described procrastination as “an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities now” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 4).
3. Alma 22:16. We also remember the sinful people under the care of their concerned leader, Mormon, who wrote, “I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them” (Mormon 5:2).
4. Especially in these latter days; see Doctrine and Covenants 18:11–12, 14; 19:21; 34:5–6; 43:20; 133:16–17.
5. “The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4). See also Doctrine and Covenants 39:6; 84:27; 138:19.
6. See Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 4:8.
7. See Revelation 2:16.
8. Mark 1:15; see also Matthew 4:17.
9. Luke 13:3.
10. The word *repent* (to teach the doctrine of repentance) in any of its forms (*repent*, *repentance*, *repented*, *repenteth*, and so on) appears 72 times in the King James Version of the Bible and 68 times in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, the word *repent* in any of its forms appears 360 times.

11. 3 Nephi 11:38. Another example is “I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 12:19).
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 1; 3; 5–6; 10–11; 13–16; 18–20; 29; 33–36; 39; 42–45; 49–50; 53–56; 58; 63–64; 66; 68; 75; 84; 90; 93; 98; 104; 107; 109; 117; 124; 133; 136; 138.
13. *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1987), “repent,” 999.
14. See 1 John 1:9; Mosiah 26:29; Doctrine and Covenants 61:2; 64:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 58:43. If no other person has been offended, confession should be prayerfully offered to God. He who hears in secret may reward openly (see Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; 3 Nephi 13:4, 6, 18).
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:73–74.
17. 2 Nephi 31:13; Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 7:33; 3 Nephi 10:6; 12:24; 18:32.
18. See Mosiah 4:2–3.
19. Isaiah 1:18.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–17.
21. In the minds of some people, the word *repent* also conjures up terms like *penalty* and *penalize*, which connote punishment. If they are not guilty of punishable sin, they may reason that they have no need to repent.
22. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “There is a prevalent, perhaps subconscious, feeling that the Lord designed repentance only for those who commit murder or adultery or theft or other heinous crimes. This is of course not so. If we are humble and desirous of living the gospel we will come to think of repentance as applying to everything we do in life, whether it be spiritual or temporal in nature. Repentance is for every soul who has not yet reached perfection” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, 37). See also 1 John 1:8; Mosiah 4:29–30.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; italics added.
24. *Metanoëo*, μετανοέω, was used in the Greek text of the Lord’s statements in Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; and Luke 13:3. The same term was used by Peter in Acts 2:38; 3:19; and 8:22.
25. In Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, *transfigured* was translated from *metamorphoo*, meaning “change of form.”
26. In Ephesians 4:23, *mind* was translated from the Greek *nous*.
27. In Luke 1:77; Romans 2:20; and 2 Corinthians 6:6, *knowledge* was translated from *gnos* or *gnosis*. *Gnos*, when preceded by the negative indicator *a-*, means “lack of knowledge,” as in *agnostic*. In Acts 17:23, *unknown* was translated from *agnostos*, and *ignorantly* was translated from *agnoeo*.
28. In Matthew 12:18 and Romans 8:5, *spirit* was translated from the Greek *pneuma*.
29. In Acts 17:25, *breath* was translated from the Greek *pnoë*.
30. Mosiah 2:21.
31. See 3 Nephi 27:21, 27.
32. Alma 37:35–36.
33. Alma 5:14.
34. See John 3:3, 7; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59.
35. See Moroni 10:32.
36. See Galatians 6:7–8.
37. See Judges 13:7; Luke 1:15; Doctrine and Covenants 89:5, 7–9.
38. See Matthew 5:27–28; Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:27–28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:23.
39. See Romans 8:5–6.
40. See Alma 38:11; Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
41. See John 13:15; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 2 Nephi 31:16; 3 Nephi 18:16; Mormon 7:10.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 85:3.
44. See Philippians 4:8; Articles of Faith 1:13.
45. Mosiah 3:19.
46. Doctrine and Covenants 138:57–59; see also vv. 30–34.
47. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
48. *Children’s Songbook*, 60.
49. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:14–15; 128:18; 138:48.
50. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 132:19; 138:47–48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.



## President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir and the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music they have provided. We also extend thanks to all who participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session of the conference. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." The benediction will then be offered by Elder D. Rex Gerratt of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A wonderful conference

My beloved brethren and sisters, we have enjoyed a wonderful conference. We have rededicated the Salt Lake Tabernacle, as we put it back to use after extensive renovation. We have filled this Conference Center to capacity for every session. Our words have gone across the world to members of the Church scattered far and wide.

Now we will return to our homes. We urge you who will be driving to do so carefully. Let no accident destroy the spirit of this wonderful occasion.

We hope that you will use the May edition of the Church magazines as a text for your family home evenings to review that which has been spoken in this conference. What has been said by each of the speakers represents his or her prayerful attempt to impart knowledge that will

inspire and cause all who have heard it to stand a little taller and be a little better.

May there be peace and harmony in your homes. Husbands, love and treasure your wives. They are your most precious possessions. Wives, encourage and pray for your husbands. They need all the help they can get. Parents, treat your children with great kindness. They are the coming generation who will bring honor to your name.

Now, as we separate for a season, God bless you, my beloved associates. I so pray, as I say good-bye, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder D. Rex Gerratt offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the priesthood session. Ronald Staheli di-

rected the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-seventh  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 6 and 7, 2007**





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# Report of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 2007. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 6, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and Henry B. Eyring

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, and Quentin L. Cook

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L.

Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, and Walter F. González

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Ulisses Soares, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, and Robert S. Wood

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst as the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang “Press Forward, Saints.” President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you to the first general session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presiden-

cies in attendance. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church’s Internet site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Press Forward, Saints” and will now favor us with “Faith of Our Fathers.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Faith of Our Fathers.”

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

I will now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote. Before doing so, I should like to take note of the recent passing of President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He was an extremely able man, a man of great faith and capacity, who contributed much to our meetings. We greatly miss him. We extend our condolences to his beloved companion, Ruth, and their children.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Henry Bennion Eyring as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K.

Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, and Quentin L. Cook. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may be opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please indicate. Contrary by the same sign.

We extend a release this morning to Elders Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, and Quentin L. Cook as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

It is also proposed that we release Elders Merrill J. Bateman, Monte J. Brough, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, and W. Rolfe Kerr as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join in doing so may please indicate.

Elder Kerr will continue to serve as Commissioner of the Church Educational System.

We extend a release to Elders D. Rex Gerratt, Robert F. Orton, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, and H. Ross Workman as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join with us in expressing appreciation to these Brethren may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow,

and Walter F. González as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor may manifest it. And those opposed may so indicate.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued sustaining faith and prayers. We shall now ask President Eyring and Elders Cook and González to take their designated seats.

The choir will now sing “Come unto Him.” President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, will then address us. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric, after which we shall hear from Sister Mary N. Cook, second counselor in the general Young Women presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Enrique R. Falabella of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang “Come unto Him.”

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## President Boyd K. Packer

We honor President James E. Faust. We miss him. His beloved wife, Ruth, is with us this morning, and we express our love to her. We welcome those who have been named to the positions that President Hinckley has outlined.

### Process for sustaining leaders is unique

Speaking for all of us who have been sustained today, we pledge to do our very best to be worthy of the trust placed in us.

We have sustained the general officers of the Church in a solemn, sacred

procedure. This common procedure occurs whenever leaders or teachers are called or released from office or whenever there is reorganization in a stake or a ward or a quorum or in the auxiliaries (see D&C 124:123, 144; see also D&C 20:65–67; 26:2). It is unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We always know who is called to lead or to teach and have the opportunity to sustain or to oppose the action. It did not come as an invention of man but was set out in the revelations: “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11; italics added). In this way, the Church is protected from any imposter who would take over a quorum, a ward, a stake, or the Church.

### **The weak and simple of the Church**

There is another principle unique to the Lord’s Church. All positions to teach and to lead are filled by members of the Church. This too has been set forth in the scriptures. One verse in the Doctrine and Covenants established the order of leadership in the Church for all time. It was unprecedented, certainly not the custom of Christian churches then or now:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, . . .

“ . . . That every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

“That faith also might increase in the earth;

“That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

“That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

“Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:17, 19–24).

I am deeply grateful for those scriptures, which explain that the Lord will use the “weak things of the world.”

Each member is responsible to accept the call to serve.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said: “In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154). The Church has no professional clergy. Those called to leadership positions worldwide are drawn from the congregations. We have no seminaries for the training of professional leaders.

Everything that is done in the Church—the leading, the teaching, the calling, the ordaining, the praying, the singing, the preparation of the sacrament, the counseling, and everything else—is done by ordinary members, the “weak things of the world.”

### **An endless supply of leaders and teachers**

We see in the Christian churches their struggle to fill the need for clergy. We do not have that problem. Once the gospel is preached and the Church is organized, there is an inexhaustible supply of faithful brothers and sisters who have that testimony and are willing to answer the call to serve. They commit themselves to the work of the Lord and live the standards required of them.

Members have had the Holy Ghost conferred upon them after their baptism (see D&C 33:15; 35:6). The Holy Ghost will teach and comfort them. They are then prepared to receive guidance, direction, and correction, whatever their position or needs require. (See John 14:26; D&C 50:14; 52:9; 75:10.)

This principle sets the Church on a different course from all other Christian churches in the world. We find ourselves in the unusual position of having an endless supply of teachers and leaders among every nation and kindred and tongue and people all over the world. There is a unique equality among members. No one of us is to consider himself of more value than the other (see D&C 38:24–25). “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34–35; see also Romans 2:11; D&C 1:35; 38:16).

### **The greatest is the servant of all**

When I was a young man, I was a home teacher to a very old sister. She taught me from her life experience.

When she was a little girl, President Brigham Young came to Brigham City, a great event in the town named after him. To honor him, the Primary children, all dressed in white, were lined up along the road coming into town, each with a basket of flowers to spread before the carriage of the President of the Church.

Something displeased her. Instead of throwing her blossoms, she kicked a rock in front of the carriage, saying, “He ain’t one bit better than my Grandpa Lovelund.” That was overheard, and she was severely scolded.

I am very sure that President Brigham Young would be the first to agree with little Janie Steed. He would not consider himself to be worth more than Grandpa Lovelund or any other worthy member of the Church.

The Lord Himself was very plain: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27). “The same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all” (D&C 50:26).

Years ago when I first received an appointment that resulted in my picture being in the newspapers, one of my high school teachers, evidently quite astonished, was heard to say, “That just proves that you can’t tell by looking at a frog how high he is going to jump!”

The image of that frog, sitting in the mud instead of jumping, illustrates how inadequate I have felt when facing the responsibilities that have come to me.

These feelings fix it so that thereafter one can never feel superior to anyone, not anyone.

### **Story of bearing testimony**

For a long time something else puzzled me. Forty-six years ago I was a 37-year-old seminary supervisor. My Church calling was as an assistant teacher in a class in the Lindon Ward.

To my great surprise I was called to meet with President David O. McKay. He took both of my hands in his and called me to be one of the General Authorities, an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

A few days later I came to Salt Lake City to meet with the First Presidency to be set apart as one of the General Authorities of the Church. This was the first time I had met with the First Presidency—President David O. McKay and his counselors, President Hugh B. Brown and President Henry D. Moyle.

President McKay explained that one of the responsibilities of an Assistant to the Twelve was to stand with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a special witness and to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ. What he said next overwhelmed me: “Before we proceed to set

you apart, I ask you to bear your testimony to us. We want to know if you have that witness.”

I did the best I could. I bore my testimony the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward. To my surprise, the Brethren of the Presidency seemed pleased and proceeded to confer the office upon me.

That puzzled me greatly, for I had supposed that someone called to such an office would have an unusual, different, and greatly enlarged testimony and spiritual power.

It puzzled me for a long time until finally I could see that I already had what was required: an abiding testimony in my heart of the restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that we have a Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. I may not have known all about it, but I did have a testimony, and I was willing to learn.

### **The power of a simple testimony**

I was perhaps no different from those spoken of in the Book of Mormon: “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, *and they knew it not*” (3 Nephi 9:20; italics added).

Over the years I have come to see how powerfully important that simple testimony is. I have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9; D&C 93:29). He is a father with all the tender love of a father. Jesus said, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:27).

Some years ago I was with President Marion G. Romney, meeting with mission presidents and their wives in Geneva, Switzerland. He told them that 50 years before, as a missionary boy in Australia, late one afternoon he had gone to a library to study. When he walked out, it was night. He looked up into the starry sky, and it happened. The Spirit touched him, and a certain witness was born in his soul.

He told those mission presidents that he did not know any more surely than as a member of the First Presidency that God the Father lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father; and that the fulness of the gospel had been restored than he did as a missionary boy 50 years before in Australia. He said that his testimony had changed in that it was much easier to get an answer from the Lord. The Lord’s presence was nearer, and he knew the Lord much better than he had 50 years before.

### **All callings are important**

There is the natural tendency to look at those who are sustained to presiding positions, to consider them to be higher and of more value in the Church or to their families than an ordinary member. Somehow we feel they are worth more to the Lord than we are. It just does not work that way!

It would be very disappointing to my wife and to me if we supposed any one of our children would think that we think we are of more worth to the family or to the Church than they are, or to think that one calling in the Church was esteemed over another or that any calling would be thought to be less important.

Recently one of our sons was sustained as ward mission leader. His wife told us how thrilled he was with the call. It fits the very heavy demands of his work.



He has the missionary spirit and will find good use for his Spanish, which he has kept polished from his missionary days. We also were very, very pleased at his call.

What my son and his wife are doing with their little children transcends anything they could do in the Church or out. No service could be more important to the Lord than the devotion they give to one another and to their little children. And so it is with all our other children. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church centers in the home and the family.

### **Ordinary members carry the Church**

As General Authorities of the Church, we are just the same as you are, and you are just the same as we are. You have the same access to the powers of revelation for your families and for your work and for your callings as we do.

It is also true that there is an order to things in the Church. When you are called to an office, you then receive revelation that belongs to that office that would not be given to others.

No member of the Church is esteemed by the Lord as more or less than any other. It just does not work that way! Remember, He is a father—our Father. The Lord is “no respecter of persons.”

We are not worth more to the onrolling of the Lord’s work than were Brother and Sister Toutai Paletu’a in Nuku’alofa, Tonga; or Brother and Sister Carlos Cifuentes in Santiago, Chile; or Brother and Sister Peter Dalebout in the Netherlands; or Brother and Sister Tatsui Sato of Japan; or hundreds of others I have met while traveling about the world. It just does not work that way.

And so the Church moves on. It is carried upon the shoulders of worthy members living ordinary lives among ordinary families, guided by the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ, which is in them.

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God—every soul—and that we are blessed to be members of the Church. I have the witness that would qualify me for the calling I have. I’ve had it since I met the First Presidency those many years ago. I bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Bishop Richard C. Edgley**

### **Ward members serve accident victims**

A couple of years ago a humor columnist for a local newspaper wrote on a serious and thought-provoking subject. I quote from this article: “Being a go-to-church Mormon in Utah means living so close to fellow ward members that not much happens that the entire congregation doesn’t know about in five minutes tops.”

He continues: “This kind of cheek-to-jowl living can be intrusive. . . . It also happens to be one of our greatest strengths.”

The author goes on to say: “At work on Tuesday, I caught the noon news broadcast on television. A van had been obliterated in a traffic crash. A young mother and two small children were being rushed to emergency rooms by helicopter and ambulance. . . . Hours later I learned that the van belonged to the young couple living across the street from me in Herriman, Eric and Jeana Quigley.

“Not only do I see the Quigleys in church, . . . we ate dinner with them at a neighborhood party the night before the

crash. Our grandkids played with daughters Bianca and Miranda. . . .

“Fourteen-month-old Miranda suffered serious head injuries and died three days later at Primary Children’s Hospital.

“Here’s where all that nosiness . . . pays off.

“Although the accident occurred several miles from home, the dust literally had not settled before someone from the ward stopped and was pulling through the wreckage. The rest of the ward knew about it before the cops and paramedics showed up.

“Ward members went to all three hospitals, contacted Eric at work and organized into labor squads. People who didn’t get in on the immediate-need level were frantic for some way to help.

“In 48 hours, the Quigley yard was mowed, home cleaned, laundry done, refrigerator stocked, relatives fed and a trust fund set up at a local bank. We would have given their dog a bath if they had one.”

The author concludes with this insightful comment: “There is a positive side to the congregational microscope my ward lives under. . . . What happens to a few happens to all” (Robert Kirby, “Well-Being of Others Is Our Business,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 30, 2005, p. C1).

### **Wards are organized to minister**

The compassion and service rendered by caring ward members as a result of this tragic accident are not unique to this particular incident. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma explained to prospective followers of Christ: “As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”—then, as Alma explained, they were prepared for baptism (see Mosiah

18:8–10). This scripture lays the foundation for ministering and caring in a most compassionate way.

The ward is organized to minister to the needs of those who face even the most difficult and heartbreaking trials. The bishop, often considered the “father” of the ward, is there to provide counsel and resources. But also close at hand are Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood leaders, the Relief Society presidency, home teachers, visiting teachers, and the ward members—always the ward members. All are there to administer comfort and show compassion in times of need.

### **Outpouring of love in times of tragedy**

In my own immediate neighborhood we have had our share of heart-wrenching tragedies. In October 1998, 19-year-old Zac Newton, who lived only three houses east of us, was killed in a tragic automobile accident.

Less than two years later, in July, 19-year-old Andrea Richards, who lived directly across from the Newtons, was killed in an automobile accident.

One Saturday afternoon in July 2006, Travis Bastian, a 28-year-old returned missionary, and his 15-year-old sister, Desiree, who lived across the street and two houses north of us, were killed in a terrible automobile accident.

One month later, in August 2006, 32-year-old Eric Gold, who grew up in the house next door to us, suffered a premature death. And others in this neighborhood have also suffered heart-wrenching experiences privately endured and known only to themselves and God.

With the loss of five young people, one might assume that this is an unusual number of trials for one small neighborhood. I choose to think the number only seems large because of a close, caring ward, whose members know when there is a pressing need. It is a ward with members who are following the admonition

of Alma and the Savior—members who care and love and bear one another’s burdens, members who are willing to mourn with those that mourn, members who are willing to comfort those in need of comfort, members who endure together.

In each of these instances we saw an outpouring of love, service, and compassion that was inspirational to all. Bishops arrived, home and visiting teachers went into action, and Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies organized to take care of both spiritual and temporal needs. Refrigerators were stocked, houses cleaned, lawns mowed, shrubs trimmed, fences painted, blessings given, and soft shoulders were available for crying on. Members were everywhere.

### **Lessons learned from enduring together**

In every one of these instances, the families who lost a loved one expressed increased faith, increased love for the Savior, increased gratitude for the Atonement, and heartfelt thankfulness for an organization that responds to the deepest emotional and spiritual needs of its members. These families now speak about how they got to know the Lord through their adversity. They relate many sweet experiences that grew out of their pain. They testify that blessings can emerge from heartbreak. They give praise to the Lord and would echo the words of Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

From bearing one another’s burdens as ward members, we have learned several lessons:

1. The Lord’s organization is fully adequate to *know* and *care for* those with even the most dire emotional and spiritual needs.

2. Adversity *can* bring us closer to God, with a renewed and enlightened appreciation for prayer and the Atonement, which covers pain and suffering in all their manifestations.

3. Members who suffer tragedy first-hand often experience increased capacity for love, compassion, and understanding. They become the first, last, and often the most effective responders in giving comfort and showing compassion to others.

4. A ward, as well as a family, draws closer together as it endures together—what happens to one happens to all.

5. And perhaps most important, we can each be more compassionate and caring because we have each had our own personal trials and experiences to draw from. We can endure together.

I rejoice in belonging to such a loving and caring organization. No one knows better how to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. I choose to call it “enduring together.” What happens to one happens to all. We endure together.

May we be an instrument in lightening the burden of others, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Mary N. Cook**

### **Youth should strengthen home and family**

Each Sunday, from Mongolia to Manchester to Mississippi, the young women of the Church repeat these inspired words: “We will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred cov-

enants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation” (“Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 5).

While this is the Young Women theme, it applies to all youth in the Church. I hope I can help you, my young

brothers and sisters, to understand how powerful your individual actions can be in strengthening your home and family, no matter what your circumstances. I understand, for example, that many of you may be the only member of the Church in your family.

*For the Strength of Youth* reminds us that “being part of a family is a great blessing. . . . Not all families are the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan” ([pamphlet, 2001], 10).

All families need strengthening, from the ideal to the most troubled. That strengthening can come from *you*. In fact, in some families you may be the only source of spiritual strength. The Lord is depending on you to bring the blessings of the gospel to your family.

#### **Four ways to strengthen your family**

It is important to establish patterns of righteousness in your own life, which will enable you to set a good example for your family, whatever form your family may take.

The example of your righteous life will strengthen your family. President Hinckley gave the young women “a simple four-point program” in the general Young Women meeting last spring that will not only “assure your happiness” but will bless your family as well. He counseled each of us to “(1) pray, (2) study, (3) pay your tithing, and (4) attend your meetings” (“Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 115).

Seeking the help of the Lord daily through prayer will bring great blessings to your family. Ask yourself: “Who in my family could benefit from my personal prayers?” “What could I do to support and encourage family prayer?”

As you personally study the scriptures, you will come to know the Savior and His teachings. From His example you will know how to love, serve, and forgive members of your family. Consider

how you could share your understanding of the scriptures with your family.

On several occasions President Hinckley has admonished us to “get all of the education you can” (*Ensign*, May 2007, 116). Your education will benefit your family now and will surely bless your future family. What can you do now to plan and prepare for a good education?

President Hinckley taught us, “While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith” (*Ensign*, May 2007, 117). Are you experiencing the blessings of paying tithing—with faith? As you obey this commandment, the Lord will “open . . . the windows of heaven” (Malachi 3:10) to bless you and your family.

How can attending your meetings—particularly sacrament meeting—bless you and your family? Regularly partaking of the sacrament will help you keep your baptismal covenant. As you live worthily and renew this covenant weekly, you will qualify for the guidance of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost will guide you and will teach you what you should do to bless your family.

#### **Be an example of righteousness at home**

As you commit to these patterns of righteousness, you will be blessed throughout your life and will develop the spiritual foundation from which you can strengthen your family by example. In 1 Timothy, Paul teaches us about example: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

The family section in *For the Strength of Youth* gives some great ways you can be “an example of the believers” in your own home:

“Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. . . . Concern yourself with the needs of other family members. . . .

“Honor your parents by showing love and respect for them and by being obe-

dient. . . . Participate in family activities and traditions, including family prayer, family home evenings, and family scripture reading. These traditions strengthen and unify families. . . .

“Strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters. They can become your closest friends” (10–11).

Example is often the best teacher. Who in your family could benefit from your example—a brother, a sister, your mom or dad?

### **A missionary’s example blesses his family**

Let me tell you an experience from my own life and how my brother’s patterns of righteousness and example resulted in our family being blessed eternally.

My brother and I were “born of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1), who loved and made great sacrifices for the two of us, but our family had not been blessed with the sacred ordinances of the temple.

Many years ago on a day in late December, we received a letter from my brother, who was serving in the California North Mission. The outside of the envelope cautioned, “*Do not open until you are all together!!*”

As my father, mother, and I gathered to open his seven-page typewritten letter, we read his testimony of prayer. He taught us the doctrine of eternal families from the scriptures. We read his experiences of how fasting and prayer helped his investigators prepare to receive the ordinance of baptism. He assured us that our family too could be blessed through fasting and prayer. Then came his challenge:

“The bishop of the Stanford Ward spoke on a topic a couple of months ago which really hit home. . . . The bishop’s talk made me stop and realize the goals I want to accomplish in life. Uppermost in my mind is the goal I want to achieve with my own family . . . that, of course, being sealed to you, Mom and Dad, for

time and all eternity in the house of the Lord. I love you very much and want our family to be together in the eternities.”

Then his closing words: “May the Lord guide you in this important decision and may you pray together as a family is my prayer.”

As a teenager, I too had prayed for this blessing to come to my family. This letter now brought hope for my righteous desire.

The new year was an opportunity for our family to make some changes. In the many months that followed, we established family patterns of righteousness. We prayed together, studied about the ordinances of the temple, paid tithing, and attended our meetings regularly—as a family. Shortly after my brother returned from his mission, we were prepared to receive the ordinances of the temple. I knew the Lord had heard and answered our prayers as we surrounded the holy altar in the temple and were sealed as a family for time and all eternity.

### **Assist in the exaltation of your family**

Can you make a difference in your family? Yes, you can! I often wonder about my family’s eternal progression if my brother had not written that powerful letter. His patterns of righteousness and example changed our lives.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: “If the example we have received from our parents was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle. . . . Each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Remember, “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Eternal families are made up

of individuals. “Do your part to build a happy home” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 10). Establish patterns of righteousness in your life. And be an example of the believers. The Lord is depending on you to assist in the exaltation of your eternal family.

I know that Jesus Christ lives. He knows you and loves you. He has blessed me and my family, and I know He will bless you and yours. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Enrique R. Falabella

### Blessings of Church membership

#### *The promise of eternal family relationships*

Why are we members of the only true Church? Even though I cannot answer this question for all 13 million members of the Church, I would like to express from my heart some answers that probably will fit with your own answers.

“Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich” (D&C 6:7).

Riches were not a part of my childhood. We were a family of five: my father and four siblings. My mother had passed away when I was five years old. My father’s meager income was used to buy our food; the purchase of clothing was put off as long as possible.

One day, somewhat bothered, I came up to my father and said, “Daddy, why don’t you buy me some shoes? Look at these; they’re worn out, and you can see my big toe through the hole in the shoe.”

“We’ll fix that up,” he replied and, with some black polish, gave a shine to my shoes. Later on he told me, “Son, it’s fixed up.”

“No,” I answered, “you can still see my big toe.”

“That can also be fixed,” he told me. He again took the polish and put some on my toe, and before long it shined like my shoes. So it was early on in life I learned that happiness does not depend on money.

As time went by, a pair of missionaries taught us the *riches* of the restored

gospel, of the doctrine of the plan of salvation, and of eternal families. We were baptized, and when my father began his calling as district president, his first objective was to journey to the temple and receive the blessings which would come because of that sacrifice. It was a 15-day journey covering 4,800 miles—a journey filled with difficulties and setbacks, highways in poor condition, uncomfortable buses, not even knowing the route, but with great hope in the ordinances we would participate in.

Upon arriving in the city of Mesa, Arizona, we headed down an avenue at the end of which we could see the house of the Lord, gleaming and beautiful. I remember the joy which filled our hearts; we all broke out in songs and praising, and tears ran down the cheeks of many Saints.

Later in the temple we knelt as a family to hear the beautiful promises about an eternal family, with the certainty that our mother, though absent, was now our mother forever, and we felt the peace which comes from knowing that we are an eternal family.

The promise of life eternal thus gave us the riches of eternity! “Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich” (D&C 6:7).

#### *The power of the restored priesthood*

The Church of Jesus Christ is a church of priests, “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

The restored Church gives to each home a priesthood holder with the power of God to bless. How many times I have been able to hear the soft, sweet voice of a little child at home say, “Daddy, could you give me a blessing?” and put my hands upon his or her head in moments of pain and difficulty and pronounce blessings of comfort and healing and see the power of the priesthood exercise its influence and the next day hear that little voice say, “Thanks, Daddy, I slept just fine last night.” We don’t need to go out looking for someone having that power—it is among us! What a blessing to be able to teach this principle to our children! This is the only church upon the earth which offers such a blessing to families.

Through this power I was able to ordain each of my sons to the priesthood and thus give them the power of God to administer His ordinances.

So then this is also why I am a member of this Church: because the power of the priesthood is again upon the earth and has reached even unto our homes.

#### *A testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ*

The most valuable power we can possess is the treasure of a personal testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning power.

A testimony comes to us as we live a worthy life and seek it in prayer. “And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith” (D&C 42:14), our Lord counseled through the Prophet Joseph.

When my son Daniel was six years old, he saw that I was worried because I had to attend a stake conference. I was unsure about what to teach the Saints. He came up to me and said, “Daddy, that’s really easy.” That’s how children see everything.

“Let’s see, Son,” I told him. “Since it’s easy, tell me what I can talk to them about.”

“Talk to them about prayer,” he told me.

“That’s a good subject,” I said, “but they’ve heard a lot of talk about prayer; what could I tell them that’s new?”

“That’s easy too, Daddy. First tell them, ‘Before you start to talk to Heavenly Father, think about the things you want to tell Him.’”

“That sounds like a magnificent idea,” I replied. “And then?”

“Well, once you’ve thought of it, tell it to Him! When you finish, wait and see if He has something to tell you.”

So, through our prayers, the Spirit speaks to our spirit and testifies to us of the reality of our Savior.

I am filled with wonder at the love my Savior Jesus Christ showed by descending from the heavenly mansions and coming to a world where the majority rejected His message, and even though they did not have the power to take His life, they condemned Him to death. Christ paid for my sins, for my illnesses, afflictions, and sorrows. His pain was indescribable; Luke only makes mention that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44).

Above all else, this is the reason for my membership in the Church: because the Holy Spirit has penetrated my heart and has made it known to me that Christ lives, that He is my Savior, that He paid for my sins, and that He has prepared the way so that if I live according to His precepts, I can enjoy all other promised blessings.

A few weeks ago my father also passed away, and now more than ever I feel thankfulness to my God for the richness and beauty of His doctrine.

Because family life can continue beyond the thresholds of death. Because the royal priesthood has been restored upon the earth. And because the Spirit has spoken to my spirit, giving me a testimony that my Savior Jesus Christ lives



and that through His intercession I shall be able, in accordance to my faithfulness, to live with Him. For these reasons and others still, I am a member of the only true Church upon the face of the earth,

and I shall be eternally grateful for this. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Elder Spencer J. Condie

### Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

I bring you the love and greeting of the faithful Saints in the South Pacific.

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes faith in His divine birth and heavenly heritage and faith that, under His Father's direction, He created the earth and all things that dwell therein (see John 1:10; Mosiah 3:8). At the very heart of our faith in Christ is the assurance that through His atoning sacrifice, though our sins may be as scarlet, they can become as white as snow (see Isaiah 1:18).

Faith in Christ includes the knowledge that following His Crucifixion, He arose from the tomb, and His Resurrection made it possible for all mankind to live again (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–23). Faith in Christ is the assurance that He and His Heavenly Father appeared to a young man, Joseph Smith, paving the way for the restoration of all things in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which bears His holy name.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is evident when we believe His teachings and claim His “exceeding great and precious promises” and become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Innumerable promises are proclaimed by His prophets, and the Lord assures us, “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

In these latter days the Lord revealed that “when we obtain any blessing from

God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). The Lord makes generous promises, and He certifies that He will not vary from these promises, for, said He, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

### Exceeding great and precious promises

The Lord's countless exceeding great and precious promises include forgiveness of our sins when we “confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43; see also D&C 1:32). Opening the windows of heaven is a promise claimed by those who pay a faithful tithe (see Malachi 3:10), and finding “great treasures of knowledge” accrues to those who observe the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89:19).

Becoming unspotted from the world is a promise to those who keep the Sabbath holy (see D&C 59:9; Exodus 31:13). Divine guidance and inspiration are promised to those who “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3) and who “liken all scriptures” unto themselves (1 Nephi 19:23).

The Lord also promised that “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20). We are promised that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion when we “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly” (see D&C 121:45–46). We can claim the spiritually liberating promise of fasting, which will “loose the bands of wickedness,” undo our “heavy



burdens,” and “break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6).

Those who are sealed in holy temples and who faithfully keep their covenants will receive God’s glory, which “shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

Sometimes, in our earthly impatience, we may lose sight of the Lord’s precious promises and disconnect our obedience from the fulfillment of these promises. The Lord has declared:

“Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled?

“I command and men obey not; I re-voke and they receive not the blessing.

“Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above” (D&C 58:31–33).

### **Seeing the promises afar off**

Important components of faith are patience, long-suffering, and enduring to the end. The Apostle Paul recounts the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, concluding that “these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (see Hebrews 11:4–13). These faithful Saints knew that this earth life was a journey, not their final destination.

When Abram was 75 years old, the Lord promised him, “I will make of thee a great nation”—this at a time when he and Sarai as yet had no children (Genesis 12:2). He was 86 when Sarai’s handmaiden Hagar “bare Ishmael to Abram” (Genesis 16:16).

And the Lord changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah, and when he was nearly 100 and she was 90, they were promised that Sarah would bear a son to be named Isaac (see Genesis 17:17, 19). Amidst their disbelief the

Lord asked, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). And “Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age” (Genesis 21:2), and the Lord promised: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:17).

Young Isaac grew into manhood, and when he was 40 years old he married Rebekah. “And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived” and bore twin sons, Esau and Jacob, when their father was 60 years old. (See Genesis 25:20–26.)

As Jacob matured and became of appropriate age, his parents sent him to the household of Laban, where he would meet Laban’s two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob told Laban, “I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. . . . And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Genesis 29:18, 20).

You will recall how Laban beguiled young Jacob into first marrying Leah and then Rachel. “And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren” (Genesis 29:31). And Leah bore Reuben, then Simeon, then Levi, and Judah. Meanwhile, Rachel remained childless (see Genesis 29:32–35).

With ever-increasing envy and mounting desperation, one day Rachel explosively demanded of Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1). Leah subsequently bore two more sons and a daughter.

### **The Lord is not slack concerning His promises**

The Apostle Peter testified that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering” toward us (2 Peter 3:9). In this age of one-hour dry cleaning and one-minute fast-food franchises, it may at

times seem to us as though a loving Heavenly Father has misplaced our precious promises or He has put them on hold or filed them under the wrong name. Such were the feelings of Rachel.

But with the passage of time, we encounter four of the most beautiful words in holy writ: “And God remembered Rachel” (Genesis 30:22). And she was blessed with the birth of Joseph and later the birth of Benjamin. There are millions on earth today who are descendants of Joseph who have embraced the Abra-

hamic promise that through their efforts “shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11).

When heaven’s promises sometimes seem afar off, I pray that each of us will embrace these exceeding great and precious promises and never let go. And just as God remembered Rachel, God will remember you. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Have we not reason to rejoice?

I still rejoice in the wonderful spirit we felt as we sang together this morning:

Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation.

No longer as strangers on earth need we roam.

Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation.

[“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3]

These words by Brother William W. Phelps are quite a contrast to the world’s tendency to focus on bad news. It is true, we live in a time foretold in the scriptures as a day of “wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places” (Mormon 8:30), when “the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 45:26).

But how does this affect us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Are we living with apprehension, fear, and worry? Or have we, amidst all of our challenges, not *reason to rejoice*?

### Family finds the gospel in time of despair

We all go through different life experiences. Some are filled with joy and others with sorrow and uncertainty.

I remember a time when things didn’t look good for our family when I was a child. It was in the winter of 1944, one of the coldest during World War II. The war front was approaching our town, and my mother had to take us four children, leave all our possessions behind, and join the millions of fleeing refugees in a desperate search for a place to survive. Our father was still in the military, but he and Mother had agreed that if they were ever separated during the war, they would try to reunite at the hometown of my grandparents. They felt this place offered the greatest hope for shelter and safety.

With bombing raids during the night and air attacks during the day, it took us many days to reach my grandparents. My memories of those days are of darkness and coldness.

My father returned to us unharmed, but our future looked extremely bleak. We were living in the rubble of postwar Germany with a devastating feeling of hopelessness and darkness about our future.

In the middle of this despair, my family learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the healing message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This message made all the difference; it lifted us above our daily

misery. Life was still thorny and the circumstances still horrible, but the gospel brought light, hope, and joy into our lives. The plain and simple truths of the gospel warmed our hearts and enlightened our minds. They helped us look at ourselves and the world around us with different eyes and from an elevated viewpoint.

### **The gospel can lift us to great heights**

My dear brothers and sisters, aren't the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in His Church great reasons to rejoice?

Wherever you live on this earth and whatever your life's situation may be, I testify to you that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the divine power to lift you to great heights from what appears at times to be an unbearable burden or weakness. The Lord knows your circumstances and your challenges. He said to Paul and to all of us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And like Paul we can answer: "My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we may claim the blessings promised in the covenants and the ordinances we received when we accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?**

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, glad tidings, and much more. It is the message of salvation as repeatedly announced by Jesus Christ and His apostles and prophets. It is my firm belief that all truth and light originating with God is embraced in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God, our loving Father in Heaven, has said that it is His work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God the Father is the author of the gospel; it is a key part of God's plan of salvation, or

plan of redemption. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the Atonement of Jesus Christ that makes redemption and salvation possible. Through the Atonement all men, women, and children are unconditionally redeemed from physical death, and all will be redeemed from their own sins on the condition of accepting and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:17–25; 76:40–42, 50–53; Moses 6:62).

Christ's gospel is the only true gospel, and "there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17; see also Acts 4:12).

The core elements of the gospel message are found in all the holy scriptures but are most clearly given to us in the Book of Mormon and in the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here Jesus Himself plainly declares His doctrine and His gospel, with which God's children must comply to "have eternal life" (D&C 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–39; 27:13–21; D&C 33:11–12).

The gospel is clear and plain. It answers the most complex questions in life, yet even a young child can comprehend and apply it. As Nephi said:

"My soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding" (2 Nephi 31:3).

### **The first principles and ordinances of the gospel**

The Prophet Joseph Smith followed the same pattern of clarity and plainness when he explained to the world in a very concise way "the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:4), which we must accept to receive the eternal blessings of the gospel:

First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—believing in the Redeemer, the Son of God, “with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” and then “[pressing] forward with a steadfastness in Christ, . . . feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Second, repentance, which includes a change of mind, offering up “a sacrifice [of] a broken heart and a contrite spirit”; giving up sin and becoming meek and humble “as a little child” (3 Nephi 9:20, 22).

Third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and as a covenant to keep the commandments of God and take upon us the name of Christ.

Fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, also known as baptism by fire, which sanctifies us and makes us “new creatures,” born of God (Mosiah 27:26; see also 1 Peter 1:23).

The gift of the Holy Ghost, given to us by our Heavenly Father and administered by one having authority, includes the merciful promise: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). Through the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, every member of the Church can receive “the words of Christ” directly (2 Nephi 32:3), at any time or place. This personal divine guidance helps us to remain valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ and endure to the end of our days. Isn’t this wonderful!

*Have we not reason to rejoice?*

### **What does it mean to endure to the end?**

The scriptures teach us that once we have received the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, our task then is to “endure to the end” (2 Nephi 31:20).

When I was a young boy, “endure to the end” meant to me mainly that I had to try harder to stay awake until the end

of our Church meetings. Later as a teenager I progressed only slightly in my understanding of this scriptural phrase. I linked it with youthful empathy to the efforts of our dear elderly members to hang in there until the end of their lives.

Enduring to the end, or remaining faithful to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout our life, is a fundamental requirement for salvation in the kingdom of God. This belief distinguishes Latter-day Saints from many other Christian denominations that teach that salvation is given to all who simply believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. The Lord clearly declared, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

### **Enduring is an active process**

Therefore, enduring to the end is not just a matter of passively tolerating life’s difficult circumstances or “hanging in there.” Ours is an active religion, helping God’s children along the strait and narrow path to develop their full potential during this life and return to Him one day. Viewed from this perspective, enduring to the end is exalting and glorious, not grim and gloomy. This is a joyful religion, one of hope, strength, and deliverance. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Enduring to the end is a process filling every minute of our life, every hour, every day, from sunrise to sunrise. It is accomplished through personal discipline following the commandments of God.

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a way of life. It is not for Sunday only. It is not something we can do only as a habit or a tradition if we expect to harvest all of its promised blessings. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what-

soever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Enduring to the end implies "patient continuance in well doing" (Romans 2:7), striving to keep the commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:10), and doing the works of righteousness (see D&C 59:23). It requires sacrifice and hard work. To endure to the end, we need to trust our Father in Heaven and make wise choices, including paying our tithes and offerings, honoring our temple covenants, and serving the Lord and one another willingly and faithfully in our Church callings and responsibilities. It means strength of character, selflessness, and humility; it means integrity and honesty to the Lord and our fellowmen. It means making our homes strong places of defense and a refuge against worldly evils; it means loving and honoring our spouses and children.

As we do our best to endure to the end, a beautiful refinement will come into our lives. We will learn to "do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us]" (Matthew 5:44). The blessings that come to us from enduring to the end in this life are real and very significant, and for the life to come they are beyond our comprehension.

### **Jesus Christ wants you to succeed**

My dear brothers and sisters, there will be days and nights when you feel overwhelmed, when your hearts are heavy and your heads hang down. Then, please remember, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is the Head of this Church. It is His gospel. He wants you to succeed. He gave His life for just this purpose. He is the Son of the living God. He has promised:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee" (3 Nephi 22:10). "I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (3 Nephi 22:8).

My dear friends, the Savior heals the broken heart and binds up your wounds (see Psalm 147:3). Whatever your challenges may be, wherever you live on this earth, your faithful membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the divine powers of the gospel of Jesus Christ will bless you to endure joyfully to the end.

Of this I bear witness with all my heart and mind in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

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### **President Hinckley**

The choir has just sung "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" We're deeply grateful to the choir for the beautiful music they have presented this morning.

Our concluding speaker for this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The music for this hymn was written by Brother John Longhurst, who has served as Tabernacle organist for the past 30 years. Brother Longhurst will retire at the end of this year. We thank him for his many years of devoted service to the Church.

After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder David F. Evans of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

I miss my colleague James E. Faust today and express my love to his dear wife and family and am assured he is serving the Lord elsewhere. I welcome the newly sustained General Authorities, President Eyring, Elder Cook, and Elder González, and assure them they have my full support.

### **Mrs. Patton—the story continues**

Thirty-eight years ago, at a general conference held in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, I spoke of one of my childhood friends, Arthur Patton, who died at a young age. The talk was titled “Mrs. Patton, Arthur Lives.”<sup>1</sup> I addressed my remarks to Arthur’s mother, Mrs. Patton, who was not a member of the Church. Although I had little hope that Mrs. Patton would actually hear my talk, I wanted to share with all who were within the sound of my voice the glorious gospel message of hope and love. Recently I have felt impressed to refer once again to Arthur and to relate to you what transpired following my original message.

First may I tell you about Arthur. He had blond, curly hair and a smile as big as all outdoors. He stood taller than any boy in the class. I suppose this is how, in 1940, as the great conflict which became World War II was overtaking much of Europe, Arthur was able to fool the recruiting officers and enlist in the navy at the tender age of 15. To Arthur and most of the boys, the war was a great adventure. I remember how striking he appeared in his navy uniform. How we wished we were older or at least taller so we too could enlist.

Youth is a very special time of life. As Longfellow wrote:

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams  
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!  
Book of Beginnings, Story without End,

Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!<sup>2</sup>

Arthur’s mother was so proud of the blue star which graced her living room window. It represented to every passerby that her son wore the uniform of his country and was actively serving. When I would pass the house, she often opened the door and invited me in to read the latest letter from Arthur. Her eyes would fill with tears; I would then be asked to read aloud. Arthur meant everything to his widowed mother.

I can still picture Mrs. Patton’s coarse hands as she would carefully replace the letter in its envelope. These were hard-working hands; Mrs. Patton was a cleaning woman for a downtown office building. Each day of her life except Sundays she could be seen walking along the sidewalk, pail and brush in hand, her gray hair pulled back into a tight bob, her shoulders weary from work and stooped with age.

### **Comforting Mrs. Patton**

In March 1944, with the war now raging, Arthur was transferred from the USS *Dorsey*, a destroyer, to the USS *White Plains*, an aircraft carrier. While at Saipan in the South Pacific, the ship was attacked. Arthur was one of those on board who was lost at sea.

The blue star was taken from its hallowed spot in the front window of the Patton home. It was replaced by one of gold, indicating that he whom the blue star represented had been killed in battle. A light went out in the life of Mrs. Patton. She groped in utter darkness and deep despair.

With a prayer in my heart, I approached the familiar walkway to the Patton home, wondering what words of comfort could come from the lips of a mere boy.

The door opened, and Mrs. Patton embraced me as she would her own son. Home became a chapel as a grief-stricken mother and a less-than-adequate boy knelt in prayer.

As we arose from our knees, Mrs. Patton gazed into my eyes and spoke: "Tommy, I belong to no church, but you do. Tell me, will Arthur live again?" To the best of my ability, I testified to her that Arthur would indeed live again.

### **Understanding the purpose of mortality**

In general conference those long years ago, as I related this account, I mentioned that I had lost track of Mrs. Patton but that I wanted to once more answer her question "Will Arthur live again?"

I referred to the Savior of the world, who walked the dusty paths of villages we now reverently call the Holy Land; who caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to live; to Him who tenderly and lovingly assured us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."<sup>3</sup>

I explained that the plan of life and an explanation of its eternal course come to us from the Master of heaven and earth, even Jesus Christ the Lord. To understand the meaning of death, we must appreciate the purpose of life.

I indicated that in this dispensation the Lord declared: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn."<sup>4</sup> "Man was also in the beginning with God."<sup>5</sup>

Jeremiah the prophet recorded: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee; and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."<sup>6</sup>

From that majestic world of spirits we enter the grand stage of life to prove ourselves obedient to all things commanded of God. During mortality we grow from helpless infancy to inquiring

childhood and then to reflective maturity. We experience joy and sorrow, fulfillment and disappointment, success and failure. We taste the sweet, yet sample the bitter. This is mortality.

### **Through Christ, all will live again**

Then to each life comes the experience known as death. None is exempt. All must pass its portals.

To most, there is something sinister and mysterious about this unwelcome visitor called death. Perhaps it is a fear of the unknown which causes many to dread its coming.

Arthur Patton died quickly. Others linger. We know, through the revealed word of God, that "the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life."<sup>7</sup>

I assured Mrs. Patton and all others who were listening that God would never forsake them—that He sent His Only Begotten Son into the world to teach us by example the life we should live. His Son died upon the cross to redeem all mankind. His words to the grieving Martha and to His disciples today bring comfort to us:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>8</sup>

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

". . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."<sup>9</sup>

I reiterated the testimonies of John the Revelator and Paul the Apostle. John recorded:

"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; . . .

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it."<sup>10</sup>



Paul declared, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>11</sup>

I explained that until the glorious Resurrection morning, we walk by faith. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."<sup>12</sup>

### **Jesus comforts and sustains us**

I reassured Mrs. Patton that Jesus invited her and all others:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."<sup>13</sup>

As part of my message, I explained to Mrs. Patton that such knowledge would sustain her in her heartache—that she would never be in the tragic situation of the disbeliever who, having lost a son, was heard to say as she watched the casket lowered into mother earth, "Good-bye, my boy. Good-bye forever." Rather, with head erect, courage undaunted, and faith unwavering, she could lift her eyes as she looked beyond the gently breaking waves of the blue Pacific and whisper, "Good-bye, Arthur, my precious son. Good-bye—until we meet again."

I quoted the words of Tennyson, as though spoken to her by Arthur:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the  
bar,  
When I put out to sea, . . .  
Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time  
and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.<sup>14</sup>

As I concluded my message those long years ago, I expressed to Mrs. Patton my personal testimony as a special witness, telling her that God our Father was mindful of her—that through sincere prayer she could communicate with Him; that He too had a Son who died, even Jesus Christ the Lord; that Christ is our advocate with the Father, the Prince of Peace, our Savior and divine Redeemer; and that one day we would see Him face-to-face.

### **A letter of gratitude from Mrs. Patton**

I hoped that my message to Mrs. Patton would reach and touch others who had lost a loved one.

And now, my brothers and sisters, I share with you the rest of this account. I delivered my message on April 6, 1969. Again, I had little or no hope that Mrs. Patton would actually hear the talk. I had no reason to think she would listen to general conference. As I have mentioned, she was not a member of the Church. And then I learned that something akin to a miracle had taken place. Having no idea whatsoever who would be speaking at conference or what subjects they might speak about, Latter-day Saint neighbors of Mrs. Terese Patton in California, where she had moved, invited her to their home to listen to a session of conference with them. She accepted their invitation and thus was listening to the very session where I directed my remarks to her personally.

During the first week of May 1969, to my astonishment and joy, I received a letter postmarked Pomona, California, and dated April 29, 1969. It was from Mrs. Terese Patton. I share with you a part of that letter:

"Dear Tommy,

"I hope you don't mind my calling you Tommy, as I always think of you that way. I don't know how to thank you for the comforting talk you gave.



“Arthur was 15 years old when he enlisted in the navy. He was killed one month before his 19th birthday on July 5, 1944.

“It was wonderful of you to think of us. I don’t know how to thank you for your comforting words, both when Arthur died and again in your talk. I have had many questions over the years, and you have answered them. I am now at peace concerning Arthur. . . . God bless and keep you always.

“Love,

“Terese Patton”<sup>15</sup>

### God loves and hears each of us

My brothers and sisters, I do not believe it was a coincidence that I was impressed to give that particular message at the April 1969 general conference. Nor do I believe it was a coincidence that Mrs. Terese Patton was invited by neighbors to join them in their home for that particular session of conference. I am certain our Heavenly Father was mindful of her needs and wanted her to hear the comforting truths of the gospel.

Although Mrs. Patton has long since left mortality, I have felt a strong impression to share with you the manner in which our Heavenly Father blessed and provided for her, a widow, in her need. With all the strength of my soul I testify that our Heavenly Father loves each one of us. He hears the prayers of humble hearts; He hears our cries for help, as He heard Mrs. Patton. His Son, our Savior

and Redeemer, speaks to each of us today: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”<sup>16</sup>

Will we listen for that knock? Will we hear that voice? Will we open that door to the Lord, that we may receive the help He is so ready to provide? I pray that we will, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 126–29.
2. “Morituri Salutamus,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1883), 259.
3. John 14:6.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:21.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29.
6. Jeremiah 1:4–5.
7. Alma 40:11.
8. John 11:25–26.
9. John 14:2–3.
10. Revelation 20:12–13.
11. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
12. 1 Corinthians 13:12.
13. Matthew 11:28–29.
14. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Crossing the Bar,” in *Poems of the English Race*, ed. Raymond Macdonald Alden (1921), 362.
15. Personal correspondence in the possession of Thomas S. Monson.
16. Revelation 3:20.

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The choir sang “I Believe in Christ.” Elder David F. Evans offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, provided the music. Manu Harris directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

## President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, under the direction of Sister Manu Harris, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Come, Rejoice.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Come, Rejoice.”

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

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## President Monson

“Oh, how lovely was the morning.” Beautifully rendered.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders M. Russell Ballard and Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elders Bruce D. Porter and Erich W. Kopischke of the Seventy.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Answering questions about the Church

Brothers and sisters, since the sesqui-centennial anniversary in 1997, there has been a dramatic increase worldwide in inquiries about the Church. This growing interest is fueled by our rapid growth, by events like the Winter Olympics here in Salt Lake City, and by the prominence in their chosen professions of many of our individual members.

I am sure that these questions come not only to the Church but to you as individual members. It is not easy to explain something as vast as the Church or as wonderful as the restored gospel to people who know little or nothing about us. Even questions on one specific aspect can be difficult to answer because every question seems to be connected to other questions. The most common request we hear is a fairly simple one that goes some-

thing like this: “Tell me a little about your Church.” The key word here is *little*. They are not saying, “Tell me everything you know and then send others to tell me everything else.”

We, of course, welcome people’s interest, and many will want to be taught more about our doctrines and beliefs. This is why we have over 53,000 full-time missionaries serving at their own expense throughout the world.

But we need to remember that there is a difference between interest and mere curiosity. Sometimes people just want to know what the Church is. Those who are curious in this general way deserve clear and accurate information that comes directly from those of us who are members so that they do not have to rely on the incomplete answers, half-truths, or false statements that may come from the media or other outside voices. The many

misunderstandings and false information about the Church are somewhat our own fault for not clearly explaining who we are and what we believe.

The Public Affairs Committee, on which I serve, has learned that there is a great need for clear, simple statements that present those who are curious with the basics about the Church as it is today. Let me share with you some of the things we have found to be helpful. You may want to prepare your own list of talking points that will assist you in explaining what we believe to your friends and acquaintances of other faiths. It may be helpful for you, as it is for me, to have on one page a few facts about the Church as it is today to give to them along with a copy of the Articles of Faith.

### **Facts, faith, family, and fruits**

Here are four subjects that will help someone today to gain a basic understanding of the Church. Under each of the four headings, there are some simple statements I have found helpful. Try to imagine them being heard or read by a person who knows virtually nothing about us. The four main subjects deal with *facts*, *faith*, *families*, and *fruits* of the restored gospel.

#### *Facts*

Some *facts* might include:

- First, *Mormon* is a nickname for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members are often referred to as *Mormons*, *Latter-day Saints*, or *LDS*. The term *Saint* means “member.”
- Second, the Church was restored in 1830 in upstate New York with Joseph Smith as its first prophet and president. Today it is headquartered in Salt Lake City, with President Gordon B. Hinckley as the present prophet.
- Third, there are now over 13 million members in 176 countries and territories. About 6 million of these are in the

United States, making us the fourth largest Christian denomination in America. As one of the fastest growing Christian faiths in the world, we complete a new chapel every working day. Members pay a tithe, which is 10 percent of their income, making this and other programs possible.

- Fourth, local congregations are led by volunteer, unpaid members. Both men and women serve in assigned leadership positions.

- And fifth, Mormons are well represented in politics and government. (In the United States, for example, there are 16 members in Congress, from both political parties.) Members also serve in high and trusted positions throughout the world in business, medicine, law, education, media, sports, and entertainment.

#### *Faith*

Next, people need to know something of our *faith* as committed Christians with strong traditional values. Along with the Articles of Faith we need to emphasize that:

- We believe in the eternity of the soul, that God is the Father of our spirits, and that we can return to Him after death.

- We believe that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior, and we try to model our lives after Him and His teachings. We commemorate Christ’s atoning sacrifice in our Sunday worship services, similar to taking communion in other churches. We accept as fellow Christians all who believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Savior of all mankind. Many Christians do not understand that we have much common ground with them. Joseph Smith taught that Jesus Christ is the core of our belief, and everything else is an appendage to it (see *Elders’ Journal*, July 1838, 44). The name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

- We believe the original church that Jesus established was lost and has been restored again in our day. The priesthood—the authority given to man to act in the name of God, with apostles and a prophet to lead us—has been restored, as have all necessary ordinances of salvation.

- We believe in and we use the Holy Bible, both the Old and New Testaments.

- And we believe in the Book of Mormon and other books of scripture which support and authenticate the Bible and testify of the ministry and divinity of Christ and of God's ongoing revelation to man. Indeed, the Book of Mormon is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

### *Family*

The next thing it is good for people to know is how *family* centered our theology and our lifestyles are. Once again, simple statements are helpful to someone who is uninformed but curious about the importance we place on families.

- Mormons place particularly strong emphasis on family as the basic unit of the Church and of society. We have a deep commitment to marriage, defined as a union between one man and one woman. Polygamy, a limited practice in the early pioneer days of the Church, was discontinued in 1890, some 117 years ago.

- Families and individuals, whether members of our faith or not, can attend Sunday services in our chapels. Here we worship together, instructing one another from the scriptures.

- Latter-day Saint families are encouraged to hold family home evenings weekly, usually on Monday nights. This provides a regular and predictable time for parents to teach values to their children and to have fun together. We invite those not of our faith to adopt this practice with their own families.

- The Church has auxiliary programs for women, youth, and children as a support to the family. These programs provide such things as religious instruction

and opportunities for Christian service, sports, drama, music, and Scouting.

- And there is also much focus on extended family, genealogy, and personal family history, providing young and old with a stronger sense of roots, identity, and belonging. The highest and most sacred ordinances of our faith relate to our families, both living and dead, and some of these ordinances take place in our temples.

### *Fruits*

Now, even as someone begins to understand a few facts about us and comes to know us more accurately by our faith and the importance of family, it was the Savior who said, "By their *fruits* ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20; italics added). A church, or any way of life, should be judged by the fruits or the results that it generates. Here are a few examples based on United States statistics. These would be similar throughout the world among practicing Mormons, by which we mean those who attend church and the temple regularly:

- One of the fruits is a longer life. Studies show that practicing Mormons are healthier and therefore live longer than the national average. In 1833 the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the Word of Wisdom, which is the way to live in order to enjoy a long and healthy life.

- Second, those who are married in and attend the temple regularly have a divorce rate far below the national and world average.

- Third, we achieve an educational level that is higher than the national average.

- Fourth, over 70,000 members volunteer at their own expense to serve for 18 to 24 months in humanitarian efforts, Church-service assignments, and full-time missionary service throughout the world.

- And fifth, we place strong emphasis on self-reliance and a solid work ethic. We encourage active involvement in our

communities and in providing service to others. The Church continues to donate substantial money, goods, and services to humanitarian causes around the globe, including untold hours of labor donated by members to assist in disaster cleanup and relief.

### **Reach out and tell others who we are**

Brothers and sisters, in today's busy world, I have found that most people will not read or focus on more than just a few important facts at one time. Whatever you choose to use to inform your friends and acquaintances about the Church, write it down, check it for accuracy, and keep it simple and short.

The growing prominence of the Church and the increasing inquiries from others present us with great opportunities to build bridges, make friends, and pass on accurate information. But it can also present a greater possibility of misunderstanding and sometimes even prejudice if we allow others to define who we are and what we believe rather than presenting it ourselves.

Generally there is no problem with those who are personally acquainted with our members. But there are millions upon millions who are not acquainted with any members of our faith. I would hope that those who know very little about the Church would seek to learn more about us. I would hope they would get to know our members rather than judging us by the misinformation given by those who do not know and in some cases by those

who would deliberately mislead or defame.

You as members can help this to happen by reaching out and sharing with others the basic information found in the Articles of Faith, along with such things as the facts, faith, families, and fruits of the gospel.

We should also remember that sometimes the best way to answer people's interest can be by how we live, how we radiate the joy of the gospel in our lives, how we treat others, and how sincerely we follow the teachings of Christ.

For those who want to learn more than just the few basics I have discussed, the missionaries can be called upon to teach them the doctrine from chapter 3 in *Preach My Gospel*. The missionaries know how to answer more of their questions and lead them to conversion and baptism.

Now is the time for all of us to reach out and tell others who we are. Prepare some simple facts such as those I have shared with you today and help those who are curious to know a little about the Church and then to want to know more about the Restoration of the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, never hesitate to bear your testimony with sincerity and love. The power of personal testimony cannot be denied and often ignites in others the interest to know more. I know this to be true and leave you my absolute witness that I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and I bear that testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Charity—"a more excellent way"**

Brethren and sisters, I would like to ask one very important question: What quality defines us best as members of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Today I would like to speak about the answer to this question.

In the first century A.D., members of the growing Church in Corinth were enthusiastic about the gospel. Almost all were recent converts to the Church. Many were attracted to it through the preaching of the Apostle Paul and others.

But the Saints at Corinth were also contentious. They argued amongst themselves. Some felt superior to others. They took each other to court.

When Paul heard this, feeling a sense of frustration, he wrote them a letter, pleading with them to become more unified. He answered many of the questions they had been arguing about. Then toward the end he told them that he wanted to show them “a more excellent way.”<sup>1</sup>

Do you remember the words he wrote next?

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,” he told them, “I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul’s message to this new body of Saints was simple and direct: Nothing you do makes much of a difference if you do not have charity. You can speak with tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and possess all knowledge; even if you have the faith to move mountains, without charity it won’t profit you at all.<sup>3</sup>

“Charity is the pure love of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> The Savior exemplified that love and taught it even as He was tormented by those who despised and hated Him.

### **The great commandment**

On one occasion the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking Him a seemingly impossible question: “Master,” they asked, “which is the great commandment in the law?”<sup>5</sup>

The Pharisees had debated this question extensively and had identified more than 600 commandments.<sup>6</sup> If prioritizing them was such a difficult task for scholars, certainly, they thought, the question

would be impossible for this son of a carpenter from Galilee.

But when the Pharisees heard His answer, they must have been troubled, for it pointed to their great weakness. He replied:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>7</sup>

Since that day, this inspired pronouncement has been repeated through many generations. Now, for us, the measure of our love is the measure of the greatness of our souls.

### **Love is the pathway of discipleship**

The scriptures tell us that “if any man love God, the same is known of him.”<sup>8</sup> What a wonderful promise—to be known of Him. It makes the spirit soar to think that the Creator of heaven and earth could know us and love us with a pure, eternal love.

In 1840 the Prophet Joseph sent an epistle to the Twelve wherein he taught that “love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”<sup>9</sup>

As we reach out in love to those around us, we fulfill the other half of the great commandment to “love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>10</sup>

Both commandments are necessary, for as we bear one another’s burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the pathway of discipleship. It comforts, counsels, cures, and

consoles. It leads us through valleys of darkness and through the veil of death. In the end love leads us to the glory and grandeur of eternal life.

### **Joseph Smith's example of love**

For me, the Prophet Joseph Smith has always exemplified the pure love of Christ. Many asked why he gained so many followers and retained them. His answer: "It is because I possess the principle of love."<sup>12</sup>

The story is told of a 14-year-old boy who had come to Nauvoo in search of his brother who lived near there. The young boy had arrived in winter with no money and no friends. When he inquired about his brother, the boy was taken to a large house that looked like a hotel. There he met a man who said, "Come in, son, we'll take care of you."

The boy accepted and was brought into the house, where he was fed, warmed, and given a bed to sleep in.

The next day it was bitter cold, but in spite of that, the boy prepared himself to walk the eight miles to where his brother was staying.

When the man of the house saw this, he told the young boy to stay for a while. He said there would be a team coming soon and that he could ride back with them.

When the boy protested, saying that he had no money, the man told him not to worry about that—that they would take care of him.

Later the boy learned that the man of the house was none other than Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. This boy remembered this act of charity for the rest of his life.<sup>13</sup>

### **Simple acts of kindness and caring**

In a recent message of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's *Music and the Spoken Word*, a story was told about an elderly man and woman who had been married

for many decades. Because the wife was slowly losing her sight, she could no longer take care of herself the way she had done for so many years. Without being asked, the husband began to paint her fingernails for her.

"He knew that she could see her fingernails when she held them close to her eyes, at just the right angle, and they made her smile. He liked to see her happy, so he kept painting her nails for more than five years before she passed away."<sup>14</sup>

That is an example of the pure love of Christ. Sometimes the greatest love is not found in the dramatic scenes that poets and writers immortalize. Often the greatest manifestations of love are the simple acts of kindness and caring we extend to those we meet along the path of life.

### **Christlike love transforms us**

True love lasts forever. It is eternally patient and forgiving. It believes, hopes, and endures all things. That is the love our Heavenly Father bears for us.

We all yearn to experience love like this. Even when we make mistakes, we hope others will love us in spite of our shortcomings—even if we don't deserve it.

Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will.

We see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our Heavenly Father sees us in terms of forever. Although we might settle for less, Heavenly Father won't, for He sees us as the glorious beings we are capable of becoming.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities.

The means of this refinement is our Christlike love. There is no pain it cannot soften, no bitterness it cannot remove, no hatred it cannot alter. The Greek play-

wright Sophocles wrote, “One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love.”<sup>15</sup>

The most cherished and sacred moments of our lives are those filled with the spirit of love. The greater the measure of our love, the greater is our joy. In the end, the development of such love is the true measure of success in life.

### **Love leads to obedience**

Do you love the Lord?

Spend time with Him. Meditate on His words. Take His yoke upon you. Seek to understand and obey because “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”<sup>16</sup> When we love the Lord, obedience ceases to be a burden. Obedience becomes a delight. When we love the Lord, we seek less for things that benefit us and turn our hearts toward things that will bless and uplift others.

As our love for the Lord deepens, our minds and hearts become purified. We experience a “mighty change in . . . our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>17</sup>

Brethren and sisters, as you prayerfully consider what you can do to increase harmony, spirituality, and build up the kingdom of God, consider your sacred duty to teach others to love the Lord and their fellowman. This is the central object of our existence. Without charity—or the pure love of Christ—whatever else we accomplish matters little. With it, all else becomes vibrant and alive.

When we inspire and teach others to fill their hearts with love, obedience flows from the inside out in voluntary acts of self-sacrifice and service. Yes, those who go home teaching out of duty, for example, may fulfill their obligation. But those who home teach out of genuine love for the Lord and for their fellowman will likely approach that task with a very different attitude.

### **Love is the essence of the gospel**

Returning to my original question, What quality defines us best as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? I would answer: we are a people who love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, and minds, and we love our neighbors as ourselves.

That is our signature as a people. It is like a beacon to the world, signaling whose disciples we are.<sup>18</sup>

At the final day the Savior will not ask about the nature of our callings. He will not inquire about our material possessions or fame. He will ask if we ministered to the sick, gave food and drink to the hungry, visited those in prison, or gave succor to the weak.<sup>19</sup> When we reach out to assist the least of our Heavenly Father’s children, we do it unto Him.<sup>20</sup> That is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **The great love of the Savior**

If we wish to learn truly how to love, all we need to do is reflect on the life of our Savior. When we partake of the sacramental emblems, we are reminded of the greatest example of love in all the world’s history. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>21</sup>

The Savior’s love for us was so great that it caused “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore.”<sup>22</sup>

Because the Savior laid down His life for us,<sup>23</sup> we have a brightness of hope, a confidence and security that when we pass from this worldly existence, we will live again with Him. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed of sin and stand as partakers of the gift of our Almighty Father. Then we will know the glory that God “hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>24</sup>

This is the transforming power of charity.



When Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment to “love one another; as I have loved you,”<sup>25</sup> He gave to them the grand key to happiness in this life and glory in the next.

Love is the greatest of all the commandments—all others hang upon it. It is our focus as followers of the living Christ. It is the one trait that, if developed, will most improve our lives.

I bear testimony that God lives. His love is infinite and eternal. It extends to all of His children. Because He loves us, He has provided prophets and apostles to guide us in our time. He has given us the Holy Ghost, who teaches, comforts, and inspires.

He has given us His scriptures. And I am grateful beyond description that He has given to each of us a heart capable of experiencing the pure love of Christ.

I pray that our hearts may be filled with that love and that we may reach out to our Heavenly Father and to others with new vision and new faith. I testify that as we do so, we will discover a greater richness in life. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 1 Corinthians 12:31.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:1.

3. See 1 Corinthians 13:1–2.
4. Moroni 7:47.
5. Matthew 22:36.
6. See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 528–29.
7. Matthew 22:37–40.
8. 1 Corinthians 8:3.
9. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
10. Galatians 5:14.
11. See Galatians 6:2.
12. *History of the Church*, 5:498.
13. See Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph: Personal Recollections of Those Who Knew the Prophet Joseph Smith* (2003), 57.
14. “Selflessness,” Sept. 23, 2007, broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*; available at [www.musicandthespokenword.com/messages](http://www.musicandthespokenword.com/messages).
15. *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *The Oedipus Cycle*, trans. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (1949), 161–62.
16. 1 John 5:3.
17. Mosiah 5:2.
18. See John 13:35.
19. See Matthew 25:31–40.
20. See Matthew 25:40.
21. John 3:16.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
23. See John 15:13.
24. 1 Corinthians 2:9; see also Isaiah 64:4.
25. John 13:34.

## Elder Bruce D. Porter

### A broken heart and a contrite spirit

How I love Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin!

The poet Rudyard Kipling wrote the following words in 1897, an admonition to the British Empire against pride:

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart.  
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
[“God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,”  
*Hymns*, no. 80]

When Kipling spoke of a contrite heart as an “ancient sacrifice,” perhaps he had in mind the words of King David in the 51st Psalm: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart” (v. 17). David’s words show that even in Old Testament times, the Lord’s people understood that their hearts must be given to God, that burnt offerings alone were not enough.

The sacrifices mandated during the Mosaic dispensation pointed symbolically to the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah,

who alone could reconcile sinful man with God. As Amulek taught, “Behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; . . . the Son of God” (Alma 34:14).

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ declared to the people in the New World:

“Your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of [them]. . . .

“And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart . . . , him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:19–20).

What are a broken heart and a contrite spirit? And why are they considered a sacrifice?

### **The Savior’s perfect submission**

As in all things, the Savior’s life offers us the perfect example: although Jesus of Nazareth was utterly without sin, He walked through life with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, as manifested by His submission to the will of the Father. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). To His disciples He said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). And when the time came to make the ultimate sacrifice entailed in the Atonement, Christ shrank not to partake of the bitter cup but submitted completely to His Father’s will.

The Savior’s perfect submission to the Eternal Father is the very essence of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Christ’s example teaches us that a broken heart is an eternal attribute of godliness. When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in

all its forms. Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the broken-hearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master.

### **Preconditions to repentance**

A broken heart and a contrite spirit are also preconditions to repentance. Lehi taught:

“Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . .

“Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (2 Nephi 2:6–7).

When we sin and desire forgiveness, a broken heart and a contrite spirit mean to experience “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:10). This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead. In such a condition of submissiveness, the Atonement can take effect and true repentance can occur. The penitent will then experience the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, which will fill them with peace of conscience and the joy of reconciliation with God. In a wondrous union of divine attributes, the same God who teaches us to walk with a broken heart invites us to rejoice and to be of good cheer.

### **A divine shield against temptation**

When we have received a forgiveness of sins, a broken heart serves as a divine shield against temptation. Nephi prayed, “May the gates of hell be shut continually

before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!" (2 Nephi 4:32). King Benjamin taught his people that if they would walk in the depths of humility, they might ever rejoice, "be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of . . . sins" (Mosiah 4:12). When we yield our hearts to the Lord, the attractions of the world simply lose their luster.

### **Increased gratitude for Christ's suffering**

There is yet another dimension of a broken heart—namely, our deep gratitude for Christ's suffering on our behalf. In Gethsemane, the Savior "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6) as He bore

the burden of sin for every human being. At Golgotha, He "poured out his soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12), and His great heart literally broke with an all-encompassing love for the children of God. When we remember the Savior and His suffering, our hearts too will break in gratitude for the Anointed One.

As we make the sacrifice to Him of all that we have and all that we are, the Lord will fill our hearts with peace. He will "bind up the brokenhearted" (Isaiah 61:1) and grace our lives with the love of God, "sweet above all that is sweet, . . . and pure above all that is pure" (Alma 32:42). Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Erich W. Kopischke**

### ***Preach My Gospel*—a great resource**

Not long ago we invited two sister missionaries over for lunch. After we finished eating, we asked them to leave a spiritual thought with us. They were well prepared and introduced a scripture reading and marking exercise to us. They had brought a fresh copy of the Book of Mormon and a set of colored pencils. We accepted the invitation of the missionaries. Since then, our daily Book of Mormon family scripture reading has changed. In every chapter we mark with different colors the passages related to Jesus Christ as we discover them. Every time, this little exercise reminds us of our missionaries.

When the missionaries presented this, we immediately recognized it as a scripture study exercise suggested in *Preach My Gospel*. As a family, we are so thankful for this great and powerful missionary tool.

For the past three years missionaries have been using *Preach My Gospel* all around the world. It has truly revolution-

ized missionary work. The great vision of President Hinckley is being fulfilled: Missionaries "master the concepts of the lessons." They "teach the concepts in their own words under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit" (see "Missionary Service," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 19).

As the missionaries become immersed in *Preach My Gospel*, they learn and apply important doctrines and principles which make them more capable in their important service. Despite this, they still need all of our help and support. Only together can we fulfill the great charge given to the ancient and modern Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

### **Unifying members, missionaries**

In order to be successful in these efforts, we must be one with the missionaries, and we must understand one another. Do you always understand the missionaries? I do not refer to language but rather

to how they do missionary work. We see and observe them inviting people to listen to their message. They teach gospel principles and invite those who are interested to change their lives and be baptized and confirmed members of the Church.

If we want to understand and help our missionaries, we must have faith as missionaries have faith, we must think as missionaries think, and we must feel as missionaries feel. How can we achieve that?

One important way, of course, is to be with the missionaries and see them do what they do. But another way for us is to get acquainted with *Preach My Gospel* and learn more about missionary work. Ever since President McKay said, “Every member a missionary,” members have been striving to become more active in sharing the gospel (in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122). With *Preach My Gospel*, we have a marvelous guide to help us act on this invitation. Our own study of *Preach My Gospel* will not only help us to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for our missionaries, but it will help us in our own day-to-day lives.

### Becoming better member missionaries

Every member of our family owns a copy of *Preach My Gospel*. Studying this guide is a great support in developing a strong testimony. It helps us understand fundamental gospel principles and the desire to serve. Allow me for a moment to highlight some of the headings of *Preach My Gospel* ([2004], iii), and you will understand. They read:

“How Do I Recognize and Understand the Spirit?”

“How Do I Study Effectively and Prepare to Teach?”

“What Do I Study and Teach?”

“What Is the Role of the Book of Mormon?”

“How Do I Develop Christlike Attributes?”

Aren’t those the things that all of us want to learn? For everyone who wants to become a better member missionary and who wants to know how to support the missionaries, *Preach My Gospel* is full of powerful ideas and insights. We learn how we can help the missionaries find people to teach and how we as members can work hand in hand with the missionaries to help those who are investigating the Church. We learn to understand why strong invitations to act are helpful to increase faith in Jesus Christ and how we can stand with our nonmember friends who are moving through this wonderful, life-changing process of conversion.

Along with studying the scriptures, missionaries study *Preach My Gospel* every day. They learn principles and skills, and they apply them. They especially learn how to use the guidance of the Spirit in their work. If we want to learn as missionaries do, we too must carefully study *Preach My Gospel* and observe the missionaries in their daily work.

In the introduction to *Preach My Gospel* we read: “*Preach My Gospel* is for the full-time missionaries of the Church. However, the principles and doctrines taught herein are also applicable to ward missionaries and leaders as they seek to build the Lord’s kingdom. Frequent study of this manual will enable them to fulfill their responsibilities as member missionaries and will foster unity with the full-time missionaries” (xi).

### How to study and use *Preach My Gospel*

Elder Richard G. Scott taught that all members should carefully study *Preach My Gospel*. He said:

“Much good has been accomplished . . . since *Preach My Gospel* was introduced, but the best is yet to come as we all become more proficient in the use of this extraordinary missionary tool” (in

Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 32; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 31).

Our time may seem limited to do this study, so therefore let me give a few suggestions that may help.

- Youth preparing for a mission should carefully study *Preach My Gospel* along with the scriptures.

- Invite the missionaries into your home. Ask them to teach you and your family a principle or doctrine from *Preach My Gospel*.

- Every once in a while, use *Preach My Gospel* for family home evening. Let your teenage children teach your family as missionaries would do. In our home, we have had some surprisingly great lessons given by our children. We have been astonished at how well they taught simple principles. Sometimes we have invited friends to those lessons.

- Gospel teachers could use the simple but effective principles of gospel teaching as outlined in *Preach My Gospel* as a support to the prescribed courses of study.

- *Preach My Gospel* has been translated and published in almost every language our members speak. In countries where the Church is still young, *Preach My Gospel* may be used along with the scriptures as a resource and foundation for all gospel learning and teaching.

- Elder Scott encouraged local leaders “to use these materials in . . . presidencies, priesthood executive committee meetings, and ward councils” (*Ensign*, May 2005, 31).

- Use *Preach My Gospel* as a resource for training, talks, spiritual thoughts, lessons, firesides, and personal study.

### **Becoming one in proclaiming the gospel**

I bear witness that this missionary guide is inspired of God. We must study it more carefully, that we may understand our missionaries and their work better. Missionaries and members must speak one language. We must become one in our efforts to proclaim the gospel. It will better enable us to become tools in the hand of the Lord, for He said, “And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice” (D&C 33:6).

As members of His Church, we are expected to be a part of this glorious gathering process. Of this truth I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Michael J. Teh and Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

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## **Elder Michael J. Teh**

### **Our responsibility to serve others**

*Mabuhay* from the lovely and wonderful people of the Philippines.

One of the oldest and most profound questions uttered in the history of this earth was, most interestingly, asked by

Cain in response to God’s inquiry soon after Cain slew his brother Abel: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>1</sup> This question deserves serious contemplation by those seeking to do the will of the Lord. One of the answers is in the teachings of Alma:

“And now, . . . ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>2</sup>

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to care for and serve our brothers and sisters. In relating the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus Christ not only confounded His enemies but also taught a great lesson to all who sought to follow Him. We need to enlarge the circle of our influence. Our service to others should be independent of race, color, standing, or relationships. After all, the commandment to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees”<sup>3</sup> did not come with qualifications.

### **Simple, day-to-day service**

Many believe that for service to be meaningful it should consist of having elaborate plans and forming a committee. Although many of these worthwhile projects help, much of the service needed in the world today relates to our day-to-day associations with each other. Often we find these opportunities within the confines of our own home, neighborhood, and ward.

The following advice, given by the deceitful Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood in C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters*, describes a common malady afflicting many of us today:

“Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient’s soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary.”<sup>4</sup>

The words from a popular hymn prescribe the perfect remedy:

Has anyone’s burden been lighter today  
Because I was willing to share?  
Have the sick and the weary been  
helped on their way?  
When they needed my help was I there?  
Then wake up and do something more  
Than dream of your mansion above.  
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond  
measure,  
A blessing of duty and love.<sup>5</sup>

### **Encouragement to serve a mission**

The following are events that I have been privileged to witness that have taught me how simple acts of service can help us and those we are permitted to influence. Our Heavenly Father places loving individuals on important crossroads to help us so that we are not left alone to grope in the dark. These men and women help by example and with patience and love. Such has been my experience.

I recall a particularly important crossroad—the decision to go on a full-time mission. I stood on that crossroad for a very, very long time. As I struggled to decide which road to take, my family, friends, and priesthood leaders came forward to take my hand. They encouraged and challenged me and offered countless prayers on my behalf. My full-time missionary sister wrote to me regularly and never gave up.

Even today I am still carried on the shoulders of good men and women. I suspect that we all are. To some degree we all depend on each other to be able to make it back to our heavenly home.

### **Sharing the gospel with “Uncle Fred”**

Sharing the gospel message is one of the most rewarding ways we can render service to those who are not of our faith. I recall a childhood experience with someone I will simply call Uncle Fred.

When I was six years old, Uncle Fred was my worst nightmare. He was our neighbor, and he was always drunk. One of his favorite pastimes was to throw rocks at our home.

Because my mother was a great cook, single adult members from our small branch frequented our home. One day when Uncle Fred was sober, these members befriended him and invited him into our home. This development terrified me. He was no longer just outside but inside our home. This happened a few more times until finally they were able to convince Uncle Fred to listen to the missionaries. He accepted the gospel and was baptized. He served a full-time mission, returned with honor, pursued further education, and was married in the temple. He is now a righteous husband, father, and priesthood leader. Watching Uncle Fred today, one would find it difficult to believe that he once brought nightmares into the life of a six-year-old boy. May we always be perceptive to opportunities to share the gospel.

### **A mother's unselfish service**

My mother was a great example of helping others by giving them a boost. She taught us many important lessons. The one lesson that has had the most lasting effect on my life was her desire to help anyone in need who visited our home. It bothered me to see many of them leave with our food, our clothing,

and even our money. Because I was young and we were poor, I did not like what I saw. How could she give to others when our family did not even have enough? Was it wrong to attend to our needs first? Didn't we deserve a more comfortable life?

For years I struggled with these questions. Much later in life I finally realized what Mother was teaching. Even as she struggled with the effects of a crippling disease, she could not stop giving to those in need.

### **Out of small things**

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."<sup>6</sup> Serving others need not come from spectacular events. Often it is the simple daily act that gives comfort, uplifts, encourages, sustains, and brings a smile to others.

May we always find opportunities to serve is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Genesis 4:9; Moses 5:34.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (2002), 201.
5. "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

## **Elder Keith K. Hilbig**

### **Quench not the Spirit**

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul admonished the members to act in a manner as becometh Saints. He proceeded to list appropriate attributes and behaviors. In verse 19 Paul counseled with these four simple words: "Quench not the Spirit."

Interestingly, some 500 years *before* Paul's writings, a Book of Mormon prophet named Jacob sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to a resistant people. He boldly inquired of them as follows: "Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye . . . deny the good

word of Christ, . . . and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit?"<sup>1</sup>

In our day, so many centuries *after* both Paul and Jacob, we too must be careful *not* to hinder, disregard, or quench the Spirit in our lives.

### **The Holy Ghost guides and enlightens us**

The beckoning invitations of the world attempt to divert our attention from the strait and narrow path. The adversary labors to dull our sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit, whether we are teenagers, young adults, or mature men and women. The role of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is essential in every season of our mortal lives.

From the beginning the Father has promised each of His spirit sons and daughters that through the Atonement and Resurrection of His Beloved Son, we *all* might return to God's presence and inherit the blessings of eternal life in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

Each of us knew that the journey to exaltation would be long, strenuous, and sometimes lonely, but we also knew that we would not travel alone. Heavenly Father provides all who fulfill the prerequisites of faith, repentance, and baptism with a companion and guide, the Holy Ghost.

The path to eternal life is not on a plateau. Rather, it is an incline, ever onward and upward. Hence, ever-increasing spiritual understanding and energy are required to reach our destination. Because the pernicious opposition by Satan continues, the continuous enlightened guidance of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential. We dare not hinder, disregard, or quench the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Yet when it comes to drawing upon the promptings and the blessings which flow from the Holy Ghost, we often "live far beneath our privileges."<sup>2</sup>

In the Pearl of Great Price, Moses recorded that Adam, having been bap-

tized and having received the Holy Ghost, "became quickened in the inner man."<sup>3</sup>

When we invite the Holy Ghost to fill our minds with light and knowledge, He "quickens" us—that is to say, enlightens and enlivens the inner man or woman.<sup>4</sup> As a result we notice a measurable difference in our soul. We feel strengthened, filled with peace and joy. We possess spiritual energy and enthusiasm, both of which enhance our natural abilities. We can accomplish more than we otherwise could do on our own. We yearn to become a holier person.

### **How to have an abundance of the Spirit**

Do you wish to know the price to be paid for the privileges that are offered after we have received the Holy Ghost? The price is not a predetermined or fixed amount; rather, it is determined by each of us individually.

If you set your payment, which is your personal effort, very low, you may not be able to avail yourself of *all* the Spirit has to offer. You may even quench the Spirit! However, if you set your personal contribution high, you will reap an abundant harvest from the Spirit. The payment I reference is, of course, not money; rather, it is a greater commitment to and involvement in personal spiritual endeavors and behaviors.

We determine the level of our current personal contribution by examining our present choices and priorities against questions such as these:

1. Do I spend more time with sports than Church attendance or callings?
2. If I have a free day, do I choose to attend the temple or to visit the mall?
3. Do I resort to computer games or surfing the Internet rather than offering meaningful service to others in my home and community?
4. Do I read the newspaper religiously but find it difficult to read the scriptures daily?



There are other questions you might formulate which will reveal the appropriateness of your current choices and priorities.

### **Make more time for the things of eternity**

Whatever level of spiritual development each of us presently has, there always exists a higher level within our reach. Time is a most precious asset. Would you consider investing more of your time in the things of eternity in order to merit the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and to benefit more fully from His influence?

If your answer is yes, the initial offering in this pursuit of deeper spirituality is an intensified desire to receive greater inspiration and to become more holy. When these desires fill our hearts, we will eagerly increase the price we pay for heaven's help.

Our next contribution to this effort will be to immerse ourselves more consistently in the words of Christ and of the prophets. When our study efforts expand, so will the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives increase. Let us search the scriptures with pen in hand, making note of new insights and recording spiritual promptings. Thereafter, let us strive to *apply* what has been learned to our personal lives. The Spirit will quicken our inner selves; new understanding will come precept upon precept.

To ensure we quench not the Spirit, but rather invite His presence, there is another step to take. Let us pray frequently and fervently. The Savior's tender and comprehensive promise is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

- "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."
- "Seek me diligently and ye shall find me."
- "Ask, and ye shall receive."
- "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

- "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you."<sup>5</sup>

Note that sequence, brothers and sisters. We draw nearer to the Savior as we keep His commandments with exactness. We earnestly petition the Father in the name of Christ. Then, through the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we receive divine direction and clear understanding.

As we fast, renew our covenants during the sacrament, and attend the temple, we further access the Spirit. In these settings the Holy Ghost may manifest His influence with great impact.

The temple is a marvelous environment for us to seek personal revelation. When we attend as often as we can and listen thoughtfully, pondering the glorious promises and expectations pertaining to eternity, we depart with heightened understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for us. The Holy Ghost extends our vision and allows that eternal perspective to influence the decisions we make in our daily lives.

### **Let us live in the Spirit**

If we undertake this effort and quench not the Spirit, our inner being is quickened. As we persevere, eternal life awaits us. Thus, we dare not quench the Spirit through disobedience or neglect. Rather, let us "live in the Spirit,"<sup>6</sup> enhancing the sacred and essential role of the Holy Ghost in our individual lives. I testify that as we truly seek the Spirit, we shall benefit more fully from the quiet, but essential, workings of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Jacob 6:8.
2. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 32.
3. Moses 6:65.
4. See Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. (1965), 101: "The gift of

the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions

and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.”

5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–64.
6. Galatians 5:25.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Declaring our Christianity

As Elder Ballard noted earlier in this session, various cross-currents of our times have brought increasing public attention to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord told the ancients this latter-day work would be “a marvellous work and a wonder,”<sup>1</sup> and it is. But even as we invite one and all to examine closely the *marvel* of it, there is one thing we would not like anyone to *wonder* about—that is whether or not we are “Christians.”

By and large any controversy in this matter has swirled around two doctrinal issues—our view of the Godhead and our belief in the principle of continuing revelation leading to an open scriptural canon. In addressing this we do not need to be apologists for our faith, but we would like not to be misunderstood. So with a desire to increase understanding and unequivocally declare our Christianity, I speak today on the first of those two doctrinal issues just mentioned.

### The doctrine of the Godhead

Our first and foremost article of faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup> We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to

say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true.

Indeed no less a source than the stalwart *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* records that “the formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is *not* to be found in the [New Testament].”<sup>3</sup>

So any criticism that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not hold the contemporary Christian view of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost is *not* a comment about our commitment to Christ but rather a recognition (accurate, I might add) that our view of the Godhead breaks with post–New Testament Christian history and returns to the doctrine taught by Jesus Himself. Now, a word about that post–New Testament history might be helpful.

### Post–New Testament creeds

In the year A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to address—among other things—the growing issue of God’s alleged “trinity in unity.” What emerged from the heated contentions of churchmen, philosophers, and ecclesiastical dignitaries came to be known (after another 125 years and three more major councils)<sup>4</sup> as the Nicene Creed, with later reformulations such as the Athanasian Creed. These various evolutions and iterations of creeds—and others to come

over the centuries—declared the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be abstract, absolute, transcendent, imminent, consubstantial, coeternal, and unknowable, without body, parts, or passions and dwelling outside space and time. In such creeds all three members are separate persons, but they are a single being, the oft-noted “mystery of the trinity.” They are three distinct persons, yet not three Gods but one. All three persons are incomprehensible, yet it is one God who is incomprehensible.

We agree with our critics on at least that point—that such a formulation for divinity is truly incomprehensible. With such a confusing definition of God being imposed upon the church, little wonder that a fourth-century monk cried out, “Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, . . . and I know not whom to adore or to address.”<sup>5</sup> How are we to trust, love, worship, to say nothing of strive to be like, One who is incomprehensible and unknowable? What of Jesus’s prayer to His Father in Heaven that “this is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom *thou* hast sent?”<sup>6</sup>

It is not our purpose to demean any person’s belief nor the doctrine of any religion. We extend to all the same respect for their doctrine that we are asking for ours. (That, too, is an article of our faith.) But if one says we are not Christians because we do not hold a fourth- or fifth-century view of the Godhead, then what of those first Christian Saints, many of whom were eyewitnesses of the living Christ, who did not hold such a view either?<sup>7</sup>

### Three separate divine beings

We declare it is self-evident from the scriptures that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate persons, three divine beings, noting such unequivocal illustrations as the Savior’s great

Intercessory Prayer just mentioned, His baptism at the hands of John, the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the martyrdom of Stephen—to name just four.

With these New Testament sources and more<sup>8</sup> ringing in our ears, it may be redundant to ask what Jesus meant when He said, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”<sup>9</sup> On another occasion He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”<sup>10</sup> Of His antagonists He said, “[They have] . . . seen and hated both me and my Father.”<sup>11</sup> And there is, of course, that always deferential subordination to His Father that had Jesus say, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”<sup>12</sup> “My Father is greater than I.”<sup>13</sup>

To whom was Jesus pleading so fervently all those years, including in such anguished cries as “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”<sup>14</sup> and “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”<sup>15</sup> To acknowledge the scriptural evidence that otherwise perfectly united members of the Godhead are nevertheless separate and distinct beings is not to be guilty of polytheism; it is, rather, part of the great revelation Jesus came to deliver concerning the nature of divine beings. Perhaps the Apostle Paul said it best: “Christ Jesus . . . being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”<sup>16</sup>

### A glorified, embodied God

A related reason The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is excluded from the Christian category by some is because we believe, as did the ancient prophets and apostles, in an embodied—but certainly glorified—God.<sup>17</sup> To those who criticize this scripturally based belief, I ask at least rhetorically: If the idea of an embodied God is repugnant, why

are the central doctrines and singularly most distinguishing characteristics of all Christianity the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the physical Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? If having a body is not only not needed but not desirable by Deity, why did the Redeemer of mankind redeem *His* body, redeeming it from the grasp of death and the grave, guaranteeing it would never again be separated from His spirit in time or eternity?<sup>18</sup> *Any who dismiss the concept of an embodied God dismiss both the mortal and the resurrected Christ.* No one claiming to be a true Christian will want to do that.

### We testify of Jesus Christ

Now, to anyone within the sound of my voice who has wondered regarding our Christianity, I bear this witness. I testify that Jesus Christ is the literal, living Son of our literal, living God. This Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer, who, under the guidance of the Father, was the Creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. I bear witness that He was born of a virgin mother, that in His lifetime He performed mighty miracles observed by legions of His disciples and by His enemies as well. I testify that He had power over death because He was divine but that He willingly subjected Himself to death for our sake because for a period of time He was also mortal. I declare that in His willing submission to death He took upon Himself the sins of the world, paying an infinite price for every sorrow and sickness, every heartache and unhappiness from Adam to the end of the world. In doing so He conquered both the grave physically and hell spiritually and set the human family free. I bear witness that He was literally resurrected from the tomb and, after ascending to His Father to complete the process of that resurrection, He appeared repeatedly to hundreds of disciples in the Old World and in the New. I know He is the Holy

One of Israel, the Messiah who will one day come again in final glory to reign on earth as Lord of lords and King of kings. I know that there is no other name given under heaven whereby a man can be saved and that only by relying wholly upon His merits, mercy, and everlasting grace<sup>19</sup> can we gain eternal life.

### The true gospel has been restored

My additional testimony regarding this resplendent doctrine is that in preparation for His millennial latter-day reign, Jesus has already come, more than once, in embodied majestic glory. In the spring of 1820 a 14-year-old boy, confused by many of these very doctrines that still confuse much of Christendom, went into a grove of trees to pray. In answer to that earnest prayer offered at such a tender age, the Father and the Son appeared as embodied, glorified beings to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. That day marked the beginning of the return of the true, New Testament gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the restoration of other prophetic truths offered from Adam down to the present day.

I testify that my witness of these things is true and that the heavens are open to all who seek the same confirmation. Through the Holy Spirit of Truth, may we *all* know “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He has] sent.”<sup>20</sup> Then may we live Their teachings and be true Christians in deed, as well as in word, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Isaiah 29:14.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. Paul J. Achtemeier, ed. (1985), 1099; italics added.
4. Constantinople, A.D. 381; Ephesus, A.D. 431; Chalcedon, A.D. 451.
5. Quoted in Owen Chadwick, *Western Asceticism* (1958), 235.
6. John 17:3; italics added.

7. For a thorough discussion of this issue, see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christian?* (1991), 71–89; see also Robert Millet, *Getting at the Truth* (2004), 106–22.
8. See, for example, John 12:27–30; John 14:26; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:1–3.
9. John 5:19; see also John 14:10.
10. John 6:38.
11. John 15:24.
12. Matthew 19:17.
13. John 14:28.
14. Matthew 26:39.
15. Matthew 27:46.
16. Philippians 2:5–6.
17. See David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 83, no. 2 (1990): 105–16; David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1996): 7–94; James L. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (2003), xi–xii, 5–6, 104–6, 134–35; Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (2001), 33–34.
18. See Romans 6:9; Alma 11:45.
19. See 1 Nephi 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:8; 31:19; Moroni 6:4; Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 3:24.
20. John 17:3.

### President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank this Young Women choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They’ve been wonderful.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Richard G. Hinckley of the Seventy.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Scriptural witnesses

We express love and admiration for President Henry B. Eyring, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder Walter F. González and pray for the Lord’s blessings to attend them in their new callings.

We extend heartfelt feelings of gratitude to each of you, brothers and sisters. Throughout the world, your examples of service and compassion are receiving a great deal of attention. At the same time, many people are wondering about this Church’s history and doctrines. Among those questioners are some who choose to cast aspersions at the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup>

Disregard for the Book of Mormon or for any other sacred scripture concerns me deeply. In addressing that concern, I have titled my remarks “Scriptural Witnesses.”

### Definitions

I will define the term *scriptural* as pertaining to the Bible and the scriptures of the Restoration.<sup>2</sup> Members of the Church “believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”<sup>3</sup> Scriptures of the Restoration also include the Doctrine

and Covenants as well as the Pearl of Great Price.

A dictionary defines the noun *witness* as an “attestation of a fact or event: [a] testimony.”<sup>4</sup> The term *witness* bears special significance when applied to the word of God. In the Bible we read this important declaration: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”<sup>5</sup> This assures God’s children that divine doctrines are confirmed by more than one scriptural witness.

### Scriptures testify of Jesus Christ

The Bible and the Book of Mormon are both witnesses of Jesus Christ. They teach that He is the Son of God, that He lived an exemplary life, that He atoned for all mankind, that He died upon the cross and rose again as the resurrected Lord. They teach that He is the Savior of the world.

Scriptural witnesses authenticate each other. This concept was explained long ago when a prophet wrote that the Book of Mormon was “written for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]; and if ye believe [the Bible] ye will believe [the Book of Mormon] also.”<sup>6</sup> Each book refers to the other. Each book stands as evidence that God lives and speaks to His children by revelation to His prophets.<sup>7</sup>

Love for the Book of Mormon expands one’s love for the Bible and vice versa. Scriptures of the Restoration do not compete with the Bible; they complement the Bible. We are indebted to martyrs who gave their lives so that we could have the Bible. It establishes the everlasting nature of the gospel and of the plan of happiness. The Book of Mormon restores and underscores biblical doctrines such as tithing,<sup>8</sup> the temple,<sup>9</sup> the Sabbath day,<sup>10</sup> and the priesthood.<sup>11</sup>

An angel proclaimed that the Book of Mormon<sup>12</sup> shall establish the truth of the Bible.<sup>13</sup> He also revealed that writings in the Bible available in our day are not

as complete as they were when originally written by prophets and apostles.<sup>14</sup> He declared that the Book of Mormon shall restore plain and precious things taken away from the Bible.<sup>15</sup>

A prophecy in the Book of Mormon warned that some people would object to the notion of additional scriptures. To those who think they “need no more Bible,”<sup>16</sup> consider this God-given counsel:

“Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, . . . created all men, . . . and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?”

“. . . Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And . . . the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.”<sup>17</sup>

The scriptural story of Jesus Christ is indeed a two-hemisphere story.<sup>18</sup> While Mary and Joseph in the East were making preparations for the holy child’s birth in Bethlehem,<sup>19</sup> Nephi in the West was being taught by the premortal Messiah. To Nephi the Lord said, “Be of good cheer; . . . on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.”<sup>20</sup>

To doubters of that second witness—the Book of Mormon—the Lord issued a warning: “Because you have treated lightly the things you have received . . . [you] shall remain under . . . condemnation until [you] repent and remember . . . the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given . . . , [the Bible, and] . . . do according to that which I have written.”<sup>21</sup>

The Lord provided other scriptures of the Restoration<sup>22</sup> and declared that those words will also be fulfilled.<sup>23</sup> With these scriptural witnesses, false doctrines



will be confounded.<sup>24</sup> With these scriptural witnesses, doctrines of the Bible are not only reaffirmed but clarified.

### Restoration scriptures clarify the Bible

How do scriptures of the Restoration clarify the Bible? Many examples exist. I will cite but a few, beginning with the Old Testament.

Isaiah wrote, “Thou shalt . . . speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.”<sup>25</sup> Could any words be more descriptive of the Book of Mormon, coming as it did “out of the ground” to “whisper out of the dust” to people of our day?<sup>26</sup>

But Isaiah was not the only Old Testament prophet who foretold the Book of Mormon. Ezekiel wrote:

“Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel . . . : then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel . . . :

“And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.”<sup>27</sup>

Today, Saints living in many nations of the earth gratefully hold the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Ephraim) bound as one in their hands.

What about the New Testament? The Book of Mormon also stands as a scriptural witness to its teachings. Examples include the miraculous birth of the babe in Bethlehem,<sup>28</sup> His Sermon on the Mount,<sup>29</sup> and the intense suffering of the Savior.<sup>30</sup> The doctrine of the Resurrection is mentioned more frequently in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible.<sup>31</sup>

The need for the Holy Ghost was mentioned by Paul. He asked:

“Have ye received the Holy Ghost? . . . And they said unto him, We have not

so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”<sup>32</sup>

That doctrine is clarified by another scriptural witness, conveyed through the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration. He taught us to “believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.”<sup>33</sup> That precious and powerful gift is again available to children of God.

Paul referred to the three degrees of postmortal glory when he taught that “there is one glory of the sun, . . . another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.”<sup>34</sup> That glimpse into postmortal glory has been clarified by another scriptural witness. The Lord revealed that “the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

“And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

“And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one.”<sup>35</sup>

The highest of these kingdoms, the celestial, is reserved for those who obey the law of that kingdom:

“They who are not sanctified through the law . . . of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

“For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.”<sup>36</sup>

These three degrees of glory relate to postmortal life. They relate to the immortality of the human soul. That gift of immortality became a reality because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>37</sup> This important word—*atonement*—in any of its forms, is mentioned only *once* in the King James Version of the New Testament!<sup>38</sup> In the Book of Mormon it appears 39 times!<sup>39</sup>

John, writing in the New Testament’s book of Revelation, foresaw “another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>40</sup> One specific angel held keys of

responsibility for the Book of Mormon.<sup>41</sup> That was the angel Moroni! These examples are but a few of many biblical doctrines that are clarified by scriptures of the Restoration.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ**

Willingly we share scriptures of the Restoration with people across the world. The Book of Mormon records the personal ministry of the resurrected Lord to people of ancient America. Ponder these everlasting truths that He proclaimed:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. . . .

“ . . . The scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. . . .

“I am the light and the life of the world.”

The Savior continued:

“Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. . . .

“ . . . I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. . . . I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me . . . and be saved.”<sup>43</sup>

Those declarations of the Lord summarize who He really is and who He really wants us to be. He wants us to come unto Him and, in due course, be embraced gloriously in His loving arms.

I express my profound gratitude for scriptural witnesses. I have seen the mighty change that comes to people who apply the Lord’s teachings in their lives. Such transformation leads to the blessing of eternal life.<sup>44</sup>

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His gospel has been restored in these latter days. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet at this time. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. The full title is the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.
2. The Restoration was foreseen by Peter (see Acts 3:19–21), John (see Revelation 14:6–8), and Paul (see Ephesians 1:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith was instructed that, in this last dispensation, there is to be a “restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began” (D&C 27:6).
3. Articles of Faith 1:8.
4. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “witness,” 1439.
5. 2 Corinthians 13:1. Similar statements appear in Matthew 18:16 and Ether 5:4.
6. Mormon 7:9.
7. To the prophet of this present dispensation, the Lord declared, “This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).
8. See Alma 13:15; 3 Nephi 24:8–10.
9. See 2 Nephi 5:16; Jacob 1:17; 2:2, 11; Mosiah 2:5–7.
10. See Mosiah 13:16–19; 18:23.
11. See 2 Nephi 6:2; Mosiah 18:18; Alma 6:1; 13:1–3, 6–11; 3 Nephi 18:5; Moroni 3:1–4.
12. The Book of Mormon is to “make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved” (1 Nephi 13:40).
13. See 1 Nephi 13:40.
14. See 1 Nephi 13:28–29.
15. See 1 Nephi 13:40.
16. 2 Nephi 29:6.
17. 2 Nephi 29:7–8.
18. Because He is Creator of “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33), additional scriptures from other locations are a distinct possibility.
19. See Luke 2:4–6.



20. 3 Nephi 1:13.
  21. Doctrine and Covenants 84:54, 57.
  22. See Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
  23. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31–35.
  24. See 2 Nephi 3:12; Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 8.
  25. Isaiah 29:4.
  26. Isaiah foresaw that God would do “a marvellous work and a wonder” in the latter days (Isaiah 29:14). Those words of Isaiah echoed in the ears of inhabitants of ancient America: “The Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men” (2 Nephi 25:17). That marvelous work would include the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration of the gospel. Isaiah was quoted frequently in the Book of Mormon. A study of those quotations may be tedious, but it is *not* repetitious. Of 433 verses of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, 234 differ from their biblical counterparts.
  27. Ezekiel 37:16–17.
  28. See 1 Nephi 11:13–20; Alma 7:10.
  29. See 3 Nephi 12–14.
  30. See Mosiah 3:7. A firsthand account of His suffering was given to His latter-day prophet (see D&C 19:16–19).
  31. The word *resurrection* appears in 40 verses of the King James Version of the Bible; it appears in 56 verses in the Book of Mormon. See also Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 238–41.
  32. Acts 19:2. See Acts 2:38 for the teaching of Peter regarding the need for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
  33. *History of the Church*, 5:499.
  34. 1 Corinthians 15:41.
  35. Doctrine and Covenants 76:96–98; see also 131:1.
  36. Doctrine and Covenants 88:21–22.
  37. See Mosiah 16:10; Alma 42:23; Mormon 6:21.
  38. See Romans 5:11.
  39. *Atonement*: 28 times; *atone* or *atoning*: 8 times; *atoneth*: 3 times. In several verses, the word *atonement* appears more than once (see 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:9; 42:23).
  40. Revelation 14:6.
  41. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; 128:20.
  42. The New Testament refers to “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). That doctrine is clarified in the Book of Mormon. It bears record of the resurrected Lord speaking to people of ancient America. There the Lord said, “Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (3 Nephi 15:21).
- A limited account of Paul’s knowledge of baptism for the dead appears in the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 15:29). Only in scriptures of the Restoration is that divine doctrine clarified (see D&C 124:29–30, 41; 128:1, 11–12, 16–18; 138:47–48).
43. 3 Nephi 9:15–16, 18, 20–22.
  44. See 3 Nephi 9:14; Doctrine and Covenants 30:8.
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- The choir sang “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

Elder Richard G. Hinckley offered the benediction.
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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A father-and-son choir from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Bountiful, Utah, provided the music. Stephen P. Shank directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a father-and-son choir

from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Bountiful, Utah, under the direction of Stephen P. Shank, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.”

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing “Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Elders Donald L. Hallstrom and L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder Walter F. González, sustained this morning as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings.”

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### **Raising the bar in high jumping**

I was privileged last month to be assigned to attend a seminar with the mission presidents from the North America West Area. Among the mission presidents in attendance was my son, Lee. He had been called to serve before I had completed my yearlong assignment in the Europe Central Area Presidency. It had

been three years since I had spent any time with my son, other than a few short visits while passing through his area on other assignments.

After a get-acquainted dinner with all of the mission presidents and their wives, Lee and I, with our wives, went to my hotel room for a visit. Our conversation, of course, centered on missionary work. Lee explained what had happened

to his missionaries since President Hinckley asked us to raise the bar on qualifications for missionary service. He reported a decided improvement in the preparation of the missionaries arriving in the mission field. The conversation led us to recall an experience Lee and I had while he was attending high school.

Lee was a member of his high school track team—he both sprinted and high-jumped. During the 1968 Summer Olympic Games held in Mexico City, the world became enamored with a little-known high jumper named Dick Fosbury. He had experimented with a new high-jumping technique that involved sprinting diagonally toward the bar, then curving and leaping backward over the bar. It came to be called the Fosbury flop.

Like many others, Lee was intrigued by this new technique, but until the new school year started, he didn't have a place to practice it. I came home one evening to find him practicing the Fosbury flop in our basement. He had set up two make-shift standards by stacking chairs, and he was jumping over a broomstick set on the chairs, using a sofa to cushion his landing. It was very clear to me that the sofa would not hold up under such treatment, so I called a halt to his indoor high-jumping. Instead, I invited him to go with me to a sporting goods store, where we purchased some foam padding to use for landing and high-jumping standards so he could move the activity out of doors.

After experimenting with the Fosbury flop, Lee decided to return to the western-roll technique that he had used previously. Still, through the end of the summer into the fall, he practiced high-jumping for many hours in our backyard.

One evening as I returned home from work, I found Lee practicing his jumping. I asked, "How high is the bar?"

He said, "Five feet, eight inches."

"Why that height?"

He answered, "You must clear that height to qualify for the state track meet."

"How are you doing?" I asked.

"I can clear it every time. I haven't missed."

My reply: "Let's raise the bar and see how well you do then."

He replied, "Then I might miss."

I queried, "If you don't raise the bar, how will you ever know your potential?"

So we started moving the bar up to five feet, ten inches; then to six feet; and so on, as he sought to improve. Lee became a better high jumper because he was not content with just clearing the minimum standard. He learned that even if it meant missing, he wanted to keep raising the bar to become the best high jumper he was capable of becoming.

### **Raising the bar for missionaries**

Remembering this experience with my son brought to mind the message Elder M. Russell Ballard gave at the priesthood session of the October 2002 general conference, in which he challenged the young men of the Church to become the greatest generation of missionaries. He announced that the bar for the minimum standard of missionary service had been raised. He instructed the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to prepare themselves more vigorously to reach this new and higher minimum standard. He also gave instructions to fathers, bishops, and stake presidents about helping young men prepare to serve full-time missions. (In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 49–53; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 46–49.)

In his concluding remarks at that priesthood session, President Hinckley commented on Elder Ballard's talk. He said:

"Elder Ballard has spoken to you concerning missionaries. I wish to endorse what he said. I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge he has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as

ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 57).

Soon afterward, in a letter dated December 11, 2002, the First Presidency instructed Church leaders about the principles of eligibility for full-time missionary service. The instructions stated:

“Full-time missionary service is a privilege for those who are called through inspiration by the President of the Church. Bishops and stake presidents have the serious responsibility to identify worthy, qualified members who are spiritually, physically, and emotionally prepared for this sacred service and who can be recommended without reservation. Those individuals not able to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of full-time missionary work are honorably excused and should not be recommended. They may be called to serve in other rewarding capacities.”

### **Set sights far above minimum standards**

The bar was raised by the leaders of the Church, and now the minimum standard for participating in missionary work is absolute moral worthiness, physical health and strength, and intellectual, social, and emotional development. In every high-jumping competition there is a minimum height at which the competition starts. The high jumper cannot ask to start at a lower height. In the same way, you should not expect the standards to be lowered to allow you to serve a mission. If you want to be a missionary, you must be able to clear the minimum standards.

But once you reach those minimum standards, shouldn't you try to keep raising the bar? I ask you the same question I asked my son many years ago, “If you don't raise the bar, how will you ever know your potential?” My challenge to you is to recognize that a minimum standard exists—and you must reach it to

serve as a full-time missionary—but don't stop there. The greatest generation of missionaries will not reach its full potential unless it keeps raising the bar.

### **Improving physical preparation**

Let me offer a few suggestions about what each of you can do to raise the bar even higher as you prepare for missionary service.

The minimum physical standard for full-time missionary service refers to a potential missionary's physical health and strength. For example, one of the questions on the missionary recommendation forms asks if you “can work 12 to 15 hours per day, walk 6 to 8 miles per day, ride a bicycle 10 to 15 miles per day, and climb stairs daily.” Missionary work is hard, and full-time missionaries must be in good physical condition to serve. Raising the bar to a higher physical standard could involve further physical conditioning.

It also could include improving your physical appearance. A missionary is expected to dress a certain way, projecting a clean-cut appearance that includes an appropriate haircut; being clean shaven; and wearing a clean white shirt, a tie, and a well-pressed suit—all the way down to a good shoe shine. Start now to prepare for a full-time mission by adopting the appearance of a full-time missionary.

### **Improving intellectual preparation**

Raise the bar higher in your intellectual preparation. Take your schooling seriously. It is important to be able to read, speak, and write with intelligence. Expand your knowledge of the world around you by reading good books. Learn how to study. Then apply your improved study habits to learning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Consistently and regularly read from the Book of Mormon.

Don't neglect the opportunity of attending seminary and institute classes.

Participate and gain all you can from the scriptures taught in these great religious-education settings. They will prepare you to present the message of the restored gospel to those you have opportunity to meet. Study from *Preach My Gospel*, emphasizing the basic doctrines taught in chapter 3. Each time you are asked to speak in church or teach a family home evening lesson, focus on these basic doctrines.

In Doctrine and Covenants 11:21 the Lord tells us, “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.” The pre-missionary age is an ideal time to set the bar higher as you prepare your mind by acquiring the light and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Improving emotional preparation**

You must recognize that missionary service is emotionally demanding. Your support system is going to be withdrawn from you as you leave home and go out into the world. Many of the ways you use now to cope with emotional stress—like hanging out with friends, going off by yourself, playing video games, or listening to music—are not allowed by the rules of missionary conduct. There will be days of rejection and disappointment. Learn now about your emotional limits, and learn how to control your emotions under the circumstances you will face as a missionary. By doing this, you raise the bar to greater heights and, in effect, fortify yourself against emotional challenges during your missionary service.

### **Improving social preparation**

While President Hinckley did not mention this, prospective missionaries also must be prepared with the social

skills needed to serve a mission. More and more, young people are isolating themselves from others by playing video games; wearing headphones; and interacting through cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, and so on instead of in person. Much of missionary work involves relating face-to-face with people, and unless you set the bar higher in the development of your social skills, you will find yourself underprepared. Let me offer a simple suggestion: get a job that involves interacting with people. As an increased motivation, set a goal to earn enough money from your part- or full-time work to pay for at least a significant part of your mission. I promise great blessings—social, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual blessings—to every young man who pays for a significant part of his mission.

### **The importance of personal worthiness**

Personal worthiness is the minimum spiritual standard for serving a mission. This means that you are worthy in every way to make and to keep sacred temple covenants. Do not disqualify yourself from the blessings bestowed on those who serve in this very special calling by committing acts of transgression which will make you ineligible to serve.

Please recognize that while your teaching as a missionary may be persuasive, only the Spirit converts. *Preach My Gospel* gives a good description of what missionary work is all about. It states:

“As an authorized representative of Jesus Christ, you can teach people with power and authority that ‘redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah,’ and that no one ‘can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah’ (2 Nephi 2:6, 8)” ([2004], 2).

We remind you that where much is given, much is required. We issue the call again for all spiritually, physically, and

emotionally qualified young men to come forth prepared to become missionaries in the Church of Jesus Christ. Be certain that you easily clear the minimum standards for service as a missionary and that you are continually raising the bar. Prepare yourself to be more effective in this great calling.

May God bless you that this will be your desire as you leave this priesthood session of general conference and start now to prepare yourself for the glorious service which is ahead of you as a missionary of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Donald L. Hallstrom

### A son's embarrassing procrastination

When our oldest child (who is now a father of three and sits in this priesthood congregation this evening) was 11 years of age, he was given an assignment, along with the other sixth graders of his school, to submit his favorite family recipe. As its contribution to a large spring fair, the sixth grade was producing a cookbook that would be distributed throughout the community. When the teacher announced the project and a deadline of a week from Friday, our son Brett immediately concluded there was plenty of time later to get the job done and dismissed it from his mind. Early the next week, when the teacher reminded the students of the Friday deadline, Brett decided he could easily complete the required task on Thursday night and until then he could occupy himself with other more enjoyable matters.

On the appointed Friday morning, the teacher directed the students to pass their recipes to the front of the class. Brett's procrastination had caused him to forget the assignment and be completely unprepared. Flustered, he turned to a fellow student seated nearby and confessed his problem. Trying to be helpful, the classmate said, "I brought an extra recipe. If you want, use one of mine." Brett quickly grabbed the recipe, wrote his name on it, and turned it in, feeling he had escaped any consequences related to his lack of preparation.

One evening several weeks later, I arrived home from work to freshen up before going to my evening Church meetings. A few days prior, I had been called as a stake president after serving several years as a bishop. We were somewhat known in our community as members of the Church who tried to live the tenets of our religion. "There's something you need to see," my wife, Diane, said as I walked through the door. She handed me a bound book with a page marked. Glancing at the cover, titled *Noelani School's Favorites—1985*, I turned to the identified page and read, "Hallstrom Family, Favorite Recipe—Bacardi Rum Cake."

### Do not procrastinate spiritual matters

Many of us place ourselves in circumstances far more consequential than embarrassment because of our procrastination to become fully converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what is right, but we delay full spiritual involvement because of laziness, fear, rationalization, or lack of faith. We convince ourselves that "someday I'm going to do it." However, for many, "someday" never comes, and even for others who eventually do make a change, there is an irretrievable loss of progress and surely regression.

As a partial self-appraisal of our spiritual-procrastination standing, what is our attitude when we attend the meetings of the Church? Is it to learn "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118), which

seamlessly translates what we learn into what we do? Or do we have an “I’ve heard it all before” mentality that immediately blocks the Spirit’s access to our minds and our hearts and enables procrastination to become a major part of our character?

Of a prominent early investigator of the restored Church who covenanted that he would obey any command that the Lord would give him, it was said, “And he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him; . . . and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word” (D&C 40:2). Contrast that with the Lord’s clear statement, “He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple” (D&C 41:5).

Alma, with deep emotion, declared, “And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance” (Alma 13:27).

Amulek, Alma’s friend and teaching companion, amplified the message by proclaiming:

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

“And now, . . . as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end” (Alma 34:32–33).

### **The lesson of the sloth**

When I was the age of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, it seemed every Saturday morning for months I was awakened to the sound of my father doing yard work outside my bedroom window. (It took me a long time to figure out why he always started his work under my window.) After a period of trying to ignore the noise, I would get up and join my

father in my weekly responsibility to help him maintain the yard surrounding our home.

Perhaps after a few mornings of my not arising very quickly, or due to other similar events when his repeated encouragement was needed before I acted, one day my father sat with me and showed me a large photograph of a sloth, an animal known for its laziness. Then he opened the Doctrine and Covenants and had me read, “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a *slothful* and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward” (D&C 58:26; italics added). Since that day, that image and its lesson have been valuable assets in my life.

### **Do it now**

One of President Spencer W. Kimball’s effective encouragements was the succinct “Do It.” He later expanded this to “Do It Now” to pointedly teach the need for timeliness.

President Kimball also taught the profound principle that procrastination leads to the loss of exaltation. He said:

“One of the most serious human defects in all ages is procrastination, an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities *now*. . . . Many have allowed themselves to be diverted and have become . . . addicts to mental and spiritual indolence and to the pursuit of worldly pleasure” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 7).

### **Easy Street is a dead end**

Many of us want the simple way—the process that will not require serious work and sacrifice. Well, I once thought I found it. Driving in the back of a verdant valley above the city of Honolulu, I looked up, and there it was—*Easy Street!* As I was dreaming of the life-changing



benefits of my discovery, I took out my camera to record the blissful moment. As I looked through the viewfinder, however, my focus literally and figuratively became clear. A large yellow sign returned me to reality—Easy Street was a dead end!

Procrastination may seem the easy way, as it momentarily removes the effort required to accomplish something of value. Ironically, in time, procrastination produces a heavy burden laced with guilt and a hollow lack of satisfaction. Temporal and, even more importantly, spiritual goals will not be achieved by procrastination.

### **Now is the time**

*Now is the time* to exercise our faith. *Now is the time* to commit to righteousness. *Now is the time* to do whatever is required to resolve our undesired circumstances. *Now is the time* to reconcile with God through the merciful process of change afforded us by the Redeemer of mankind.

We appeal:

- To anyone who has received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has not been baptized and confirmed.

- To any holder of the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood who, either by transgression or just doing nothing, is living in opposition to a sacred oath and covenant (see D&C 84:33–39).

- To any endowed member of the Church who does not currently qualify for a temple recommend.

- To any member who has been offended by the actions of another and has in any manner disassociated himself or herself from the Church.

- To anyone who is living a duplicitous life and is burdened by unresolved sin.

It is my witness that you and all of us can change, and it can be now. It may not be easy, but our afflictions can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38). I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder L. Whitney Clayton**

### **Fishermen’s traps**

Walking down a beach in the Caribbean one sunny morning some years ago, my wife and I saw several small fishing boats that had been pulled up onto the sand. When we stopped to look at the boats, I learned something about fishing that I have never forgotten. Instead of using nets, lines, or hooks, the local fishermen used simple traps made of wire mesh. Each trap was shaped like a box. The fishermen cut vertical openings about eight inches long on each side of the trap and then bent the cut wires inward, creating narrow slots through which fish could enter.

You can probably guess how a trap worked. The fishermen took a baited trap out to sea and lowered it to the bottom. When a dinner-sized fish came near the trap and sensed the bait, it would find an opening on the side of the trap and swim in, just squeezing between the cut wires. Then, when a trapped fish tried to swim out, it would discover that it was one thing to squeeze past the cut wires to get into the trap, but it was an entirely different thing to swim against those sharp ends to get out—it was caught. When the fishermen returned, they hauled the trap out of the water, and the trapped fish soon became a fresh seafood dinner.



### **David succumbs to the adversary's trap**

There's an account in the Old Testament about someone who fell prey to a similar trap. That man was mighty King David, and what happened is one of the saddest stories in the scriptures.

"And it came to pass . . . at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they [fought against Ammon]. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

"And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (2 Samuel 11:1–2).

David learned the woman's name was Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, a soldier, was away fighting the Ammonites with the rest of the army, where David, their king, should have been. David had Bathsheba brought to the palace. They committed adultery, she became pregnant, and David began to fear that their adultery would be discovered. Hoping to cover his sin, David ordered that Uriah be sent back to Jerusalem. Uriah returned, but he refused on principle to go to his home to visit Bathsheba. David then arranged for Uriah to be slain in battle (see 2 Samuel 11:3–17). This series of dreadful decisions brought death to Uriah and misery to David, Bathsheba, and eventually the entire kingdom. With rich understatement, the Bible says, "The thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Do you see how David got caught in this trap? He was on a rooftop courtyard of his palace, and looking below in a neighboring yard, he saw something he never should have seen. That was the adversary's bait. Modesty, chastity, and good judgment required that David turn away immediately and not watch, but he didn't do either thing. Instead, he allowed his mind to turn to forbidden fantasies,

those thoughts led to actions, and things quickly spiraled downward from bad to worse to fatal. David was trapped, and for him the consequences were eternal.

### **The trap of pornography**

There's a spiritual snare today called pornography, and many, allured by its provocative messages, enter this deadly trap. Like any trap, it is easy to enter but difficult to escape. Some rationalize that they can casually view pornography without suffering its adverse effects. They say initially, "This isn't so bad," or, "Who cares? It won't make any difference," or, "I'm just curious." But they are mistaken. The Lord has warned, "And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out" (D&C 42:23). That's exactly what happened to David: he looked at Bathsheba, lusted after her, and lost the Spirit. How different the rest of David's life might have been if he had just looked away.

Along with losing the Spirit, pornography users also lose perspective and proportion. Like King David, they try to conceal their sin, forgetting that nothing is hidden from the Lord (see 2 Nephi 27:27). Real consequences start to accumulate as self-respect ebbs away, sweet relationships sour, marriages wither, and innocent victims begin to pile up. Finding that what they have been viewing no longer satisfies, they experiment with more extreme images. They slowly grow addicted even if they don't know it or they deny it, and like David's, their behavior deteriorates as their moral standards disintegrate.

### **Traps of popular culture**

As popular culture across the world degenerates, sleaze increasingly saturates the media, entertainment, advertising,

and the Internet. But popularity according to the world's prevailing norms is a very perilous scale to use to measure what's right or even what's not dangerous. A movie or television show may be well known and well liked by millions of viewers and nevertheless portray images and conduct that are pornographic. If something in a movie "isn't too bad," that automatically means that it isn't too good either. Thus, the fact that others watch movies or open Web sites that aren't appropriate is no excuse for us. Priesthood holders' lives should emulate the standards of the Savior and His Church, not the standards of the world.

### **Our quest for purity**

The Savior taught, "And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (3 Nephi 12:8). The promises of the gospel are uplifting and ennobling, even exalting. We receive those promises by covenants which are conditioned on our living lives of purity and morality. When we live right and seek to purify our hearts, we draw closer to God and the Spirit. The condition of our heart determines how much evidence of divinity we see in the world now and qualifies us for the eventual realization of the promise that the pure "shall see God." Ours is a quest for purity. Thus, the Apostle John wrote:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2–3).

### **Repentance can free us from traps**

If you are already caught in the pornography trap, now is the time to free yourself with the help of the Savior. There is a way out, but you will need His help to escape. Your complete recovery will depend upon your complete repentance. Go to your bishop immediately. Seek his inspired guidance. He will help you put in place a plan of repentance that will restore your self-esteem and bring the Spirit back into your life. The healing power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches all afflictions, even this one. If you will turn to the Savior with all your heart and follow the counsel of your bishop, you will find the healing you need. The Savior will help you find the strength to resist temptation and the power to overcome addiction. As Moroni taught:

"Come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. . . .

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:30, 32).

May God bless our genuine efforts to be pure of heart and mind, that "virtue [may] garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45). I testify of the redeeming love of the Savior and of the purifying power of His Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Walter F. González

### Response to an earthquake in Peru

When President James E. Faust informed my wife and me that we would be transferred to Lima, Peru, we had no clue that on August 15, 2007, only a few days after our arrival, we would witness a devastating earthquake. More than 52,000 houses were destroyed by its sheer strength. Worse yet, it left more than 500 dead. Nine of them were members of the Church. Members in the Ica and Pisco stakes and the Cañete and Chinchá districts suffered the brunt of the tremor's aftermath.

The Church provided immediate relief to its members and those of other faiths. The morning after the quake, our members in the disaster area were receiving food and clothing, and before noon the Church was donating humanitarian aid to the nation's civil defense. Many members who were left homeless were sheltered in our meetinghouses. Despite how unexpected the catastrophe was, the priesthood organization functioned very well to bring relief to those less fortunate.

Stake and district presidents, along with bishops, went out to help their members only minutes after the earthquake. The terrible situation into which these priesthood leaders went is worth highlighting: it was nighttime; the lights were out; destruction abounded; and the earth would not stop shaking. These magnificent priesthood leaders left their families secured and walked out into the darkness, among people who wept, surrounded by destroyed houses. Thus our leaders went out during the night and the following days, facing frequent, strong aftershocks and a tsunami warning. They searched among the rubble, in the midst of commotion, risking their own lives to get to all the members. A bishop declared, "Without as much as a second thought, I ran in search of my Church brothers and sis-

ters and leaders." He found them. That's how he spent most of the night.

What motivated these leaders to go out and help others, even to the risking of their own lives? Certainly it was their great faith in the Savior and His Church. It was their understanding of their calling as leaders in the priesthood. It was gospel principles engraved in their lives before the earthquake, not during the crisis—engraved not with ink but with fire by the Spirit in the fleshy tablets of their hearts (see 2 Corinthians 3:3).

The possibility of an earthquake was always there. When or how it would hit, no one knew. When it came, it was devastating. But under the direction of the priesthood, the moment's challenge was faced. In many cases, when members were unable, the Lord made up the difference. Some members tell of seeing men in white helping to save their lives. Others heard guiding voices. Years of Church service were a preparatory school to becoming organized and helping one another.

### Prepare for spiritual earthquakes

The same happens in our lives. We don't know when or how earthquakes will hit us. They likely won't be literal shakings of the earth, as happened in Peru, but rather quakes of temptations, sin, or trials, such as unemployment or serious sickness. Today is the time to prepare for when that type of quake comes. Today is the time to prepare—not during the crisis. What are we doing today to engraven in our souls the gospel principles that will uphold us in times of adversity?

For example, what did Joseph who was sold into Egypt plant in his soul to reply, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) when avoiding pressure from Potiphar's wife to break the law of chastity?

What had Nephi planted previously in his soul so that when faced with a commandment from God he was able to answer, “I will go and do . . . , for I know”? (1 Nephi 3:7).

What these great leaders did was allow the Spirit to write gospel principles in their souls. This writing doesn’t happen overnight. Profoundly exposing our souls to the principles of righteousness will make a difference in our preparation for spiritual quakes. This exposure can be enhanced by pondering and by cutting off bad influences.

### **Study scriptures, teachings of prophets**

Eternal principles will take root in us as we take time not only to read the teachings of the prophets and the scriptures but also to ponder them in the spirit of prayer. Nephi, for example, took time to sit and ponder. By so doing, he was exposed to doctrinal pearls (see 1 Nephi 11:1). Take the time to do what the Lord has directed us to do: “Treasure these things up in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds” (D&C 43:34). In a world that increasingly demands more of our time, it is essential that we take time to ponder in our homes, so that we may understand divine doctrine and its principles. As the Savior said, “Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon [these] things . . . that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow” (3 Nephi 17:3). By so doing, our exposure to doctrine and its principles will continue to be enhanced if we also hearken to the Lord’s admonition about bad influences.

### **Remove bad influences**

It is very likely that there are people who pressure us to act or think in a way such that future quakes will find us inadequately prepared. Regarding this, the Savior gave us a key which will help us

better prepare today for the coming vicissitudes. He said, “Therefore, if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; or if thy brother offend thee and confess not and forsake not, he shall be cut off” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:40).

Fortunately the Savior Himself taught the meaning of cutting off our hand. It’s not about self-mutilation but rather about removing from our lives today those influences that keep us from preparing for tomorrow’s earthquakes. If I have friends who are bad influences for me, the advice is clear: “It is better for thee to enter into life without thy brother, than for thee and thy brother to be cast into hell” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:41). The Lord applied this same principle when warning Nephi to depart from his brethren who became a dangerous influence (see 2 Nephi 5:5).

It follows that such cutting off refers not only to friends but to every bad influence, such as inappropriate television shows, Internet sites, movies, literature, games, or music. Engraving in our souls this principle will help us to resist the temptation to yield to any bad influence.

### **Grow deep gospel roots**

Enhancing our exposure to doctrine and its principles will make us priesthood holders with deep-rooted gospel values. We will be better prepared to face the tremors that will come without warning, when least expected. As priesthood holders, we will feel the promise made to the prophet Jeremiah extended to us: “For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land” (Jeremiah 1:18).

Then we’ll be able to express our gratitude as did Sister Linda Cruzado in Ica. After spending all night exposed to the elements, she wrote, “At daybreak the next day, our Heavenly Father showed His love through a warm sun that came

up very early, and at night He comforted us with a very starry night.”

Today is our time to be valiant and decide to give our souls a serious, profound exposure to our Savior’s teachings. I know that He lives, and after we do all we can, He will make up the difference. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, we will hear from President Henry B. Eyring, who was sustained this morning as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Eyring’s remarks, President Hinckley has asked that I address you.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## **President Henry B. Eyring**

### **God helps the faithful priesthood holder**

Tonight my thoughts are about a boy somewhere in the world. He is wondering if he can do what being a priesthood holder will require of him. I had that worry when I was about 13 or 14.

I had grown up in the mission field where there was only a tiny branch, which met in my home. Then my family moved to where there were stakes and large wards and chapels and quorums of boys who all seemed to know so much more than I did about what priesthood holders do. They had in that ward a complicated pattern for passing the sacrament. I felt almost certain that I would make a mistake when my turn to pass or prepare the sacrament came.

In my fear and desperation, I remember going outside the chapel to be alone. I was worried. I prayed for help and for some assurance that I would not fail in serving God in His priesthood.

It is now many years later. I have held the Melchizedek Priesthood for more than 50 years. But in the last few days I have prayed with that same pleading for help and assurance that I will not fail in the call which has come to me to serve

in the First Presidency. Others seem so much more able to serve and so much better prepared. But as I prayed this time, I think I could feel an answer that was probably sent to me outside the Yalecrest Ward chapel long ago. It is the same answer you can expect to get when you face a call to serve in the priesthood which seems beyond you.

### **Heavenly messages to help and guide you**

The message may come in words to your mind or in a feeling or both. But it will include at least three things to give you assurance and guidance in what you must do in this seemingly overwhelming calling.

#### *Recollection of God’s help in times past*

First, the assurance will come from a memory of times Heavenly Father has helped you through dangers and difficulties. That’s happened to me in the last few days.

When I was young and still living in New Jersey, a large crowd of angry people gathered in front of our house. My mother went out to meet them, standing alone in this crowd of people who looked

very dangerous to me. I couldn't hear what she said, but after a few minutes they went away peacefully. I still remember that I had seen a miracle.

From when I was older, I have a more recent memory of a crowd of angry people I was called by the First Presidency to face who suddenly and inexplicably were touched by a spirit of calm and reconciliation.

Another time I was sent to speak to leaders of churches in the United States and ministers of those churches who had met in Minneapolis to deal with the problem of competition among churches.

When I arrived, I found that I was assigned to be a speaker. My subject was to be: Why there was a need for a restoration of the true Church through Joseph Smith. I was a last-minute substitute for Elder Neal A. Maxwell.

When I arrived in the city the night before the meetings and looked at the program, I called President Hinckley. I told him that the meetings were to last three days, that many talks were to be given at the same time, that the crowd could choose which one to attend. I told him that I thought if I told the truth, I feared that no one would come to my second session and that I might be coming home very quickly. I asked him what he thought I should do. He said, "Use your best judgment."

I prayed through the night. Somewhere near dawn, I was sure I was to say about the Restoration not, "This is what we believe happened to Joseph Smith and why we believe it happened," but, "This is what happened to Joseph Smith, and this is why the Lord did it." In the nighttime I was given no assurance of the outcome, just a clear direction—go forward.

To my amazement, after my talk the ministers lined up to speak to me. Every one of them, one after another coming to me, told essentially the same story. Each of them had met a member of the

Church somewhere in their lives that they admired. Many of them said that they lived in a community where the stake president had come to the aid of not just his members but of the community in a disaster. They asked if I could take back their greeting and their thanks to people I not only didn't know but had no hope of ever meeting.

By the end of the three days of meetings, larger and larger crowds were coming to hear the message of the restoration of the gospel and the true Church of Jesus Christ not because they believed the message but because they had seen goodness in people's lives—the fruits of that restoration.

As I have prayed in these last few nights, those and other memories flooded back with an assurance something like this: "Haven't I always looked after you? Think of the times I have led you beside the still waters. Remember the times I have set a table before you in the presence of your enemies. Remember, and fear no evil." (See Psalm 23.)

So to the new deacons: remember. He has always taken care of you from your childhood. To the new quorum presidents: remember. To you fathers with children who are a challenge to you: remember, and have no fear. What is impossible for you is possible with God's help in His service. And even when you were very small and in the years since, He has with His power and His Spirit gone before your face and been on your left hand and on your right hand when you went in His service (see D&C 84:88). You can receive assurance that God will watch over you if you pray for it in faith. I know that.

*Forget yourself and pray for those you serve*

The second part of the message you will receive as you pray for help in facing a hard assignment came to me very early Friday morning. I had prayed, as you will,



about overwhelming inadequacies. The answer was very clear and very direct and really a rebuke as I prayed. "Forget yourself; start praying about the people you are to serve." That does wonders, I can testify, to bring the Holy Ghost.

But be prepared to lose track of time as you pray. You will feel love for the people you are to serve. You will feel their needs, their hopes, their hurts, and those of their families. And as you pray, the circle will grow wider than you would imagine, to perhaps people not in your quorum or your family but to those they love across the world. When you forget yourself to pray for the circle of others, your service will be extended in your heart. It will change not only your service but your heart. That is because the Father and His Beloved Son, whom you are called to serve, know and love so many people your service will touch, however limited to a few it may seem to be to you.

### *Go to work*

The third and final message you can watch for when you pray for help in a hard priesthood assignment is this one—I got this one as well—go to work. Priesthood power is given you to bless others. And that always takes moving out and doing something, usually something hard to do. So you can expect, in addition to assurance of God's help and the command to forget yourself, the clear prompting by the Holy Ghost to go and do something which will bless someone's life. That may be as obvious as going prayerfully to visit a person or a family or a quorum member whom you are assigned to serve. For a father it may be to correct one of his children.

Whether what you do is to correct or to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will do it better if you remember what success will be. You are to help Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, make eternal life possible for those you serve.

To do that, the Spirit must take a testimony down into their hearts. And that testimony has to lead them to choose to keep the commandments of God, whatever storms and temptations may come.

As you keep that in mind, the Spirit will guide you in teaching and correcting with priesthood power. You will keep yourself clean so that you will teach with the Spirit. You will pray for the Spirit to tell you when to correct and how to correct and how to show an increase of love (see D&C 121:43–44). Whatever you do in your priesthood service can be guided and measured by how well it could or did help the person take a testimony of the truth down into his or her life and heart enough for the Atonement to work and keep working.

### **It will never be easy**

You can get assurance in your service. You can forget yourself and begin to pray for and love those you are to serve. And you can choose what to do and measure success by the degree to which it changes the hearts of the people you serve.

But it is never going to be easy for you or for those you serve. There will always be pain in service and in the repentance necessary to bring the power of the Atonement to change hearts. That is in the nature of what you are called to do. Think of the Savior, whose service you are in. At what point in His mortal life can you see an instance when it was easy for Him? Did He ask easy things of His disciples then? Then why should it ever be easy in His service or for His disciples?

The reason for that is suggested by the phrase "a broken heart," about which you have been taught so well today. The scriptures sometimes speak of people's hearts being softened, but more often the words describing the state we seek for ourselves and for those we serve are a "broken heart." This may help us accept that our call to serve and the need for the

repentance we need and seek will not be easy. And it helps us understand better why testimony needs to go down into the hearts of our people. Faith that Jesus Christ atoned for their sins has to go down into the heart—a broken heart.

### **Invite the Spirit into your life**

Now, tonight let us decide together what we are going to do. All of us, whatever our callings may be, face tasks that are beyond our own powers. I do and you do. That's true from the simple fact that success is to get testimony down into the hearts of people. We can't make that happen. Even God won't force that on anyone.

So success requires people we serve to choose to accept the testimony of the Spirit into their hearts. The Spirit is ready. But many people aren't ready to invite the Spirit. Our task, which *is* in our power, is to invite the Spirit into our lives so that people we serve will want to have the fruits of the Spirit in their lives—the fruits that they can see in ours.

### **Control what you see and what you say**

This leads me to some suggestions of what we can choose to do or not to do. Some things we can do invite the Spirit. Some force the Spirit to withdraw. You know that from your own experience.

No priesthood holder who wants to succeed will be careless about where his eyes may go. Choosing to look at images which incite lust will cause the Spirit to withdraw. You have been warned by Elder Clayton as well as you may ever be warned about the dangers of the Internet and the media in putting pornographic images before us. But immodesty is now so common that everyday life requires discipline—a conscious choice not to linger watching whatever might create in us feelings which would repel the Spirit.

The same care is required in what we say. We cannot hope to speak for the Lord unless we are careful with our speech. Vulgarity and profanity offend the Spirit. Just as immodesty seems to be more common, so does vulgar and profane language. It used to be that only in certain places and with certain groups would we hear the name of the Lord taken in vain or hear vulgar words and crude humor. Now it seems to be everywhere and, for many, socially acceptable, where once it was not.

You can decide—and you must—to change what you say even when you can't control what others say. But I know from my own experience that even in such a terrible situation you can count on God's help. Years ago I was an air force officer serving for two years in an office with a marine colonel, an army colonel, and a grizzled navy commander. They had learned to speak in war and in peace in a way which offended me, and I know it repelled the Holy Ghost. I was at the time serving as a district missionary, trying in the evenings to go out to find people and teach them under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It was very hard. I was only a lieutenant. They were very senior to me. I had no way of changing their language. But I prayed for help. I don't know how God did it, but in time their language changed. Slowly the profanity disappeared and then the vulgarity. Only when they drank liquor did it come back, but that was in the evenings, so I could excuse myself for missionary work.

### **Let virtue garnish thy thoughts**

You can have memories like that to sustain your faith when life puts you in difficult places. God helps the faithful priesthood holder who decides to see and say no evil, even in a wicked world. It will not be easy. It never is. But you can have the promise fulfilled for you as I know



that it can be for me: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45).

I testify that I know that you and I hold the priesthood of God and that He will answer our prayers with sweet assurance and with the help to serve Him better. I so promise you and testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### A royal priesthood

Brethren, as I gaze from one end to the other of this majestic building, I can only say, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is amazing to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world, others of you—holders of the priesthood of God—are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Nationalities vary and languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

We who hold the priesthood of God and honor it are among those who have been reserved for this special period in history. The Apostle Peter described us in the second chapter of 1 Peter, the ninth verse:

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

How might you and I qualify ourselves to be worthy of that designation, “a royal priesthood”? What are the characteristics of a true son of the living God? Tonight I would like us to consider just some of those very characteristics.

Times may change, circumstances may alter, but the marks of a true holder of the priesthood of God remain constant.

### The mark of vision

May I suggest that first of all every one of us develop *the mark of vision*. One writer said that the door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives. If we were to apply that maxim to our lives, we could say that we are the result of many small decisions. In effect, we are the product of our choices. We must develop the capacity to recall the past, to evaluate the present, and to look into the future in order to accomplish in our lives what the Lord would have us do.

You young men holding the Aaronic Priesthood should have the ability to envision the day when you will hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and then prepare yourselves as deacons, as teachers, as priests to receive the holy Melchizedek Priesthood of God. You have the responsibility to be ready, when you receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to respond to a call to serve as a missionary by accepting it and then fulfilling it. How I pray that every boy and every man will have *the mark of vision*.

### The mark of effort

The second principle I should like to emphasize as a characteristic of a true priesthood holder of God is *the mark of effort*. It is not enough to *want* to make the effort and to *say* we’ll make the effort. We must actually *make* the effort. It’s in

the *doing*, not just the *thinking*, that we accomplish our goals. If we constantly put our goals off, we will never see them fulfilled. Someone put it this way: Live only for tomorrow, and you will have a lot of empty yesterdays today.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Garry Bjorklund's determination*

In July of 1976, runner Garry Bjorklund was determined to qualify for the U.S. Olympic team's 10,000-meter race which would be run at the Montreal Olympics. Halfway through the grinding qualifying race, however, he lost his left shoe. What would you and I do if that were our experience? I suppose he could have given up and stopped. He could have blamed his bad luck and lost the opportunity of participating in the greatest race of his life, but this champion athlete did not do that. He ran on without his shoe. He knew that he would have to run faster than he had ever run in his life. He knew that his competitors now had an advantage that they did not have at the beginning of the race. Over that cinder track he ran, with one shoe on and one shoe off, finishing third and qualifying for the opportunity to participate in the race for the gold medal. His own running time was the best he had ever recorded. He put forth the effort necessary to achieve his goal.

As priesthood holders we may find that there are times in our lives when we falter, when we become weary or fatigued, or when we suffer a disappointment or a heartache. When that happens, I would hope that we will persevere with even greater effort toward our goal.

#### *Service as a young bishop*

At one time or another each of us will be called to fill a position in the Church, whether as a deacons quorum president, a teachers quorum secretary, a priesthood adviser, a class teacher, or a bishop. I could name more, but you get the picture.

I was just 22 years of age when I was called to be the bishop of the Sixth-Seventh Ward in Salt Lake City. With 1,080 members in the ward, a great deal of effort was required to make certain that every matter which needed to be handled was taken care of and every member of the ward felt included and watched over. Although the assignment was monumental in scope, I did not let it overwhelm me. I went to work, as did others, and did all I could to serve. Each of us can do the same, regardless of the calling or assignment.

Just last year I decided to see how many residential dwellings were still standing from the period between 1950 and 1955 when I served as bishop of that same area. I drove slowly around each of the blocks that once comprised the ward. I was surprised to observe in my search that of all the houses and apartment buildings where our 1,080 members had lived, only three dwellings were still standing. At one of those houses, the grass was overgrown, the trees unpruned, and I found no one was living there. Of the other two houses remaining, one was boarded up and unoccupied, and the other housed some sort of a modest business office.

I parked my car, turned off the ignition, and just sat there for a long while. I could picture in my mind each house, each apartment building, each member who lived there. While the homes and the buildings were gone, the memories were still very vivid concerning the families who resided in each dwelling. I thought of the words of the author James Barrie, who wrote that God gave us memories that we might have June roses in the December of our lives.<sup>2</sup> How grateful I was for the opportunity to serve in that assignment. Such can be the blessing of each of us if we put forth in our assignments our very best efforts.

*The mark of effort* is required of every priesthood holder.

### The mark of faith

The third principle I would like to emphasize is *the mark of faith*. We must have faith in ourselves, faith in the ability of our Heavenly Father to bless us and to guide us in our endeavors. Many years ago the writer of a psalm wrote a beautiful truth: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."<sup>3</sup> In other words, let us put our confidence in the ability of the Lord to guide us. Friendships, we know, may alter and change, but the Lord is constant.

Shakespeare, in his play *King Henry the Eighth*, taught this truth through Cardinal Wolsey—a man who enjoyed great prestige and pride because of his friendship with the king. When the friendship ended, Cardinal Wolsey was stripped of his authority, resulting in a loss of prominence and prestige. He was one who had gained everything and then lost all. In the sorrow of his heart, he spoke a real truth to his servant, Cromwell. He said:

O Cromwell, Cromwell!  
Had I but served my God with half the  
zeal  
I served my king, He would not in  
mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.<sup>4</sup>

I trust we shall have *the mark of faith* in every heart represented here tonight.

### The mark of virtue

I add to my list *the mark of virtue*. The Lord indicated that we should let virtue garnish our thoughts unceasingly.<sup>5</sup>

I recall a priesthood meeting held in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City when I was a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood. The President of the Church was speaking to the priesthood, and he made a statement I have never forgotten. He said, in essence, that men who commit sexual sin

or other sins do not do so in the twinkling of an eye. He emphasized that our actions are preceded by our thoughts, and when we commit sin, it is because we have first thought of committing that particular sin. Then the President declared that the way to avoid sin is to keep our thinking pure. The scripture tells us that as we think in our hearts, so are we.<sup>6</sup> We must have *the mark of virtue*.

If we are to be missionaries in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, we must be entitled to the companionship of His Holy Spirit, and we have been told precisely that His Spirit will not dwell in impure or unholy tabernacles.

### The mark of prayer

Finally, may I add *the mark of prayer*. The desire to communicate with one's Heavenly Father is a mark of a true priesthood holder of God.

As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."<sup>7</sup>

If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."<sup>8</sup> Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical weakness should consider that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

May we ever remember:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast. . . .

O thou by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way!  
The path of prayer thyself hast trod;  
Lord, teach us how to pray.<sup>9</sup>

As we cultivate *the mark of prayer*, we will receive the blessings our Heavenly Father has for us.

In conclusion, may we have *vision*. May we put forth *effort*. May we exemplify *faith* and *virtue* and ever make *prayer* a part of our lives. Then we shall indeed be a royal priesthood. This would be my prayer, my personal prayer this evening, and I offer it from my heart in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey, *The Music Man* (1957).
2. See Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335.
3. Psalm 118:8–9.
4. Act 3, scene 2, lines 455–58.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
6. See Proverbs 23:7.
7. Hebrews 11:6.
8. In William Neil, comp., *Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations* (1974), 144.
9. “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” *Hymns*, no. 145.

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to this father-and-son choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Our concluding speaker for this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “We Ever Pray for Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, an emeritus member of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Slow to anger

My beloved brethren, wherever you may be, here in the Conference Center or in a Church hall far away across the seas, what a remarkable thing it is that we can speak in this Conference Center and that you can hear what we say in a place as far away as Cape Town, South Africa.

I have chosen tonight to speak to the subject of anger. I realize that this is a little unusual, but I think it is timely.

A proverb in the Old Testament states, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

It is when we become angry that we get into trouble. The road rage that affects our highways is a hateful expression of anger. I dare say that most of the inmates of our prisons are there because

they did something when they were angry. In their wrath they swore, they lost control of themselves, and terrible things followed, even murder. There were moments of offense followed by years of regret.

### School thy feelings

This story is told concerning Charles W. Penrose. He was a convert to the Church, and he served as a missionary in England for some 11 years. When he was released, he sold some of his belongings to pay for his trip to Zion. Some of the Saints observing him said that he was taking Church property.

This angered him so, that he went upstairs in his residence, sat down, and wrote these verses, which are familiar to you. (See Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* [1988], 323.)

School thy feelings, O my brother;  
 Train thy warm, impulsive soul.  
 Do not its emotions smother,  
 But let wisdom's voice control.  
 School thy feelings; there is power  
 In the cool, collected mind.  
 Passion shatters reason's tower,  
 Makes the clearest vision blind. . . .

School thy feelings; condemnation  
 Never pass on friend or foe,  
 Though the tide of accusation  
 Like a flood of truth may flow.  
 Hear defense before deciding,  
 And a ray of light may gleam,  
 Showing thee what filth is hiding  
 Underneath the shallow stream.  
 School thy feelings, O my brother;  
 Train thy warm, impulsive soul.  
 Do not its emotions smother,  
 But let wisdom's voice control.  
 ["School Thy Feelings," *Hymns*, no. 336]

Many years ago I worked for one of our railroads. A switchman was aimlessly strolling about the platform one day. I asked him to move a car to another track. He exploded. He threw his cap on the pavement and jumped up and down on it, swearing like a drunken sailor. I stood there and laughed at his childish behavior. Noting my laughter, he began to laugh at his own foolishness. He then quietly climbed on the switch engine, drove it over to the empty car, and moved it to an empty track.

I thought of a verse from Ecclesiastes: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Anger is the mother of a whole brood of evil actions.

### **Divorce is often the fruit of anger**

I clipped from the morning newspaper a story that led off with this statement:

"More than half the Americans who might have celebrated their 25th wedding

anniversaries since 2000 were divorced, separated or widowed before reaching that milestone" (Sam Roberts, "Most U.S. Marriages Don't Get to Silver," *Deseret Morning News*, Sept. 20, 2007, p. A1).

Widowhood of course is beyond the control of the parties, but divorce and separation are not.

Divorce too often is the bitter fruit of anger. A man and a woman fall in love, as they say; each is wonderful in the sight of the other; they feel romantic affection for no one else; they stretch their finances to buy a diamond ring; they marry. All is bliss—that is, for a season. Then little inconsequential activities lead to criticism. Little flaws are magnified into great torrents of faultfinding; they fall apart, they separate, and then with rancor and bitterness they divorce.

This cycle is repeated again and again in thousands of cases. It is tragic, and as I have said, it is in most cases the bitter fruit of anger.

I think of my own marriage. My eternal companion passed away three and a half years ago. But we lived together for 67 years. I have no recollection of ever having a quarrel with her. She traveled with me and spoke on every continent, pleading for the exercise of restraint, kindness, and love.

### **Do not be easily offended**

A small publication that came to me some years ago carried the following:

Once a man who had been slandered by a newspaper came to Edward Everett asking what to do about it. Said Everett:

"Do nothing! Half the people who bought the paper never saw the article. Half of those who saw it, did not read it. Half of those who read it, did not understand it. Half of those who understood it, did not believe it. Half of those who believed it are of no account anyway" ("Sunny Side of the Street," Nov. 1989; see also Zig Ziglar, *Staying Up, Up, Up in a Down, Down World* [2000], 174).

So many of us make a great fuss of matters of small consequence. We are so easily offended. Happy is the man who can brush aside the offending remarks of another and go on his way.

### **“A little piece of string”**

Grudges, if left to fester, can become serious maladies. Like a painful ailment they can absorb all of our time and attention. Guy de Maupassant has written an interesting chronicle that illustrates this.

It concerns Master Hauchecome, who on market day went to town. He was afflicted with rheumatism, and as he stumbled along he noticed a piece of string on the ground in front of him. He picked it up and carefully put it in his pocket. He was seen doing so by his enemy, the harness maker.

At the same time it was reported to the mayor that a pocketbook containing money had been lost. It was assumed that what Hauchecome had picked up was the pocketbook, and he was accused of taking it. He vehemently denied the charge. A search of his clothing disclosed only the piece of string, but the slander against him had so troubled him that he became obsessed with it. Wherever he went he bothered to tell people about it. He became such a nuisance that they cried out against him. It sickened him.

“His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

“He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings of [his] death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

“‘A little [piece] of string—a little [piece] of string. See, here it is, [Mister Mayor.]’” (See “The Piece of String,” <http://www.online-literature.com/Maupassant/270/>.)

The story is told that reporters were interviewing a man on his birthday. He had reached an advanced age. They asked him how he had done it.

He replied, “When my wife and I were married, we determined that if we ever got in a quarrel, one of us would leave the house. I attribute my longevity to the fact that I have breathed good fresh air throughout my married life.”

Anger may be justified in some circumstances. The scriptures tell us that Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple, saying, “My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13).

But even this was spoken more as a rebuke than as an outburst of uncontrolled anger.

### **Speak words of love, peace, and respect**

Now, my dear brethren, in closing I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and family relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier. You will do greater good. You will feel a sense of peace that will be wonderful.

May the Lord bless you and inspire you to walk without anger, without bitterness of any kind, but to reach out to others with expressions of friendship, appreciation, and love. This is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 7, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth were the organists. The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah” to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the public broadcast facilities who are making this conference available.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah” and will now favor us with “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, an emeritus member of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.”

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr offered the invocation.

The choir sang “A Child’s Prayer.”

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### President Hinckley

The choir has just sung “A Child’s Prayer.” We will now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, newly sustained Second Counselor in the Presidency. Following his remarks, we shall hear from Elder Quentin L. Cook, sustained yesterday morning as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Presidency of the Seventy and Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.

After Sister Beck, the choir and congregation will sing “I Am a Child of God.” Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. of the Seventy will then address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## President Henry B. Eyring

I was grateful for the choir in their broadcast this morning, which was about the Savior, and grateful to see that the words of one of the songs they sang, “This Is the Christ,” were written by President James E. Faust. As I sat down next

to Brother Newell, I leaned over to him and asked, “How are your children?” He said, “When President Faust sat in that chair, that’s what he always asked.” I’m not surprised, because President Faust was always a perfect example of a disciple

that was described in *Music and the Spoken Word* today. I always felt that when I grew up, I wanted to be like President Faust. There may still be time.

### Looking for the hand of God

When our children were very small, I started to write down a few things about what happened every day. Let me tell you how that got started. I came home late from a Church assignment. It was after dark. My father-in-law, who lived near us, surprised me as I walked toward the front door of my house. He was carrying a load of pipes over his shoulder, walking very fast and dressed in his work clothes. I knew that he had been building a system to pump water from a stream below us up to our property.

He smiled, spoke softly, and then rushed past me into the darkness to go on with his work. I took a few steps toward the house, thinking of what he was doing for us, and just as I got to the door, I heard in my mind—not in my own voice—these words: “I’m not giving you these experiences for yourself. Write them down.”

I went inside. I didn’t go to bed. Although I was tired, I took out some paper and began to write. And as I did, I understood the message I had heard in my mind. I was supposed to record for my children to read, someday in the future, how I had seen the hand of God blessing our family. Grandpa didn’t have to do what he was doing for us. He could have had someone else do it or not have done it at all. But he was serving us, his family, in the way covenant disciples of Jesus Christ always do. I knew that was true. And so I wrote it down, so that my children could have the memory someday when they would need it.

I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write,

I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

More than gratitude began to grow in my heart. Testimony grew. I became ever more certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. I felt more gratitude for the softening and refining that come because of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.

The years have gone by. My boys are grown men. And now and then one of them will surprise me by saying, “Dad, I was reading in my copy of the journal about when . . .” and then he will tell me about how reading of what happened long ago helped him notice something God had done in his day.

### Recognize and remember God’s kindness

My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build your testimonies. You may not keep a journal. You may not share the record you keep with those you love and serve. But you and they will be blessed as you remember what the Lord has done. You remember that song we sometimes sing: “Count your many blessings; name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”<sup>1</sup>

It won’t be easy to remember. Living as we do with a veil over our eyes, we cannot remember what it was like to be with our Heavenly Father and His Be-



loved Son, Jesus Christ, in the premortal world; nor can we see with our physical eyes or with reason alone the hand of God in our lives. Seeing such things takes the Holy Ghost. And it is not easy to be worthy of the Holy Ghost's companionship in a wicked world.

That is why forgetting God has been such a persistent problem among His children since the world began. Think of the times of Moses, when God provided manna and in miraculous and visible ways led and protected His children. Still, the prophet warned the people who had been so blessed, as prophets always have warned and always will:

"Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life."<sup>2</sup>

### **Challenges to remembering God**

And the challenge to remember has always been the hardest for those who are blessed abundantly. Those who are faithful to God are protected and prospered. That comes as the result of serving God and keeping His commandments. But with those blessings comes the temptation to forget their source. It is easy to begin to feel the blessings were granted not by a loving God on whom we depend but by our own powers. The prophets have repeated this lament over and over:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their

enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity."

And the prophet goes on to say: "Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!"<sup>3</sup>

Sadly, prosperity is not the only reason people forget God. It can also be hard to remember Him when our lives go badly. When we struggle, as so many do, in grinding poverty, or when our enemies prevail against us, or when sickness is not healed, the enemy of our souls can send his evil message that there is no God or that if He exists, He does not care about us. Then it can be hard for the Holy Ghost to bring to our remembrance the lifetime of blessings the Lord has given us from our infancy and in the midst of our distress.

### **Holy Ghost is the key to remembering**

There is a simple cure for the terrible malady of forgetting God, His blessings, and His messages to us. Jesus Christ promised it to His disciples when He was about to be crucified, resurrected, and then taken away from them to ascend in glory to His Father. They were concerned to know how they would be able to endure when He was no longer with them.

Here is the promise. It was fulfilled for them then. It can be fulfilled for all of us now:

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”<sup>4</sup>

The key to the remembering that brings and maintains testimony is receiving the Holy Ghost as a companion. It is the Holy Ghost who helps us see what God has done for us. It is the Holy Ghost who can help those we serve to see what God has done for them.

Heavenly Father has given a simple pattern for us to receive the Holy Ghost not once but continually in the tumult of our daily lives. The pattern is repeated in the sacramental prayer: We promise that we will always remember the Savior. We promise to take His name upon us. We promise to keep His commandments. And we are promised that if we do that, we will have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>5</sup> Those promises work together in a wonderful way to strengthen our testimonies and in time, through the Atonement, to change our natures as we keep our part of the promise.

It is the Holy Ghost who testifies that Jesus Christ is the Beloved Son of a Heavenly Father who loves us and wants us to have eternal life with Him in families. With even the beginning of that testimony, we feel a desire to serve Him and to keep His commandments. When we persist in doing that, we receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost to give us power in our service. We come to see the hand of God more clearly, so clearly that in time we not only remember Him, but we come to love Him and, through the power of the Atonement, become more like Him.

### **Getting the process started**

You might ask, “But how does this process get started in someone who knows nothing about God and claims no memory of spiritual experiences at all?” Everyone has had spiritual experiences

that they may not have recognized. Every person, upon entering the world, is given the Spirit of Christ. How that spirit works is described in the book of Moroni:

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. . . .

“Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

So, even before people receive the right to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, when they are confirmed as members of the Church, and even before the Holy Ghost confirms truth to them before baptism, they have spiritual experiences. The Spirit of Christ has already, from their childhood, invited them to do good and warned them against evil. They have memories of those experiences even if they have not recognized their source. That memory will come back to them as missionaries or we teach them the word of God and they hear it. They will remember the feeling of joy or sorrow when they are taught the truths of the gospel. And that memory of the Spirit of Christ will soften their hearts to allow the Holy Ghost to testify to them. That will lead them to keep commandments and want to take the name of the

Savior upon them. And when they do, in the waters of baptism, and as they hear the words in confirmation “receive the Holy Ghost” spoken by an authorized servant of God, the power to always remember God will be increased.

### **See God’s hand and preserve the memory**

I testify to you that the warm feelings you have had as you have listened to truth being spoken in this conference are from the Holy Ghost. The Savior, who promised that the Holy Ghost would come, is the beloved, glorified Son of our Heavenly Father.

Tonight, and tomorrow night, you might pray and ponder, asking the questions: Did God send a message that was

just for me? Did I see His hand in my life or the lives of my children? I will do that. And then I will find a way to preserve that memory for the day that I, and those that I love, will need to remember how much God loves us and how much we need Him. I testify that He loves us and blesses us, more than most of us have yet recognized. I know that is true, and it brings me joy to remember Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
2. Deuteronomy 4:9.
3. Helaman 12:1–2, 5.
4. John 14:25–26.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
6. Moroni 7:16–17, 19.

## **Elder Quentin L. Cook**

### **Live by faith, not by fear**

Dear brothers and sisters, I join with you in expressing my love and sustaining support to President Eyring and his family. President Hinckley extended this call to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve late Thursday afternoon. I cannot possibly articulate the kaleidoscope of feelings I have experienced since then. There have been sleepless nights and much prayer. My spirits have been buoyed, however, by the knowledge that President Hinckley is the prophet and that the membership of the Church will be praying for me and my family.

To say that I feel deeply inadequate would be an understatement. When I was called as a General Authority in April of 1996, I also felt unequal to the calling. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reassured me then that the most important qualification for all of us serving in the kingdom is to be comfortable in bearing

witness of the divinity of the Savior. A peace came over me at that time and has stayed with me since because I love the Savior and have had spiritual experiences that allow me to testify of Him. I rejoice in the opportunity to bear witness of Jesus Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), notwithstanding my inadequacies.

In Doctrine and Covenants 68, verses 5 and 6, we read:

“Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants.

“Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.”

I seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost as I speak with you this Sabbath morning.

The overwhelming feeling that I have in receiving this call is that we must live

by faith and not by fear. In 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul references the faith of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice. Paul writes:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

### **Gratitude for family and friends**

In my own case, I respectfully acknowledge ancestors now on the other side of the veil who gave everything asked of them to build the kingdom of God upon the earth.

I am grateful that all my life I have been surrounded by those who love the Savior. My heart is full of appreciation for my family. My wife, Mary, has been the joy of my life. Her spiritual strength, righteous example, sense of humor, and loving support have blessed me throughout my life. Our three children and their spouses have been sources of great personal satisfaction and, together with our nine grandchildren, have been such a blessing to us. Their faith and prayers and the goodness of their lives have been a great comfort to Mary and me.

When I think back to my youth in Logan, Utah (Elder Perry's fabled Cache Valley), I realize how fortunate I was to be reared in a goodly home—to have a righteous mother who was full of faith, a loving father, an older brother who has been an extraordinary example to me as well as a friend and counselor, and a younger sister who has been loving and supportive. How fortunate also to have had talented and devoted Church leaders, teachers, coaches, and friends who were wonderful examples to me.

### **Gratitude for mission**

As a young man I had the opportunity to serve in the British Mission, which was a seminal, defining event in my life. The influence of a valiant mission president is one of the great miracles of the

restored gospel. A few weeks ago I received a birthday card at Church headquarters from a woman I helped teach in Gloucester, England, many years ago. I had lost contact with her. She informed me that she and her husband are both very active members and have 6 children and 20 grandchildren, all born in the covenant. It may be the best birthday card I have ever received.

Mary and I left Utah so I could attend law school in Palo Alto, California. We were planning to return to Utah after graduation, but the Spirit directed that we stay in California. We lived in California for 33 years and raised our family there. We both had many opportunities to serve. We loved the diversity of the members and their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I will be eternally grateful for the wonderful Latter-day Saints in California who have been such a positive influence in my life.

### **Gratitude for Church leaders**

These last 11½ years of service as a Seventy have been truly rewarding ones. As I leave that quorum, I want my fellow Brethren to know of my love and appreciation for their dedication and loyalty to the kingdom of God on the earth—for their faithfulness and good works. I want them to know of the joy it has been to serve with them.

I love the Brethren we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators with all my heart. I've tried to serve honorably and lighten their responsibilities in any way I could. I'm grateful to the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve for their lives of goodness and example, their patience, their teaching, their kindness, their devotion to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and His restored gospel. I am grateful that God called Joseph Smith to be a prophet through whom the fulness of the gospel was restored to earth.

### **Gratitude for faithful Saints worldwide**

My experience as a General Authority has filled my heart with appreciation for the faith and goodness of the Latter-day Saints all over the world. We served for two years in the Philippines. In April of 1961, President Hinckley, then an Assistant to the Twelve, sent the first missionaries to Manila. There was only one Filipino priesthood holder in the Philippines. Today there are almost 600,000 members. Their lives are not easy, and they lack many material things, but they love the Savior. The gospel is having a tremendous impact in improving their lives. What a blessing to serve in their midst.

We also served for three years in the Pacific Islands. It is significant that almost 25 percent of all the Polynesians in the world are members of the Church. Their faith and spirituality are legendary. Sister Cook and I were in Vava'u in the Tongan islands on one occasion. I had just spoken about following the prophet in the general session of stake conference. At the luncheon following the conference, I sat next to a distinguished elderly patriarch. He indicated how grateful he was to hear what the prophet was teaching. He gave me the following account.

### **The gospel is lifesaving fresh water**

Vava'u, which is a relatively small island, usually has sufficient rain, but periodically there are severe droughts. The island has long inlets or bays, almost like sounds, that curl into the island below steep hills. When drought left the village without water, there was only one way they could obtain fresh water and stay alive. Over the centuries they had found that fresh water traveled down through rock formations inside the mountains and came up in a few spots in the sea.

The Tongan men would set off in their small boats with a wise elder standing at one end of the boat looking for just

the right spot. The strong young men in the boat stood ready with containers to dive deep into the seawater. When they reached the appropriate spot, the wise man would raise both arms to heaven. That was the signal. The strong young men would dive off the boat as deep as they could and fill the containers with fresh springwater. This old patriarch likened this lifesaving tradition to the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the wise man to God's prophet here on earth. He noted that the water was pure, fresh, and, in their drought condition, lifesaving. But it was not easy to find. It was not visible to the untrained eye. This patriarch wanted to know everything the prophet was teaching.

We live in a precarious time. The world is in desperate need of the fresh springwater, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should listen intently to the prophet as we make choices. My own informal records indicate that President Hinckley has continually emphasized faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That has been followed by his emphasis on strengthening families and having family religious observance in the home. Over and over again he has told us that if we would live a principle, we would gain a testimony of the truthfulness of that principle, which would in turn increase our faith.

### **Do not fear in raising children**

I know that many of you are concerned about raising your children during these difficult times and increasing their faith. When my wife and I were starting our family in the San Francisco Bay area, we had that same concern. At a critical point our stake members were advised by Elder Harold B. Lee, then a member of the Twelve, that we could raise our families in righteousness if we would:

1. Follow the prophet.
2. Create the true spirit of the gospel in our hearts and homes.

3. Be a light to those among whom we live.

4. Focus on the ordinances and principles taught in the temple. (See D&C 115:5; Harold B. Lee, “Your Light to Be a Standard unto the Nations,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 3–4.)

As we followed this counsel, our faith increased and our fears decreased. I believe we can raise righteous children anywhere in the world if they are taught religious principles in the home.

### **Do not fear in sharing the gospel**

One area where members can live by faith and not by fear is in our missionary effort. Prior to my call to the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1 of this year, I had served in the Missionary Department for six years, the last three years as executive director under Elder M. Russell Ballard, who served as chairman of the Missionary Executive Council.

Some mission presidents informed us that many wonderful members are in camouflage to their neighbors and co-workers. They do not let people know who they are and what they believe. We need much more member involvement in sharing the message of the Restoration. Romans 10, verse 14, puts this into perspective:

“How then shall they call on him [speaking of the Savior] in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

Verse 15 contains the wonderful message referenced in Isaiah: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings” (see also Isaiah 52:7).

It has been observed that the members are going to have to move their feet and let their voices be heard if they are to achieve this blessing.

*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* was first introduced in October 2004. President Hinckley commenced this effort when he called for missionaries to learn the doctrine and to teach the principles by the Spirit. Every member of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve participated to a significant degree. Elder Ballard and I felt that the windows of heaven were opened and the Lord’s inspiration poured out to bring forth this great resource.

Over 1.5 million copies of *Preach My Gospel* have been acquired by the members of the Church. It is a wonderful foundation, and the missionaries are powerful, spiritual teachers. However, if we are to accomplish what President Hinckley has requested, the members, living by faith and not by fear, need to share the gospel with their friends and associates.

### **Do not fear in Church service**

In our individual callings we need to have faith and not be fearful.

Our daughter, Kathryn, is serving as the Primary president in her ward in Salt Lake City. My wife and I attended her ward last Sunday to observe the Primary sacrament meeting presentation, “I’ll Follow Him in Faith.” I was thrilled to hear the children recite scriptures and stories coupled with songs focused on faith in Christ.

After the meeting I asked her about her calling. She said that initially the calling weighed her down. Much time was spent going over problems. Then the presidency decided to emphasize love, faith, and prayer. Suddenly spiritual impressions came to mind about a particular child or family. Friction was replaced with love. She tells me that as they acted upon promptings from the Spirit, Primary reflected a reverence and peace, and real gospel learning was taking place.

### **Faith in Jesus Christ sustains us**

It is our faith in Jesus Christ that sustains us at the crossroads of life's journey. It is the first principle of the gospel. Without it we will spin our wheels at the intersection, spending our precious time but getting nowhere. It is Christ who offers the invitation to follow Him, to give Him our burden, and to carry His yoke, "for [His] yoke is easy, and [His] burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

There is no other name under heaven whereby man can be saved (see Acts 4:12). We must take upon us His name and receive His image in our countenance so that when He comes we will be more

like Him (see 1 John 3:2; Alma 5:14). When we choose to follow Christ in faith rather than choosing another path out of fear, we are blessed with a consequence that is consistent with our choice (see D&C 6:34–36).

May we all recognize and give thanks for the incomparable gift of life we each enjoy and for the breath that He lends us daily. May we choose to have conviction at the crossroads of life and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that we will live by faith and not by fear. I bear my witness of God, who is our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, who atoned for our sins, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Claudio R. M. Costa**

### **Parents' responsibility to teach the gospel**

On September 23, 1995, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced to the Church and the world a document called "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." I quote from the paragraph which reads, "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."<sup>1</sup>

We live in a day and age in which this counsel is indeed very important. Many parents argue that they don't have time for their families. The fast-paced lifestyle of modern-day life and excessive amounts of work are curbing parents' attention from what is most important: to give time, to give of oneself to one's family.

The Lord taught us that every man has the responsibility to provide for his family,<sup>2</sup> but that does not mean solely to store up the house with food and other items which are needed or desired. We must also have time to provide our family with teachings. What should we teach?

Our Father has taught us that parents are obligated to teach the gospel to their children.<sup>3</sup> The prophet Lehi understood well his responsibility to teach his children. Nephi declared that he had been taught "in all the learning of [his] father."<sup>4</sup>

The Lord instructed us how to take care of our families when He told us through His prophets in the proclamation to the world, "Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."<sup>5</sup>

### **Now is the time to protect our families**

We know that God has taught us for centuries how to protect and take care of our families. We also know and can see that the adversary has been attacking the family. Now is the time to use all those teachings. Now is the time to perform our God-given duties concerning the family.



President James E. Faust gave us three key things we can do to protect and strengthen our families:

1. Family prayer. Parents must teach their children that they are God's children and therefore need to pray to Him daily.

2. Family home evening. As President Faust taught us, family home evening is for all of us no matter what stage of life we are in. We must have Monday nights free of all other activities that might keep us from gathering as a family.

3. Personal and family scripture study. We need to help our children strengthen their faith and testimonies through this basic habit.<sup>6</sup>

As we follow President Faust's wise counsel, we will be protecting family members against Satan's attacks as well as strengthening their faith and testimony in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Love is needed to teach and guide a family**

In the family proclamation we also learn that "by divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."<sup>7</sup>

It is in the home that the family learns and applies gospel principles. Great love is necessary in order to teach and guide a family. Loving fathers and mothers will teach their children to worship God in their home. When a worshipping spirit permeates the home, that spirit is extended into the life of each family member. This will prepare them to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to be able to return to God's presence and stay together as a family for all eternity.

The family proclamation helps us understand much of the love the Savior referred to when He told us to "love one

another."<sup>8</sup> He gave us the supreme example of love when He declared, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>9</sup> He later atoned for all our sins and finally gave His life for all of us.

We can lay down our lives for those we love not by physically dying for them but rather by living for them—giving of our time, always being present in their lives, serving them, being courteous and affectionate, and showing true love for those of our family and to all men—as the Savior taught.

### **Do not procrastinate showing your love**

We don't know what could happen to us tomorrow, and that is why today is the time to start showing your love through small acts such as a hug and an "I love you" to your spouse and children and those around you.

I recently read a text which expresses the urgency of not leaving for tomorrow what you can do today. In July of this year, Brazil witnessed the most devastating aircraft accident in its history. There were 199 people killed, including passengers, airline workers, crew members, and others who were at the site when the accident happened. The text I mentioned was said to have been posted on the airline communication board by the husband of one of the flight attendants who died in the accident. It is entitled "Tomorrow Never Comes" and is based upon a poem by Norma Cornett Marek.

If I knew this would be the last time I  
would watch you sleep,

I would hug you tighter. I would plead  
with the Lord to protect you.

If I knew this would be the last time I  
saw you walk out the door,

I would hug and kiss you and call you  
back to hug and kiss you one more  
time.

If I knew this would be the last time I  
would hear your voice in prayer,



I would record every gesture, every  
 look, every smile, every one of your  
 words,  
 So that I could listen to it later, day  
 after day.  
 If I knew this would be the last time,  
 I would spend an extra minute or two  
 to tell you, "I love you," instead of  
 assuming you already knew it.  
 If I knew this would be our last time,  
 our last moment,  
 I would be by your side, spending the  
 day with you instead of thinking,  
 "Well, I'm sure other opportunities will  
 come, so I can let this day go by."  
 Of course there will be a day to revise  
 things,  
 And we would have a second chance to  
 do things right.  
 Oh, of course there will be another day  
 for us to say, "I love you."  
 And certainly there will be another  
 chance to tell each other, "Can I  
 help with anything?"  
 But in my case, there isn't one!  
 I don't have you here with me, and  
 today is the last day we have—our  
 farewell.  
 Therefore I would like to say how much  
 I love you,  
 And I hope you never forget it.  
 Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,  
 young or old.  
 Today might be your last chance to hold  
 tight to the hand of the one you love  
 and show all you feel.  
 If you are waiting for tomorrow, why  
 not do it today?  
 Because if tomorrow never comes, you  
 certainly will regret for the rest of  
 your life  
 Not having spent some extra time for a  
 smile, a conversation, a hug, a kiss,

Because you were too busy to give that  
 person what ended up being their  
 last wish.

Then hug tight today the one you  
 love, your friends, your family, and  
 whisper in their ears how much you  
 love them and want them close to  
 you.

Use your time to say,

"I'm sorry,"

"Please,"

"Forgive me,"

"Thank you,"

Or even,

"That was nothing,"

"It's all right,"

Because if tomorrow never comes, you  
 will not have to regret today.

The past doesn't come back, and the  
 future might not come!<sup>10</sup>

Let us express our love to our spouse  
 and children and our brothers and sisters  
 today.

I know God lives. I know Jesus is the  
 Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I know  
 that Joseph Smith is a prophet of the  
 Lord and that Gordon B. Hinckley is  
 God's living prophet on this earth. In the  
 name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 75:28.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
4. 1 Nephi 1:1.
5. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
6. See "Challenges Facing the Family,"  
*Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*,  
 Jan. 10, 2004, 2–3.
7. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. John 13:34.
9. John 15:13.
10. See [www.heartwhispers.net](http://www.heartwhispers.net); printed  
 with permission.

## Julie B. Beck

### Mothers who know

In the Book of Mormon we read about 2,000 exemplary young men who were exceedingly valiant, courageous, and strong. “Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21). These faithful young men paid tribute to their mothers. They said, “Our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:48). I would suspect that the mothers of Captain Moroni, Mosiah, Mormon, and other great leaders also knew.

The responsibility mothers have today has never required more vigilance. More than at any time in the history of the world, we need mothers who know. Children are being born into a world where they “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).<sup>1</sup> However, mothers need not fear. When mothers know who they are and who God is and have made covenants with Him, they will have great power and influence for good on their children.

### Mothers who know bear children

Mothers who know desire to bear children. Whereas in many cultures in the world children are “becoming less valued,”<sup>2</sup> in the culture of the gospel we still believe in having children. Prophets, seers, and revelators who were sustained at this conference have declared that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”<sup>3</sup> President Ezra Taft Benson taught that young couples should not postpone having children and that “in the eternal perspective, children—not posses-

sions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels.”<sup>4</sup>

Faithful daughters of God desire children. In the scriptures we read of Eve (see Moses 4:26), Sarah (see Genesis 17:16), Rebekah (see Genesis 24:60), and Mary (see 1 Nephi 11:13–20), who were fore-ordained to be mothers before children were born to them. Some women are not given the responsibility of bearing children in mortality, but just as Hannah of the Old Testament prayed fervently for her child (see 1 Samuel 1:11), the value women place on motherhood in this life and the attributes of motherhood they attain here will rise with them in the Resurrection (see D&C 130:18). Women who desire and work toward that blessing in this life are promised they will receive it for all eternity, and eternity is much, much longer than mortality. There is eternal influence and power in motherhood.

### Mothers who know honor sacred ordinances and covenants

Mothers who know honor sacred ordinances and covenants. I have visited sacrament meetings in some of the poorest places on the earth where mothers have dressed with great care in their Sunday best despite walking for miles on dusty streets and using worn-out public transportation. They bring daughters in clean and ironed dresses with hair brushed to perfection; their sons wear white shirts and ties and have missionary haircuts. These mothers know they are going to sacrament meeting, where covenants are renewed. These mothers have made and honor temple covenants. They know that if they are not pointing their children to the temple, they are not pointing them toward desired eternal goals. These mothers have influence and power.

### **Mothers who know are nurturers**

Mothers who know are nurturers. This is their special assignment and role under the plan of happiness.<sup>5</sup> To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow. Therefore, mothers who know create a climate for spiritual and temporal growth in their homes. Another word for *nurturing* is *homemaking*. Homemaking includes cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home. Home is where women have the most power and influence; therefore, Latter-day Saint women should be the best homemakers in the world. Working beside children in homemaking tasks creates opportunities to teach and model qualities children should emulate. Nurturing mothers are knowledgeable, but all the education women attain will avail them nothing if they do not have the skill to make a home that creates a climate for spiritual growth. Growth occurs best in a “house of order,” and women should pattern their homes after the Lord’s house (see D&C 109). Nurturing requires organization, patience, love, and work. Helping growth occur through nurturing is truly a powerful and influential role bestowed on women.

### **Mothers who know are leaders**

Mothers who know are leaders. In equal partnership with their husbands, they lead a great and eternal organization. These mothers plan for the future of their organization. They plan for missions, temple marriages, and education. They plan for prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Mothers who know build children into future leaders and are the primary examples of what leaders look like. They do not abandon their plan by succumbing to social pressure and worldly models of parenting. These wise

mothers who know are selective about their own activities and involvement to conserve their limited strength in order to maximize their influence where it matters most.

### **Mothers who know are teachers**

Mothers who know are always teachers. Since they are not baby-sitters, they are never off duty. A well-taught friend told me that he did not learn anything at church that he had not already learned at home. His parents used family scripture study, prayer, family home evening, mealtimes, and other gatherings to teach. Think of the power of our future missionary force if mothers considered their homes as a pre-missionary training center. Then the doctrines of the gospel taught in the MTC would be a review and not a revelation. That is influence; that is power.

### **Mothers who know do less**

Mothers who know do less. They permit less of what will not bear good fruit eternally. They allow less media in their homes, less distraction, less activity that draws their children away from their home. Mothers who know are willing to live on less and consume less of the world’s goods in order to spend more time with their children—more time eating together, more time working together, more time reading together, more time talking, laughing, singing, and exemplifying. These mothers choose carefully and do not try to choose it all. Their goal is to prepare a rising generation of children who will take the gospel of Jesus Christ into the entire world. Their goal is to prepare future fathers and mothers who will be builders of the Lord’s kingdom for the next 50 years. That is influence; that is power.

### Mothers who know stand strong and immovable

Who will prepare this righteous generation of sons and daughters? Latter-day Saint women will do this—women who know and love the Lord and bear testimony of Him, women who are strong and immovable and who do not give up during difficult and discouraging times. We are led by an inspired prophet of God who has called upon the women of the Church to “stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord.”<sup>6</sup> He has asked us to “begin in [our] own homes”<sup>7</sup> to teach children the ways of truth. Latter-day Saint women should be the very best in the world at upholding, nurturing, and protecting families. I have every confidence that our women will do this and will come to be known as mothers who “knew” (Alma 56:48). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
2. James E. Faust, “Challenges Facing the Family,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 2.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. *To the Mothers in Zion* (pamphlet, 1987), 3.
5. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“I Am a Child of God.”

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## Elder Christoffel Golden Jr.

### Small and simple things

Everyone who will live the gospel of Jesus Christ daily and endure to the end will gain eternal life—this is the promise of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> In its essentials, the gospel is simple and easy to understand and adapted to the capacity of the weakest.<sup>2</sup> Alma, the Book of Mormon prophet, aptly remarked, “Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but . . . by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; . . . and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.”<sup>3</sup>

### A man’s journey back to fellowship

Quite recently I was privileged to observe this process in the life of a brother

named Stan, who had been less active for some 45 years. He had lived a good life and supported both his wife and son in their activity as faithful members in the Church. Yet for personal reasons he chose to remain outside the fellowship of the Church. Even so, each month he welcomed the home teachers.

### *Power of the Book of Mormon*

During February 2006, Stan received new home teachers. Their first visit was pleasant enough, although Stan showed no real interest in the gospel or in any matters remotely associated with spiritual things. Their next visit did little to alter their initial observations, even though Stan was a little warmer and friendlier. On their third visit, however, there was a visible change in Stan’s countenance

and demeanor. To their utmost surprise and even before they were able to present their message, Stan interrupted them with a number of thoughtful questions. In the ensuing discussion he also recounted his experiences during the past month, in which he and his wife had commenced reading one chapter a day from the Book of Mormon.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie eloquently described the type of reawakening Stan experienced: “Here is a man who gains a copy of this blessed book, begins to read it, and continues . . . until, having read it all, his famished soul is filled with the bread of life. He cannot lay it aside or ignore its teachings. It is as though the waters of life are flowing into the barren deserts of his soul, quenching the arid, empty feeling that theretofore separated him from his God.”<sup>4</sup>

The home teachers were reminded of the remarkable power of the Book of Mormon and how very real the influence of the Spirit of the Lord is when we turn to its sacred pages. They also more fully understood the Prophet Joseph Smith’s declaration “that the Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, . . . and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>5</sup>

#### *Soul-searching, fervent prayer*

Stan’s thirst for learning and rediscovery of the restored gospel soon expanded his reading beyond one chapter a day, accompanied by deep soul-searching and fervent prayer. To those who sometimes are concerned whether the Lord will actually hear their prayers, the Savior reminds us:

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . .

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father

give good gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to them that ask him?”<sup>6</sup>

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, also counseled:

“You can’t do it alone. . . . You need the help of the Lord . . . and the marvelous thing is that you have the opportunity to pray, with the expectation that your prayers will be heard and answered. . . . He stands ready to help.”<sup>7</sup>

#### *Partaking of the sacrament*

During August of 2006, Stan ventured alongside his ever-faithful wife into his ward sacrament meeting—his first in 45 years. There, with a humble and prayerful heart, he listened to the simple sacramental prayers offered by the youthful priests. Feeling unworthy and sensing something of the depth and the meaning of this most holy ordinance, he reflected deeply and painfully without partaking of the bread or the water for a number of weeks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith, in a tender testimony many years ago, said: “In my judgment the sacrament meeting is the most sacred, the most holy, of all the meetings of the Church. When I reflect upon the gathering of the Savior and his apostles on that memorable night when he introduced the sacrament . . . my heart is filled with wonderment and my feelings are touched. I consider that gathering one of the most solemn and wonderful since the beginning of time.”<sup>8</sup>

Stan continued studying, praying, attending church, and receiving appropriate counsel and encouragement from his home teachers. Then the day arrived when, joyfully, he felt he was ready to put forth his hand to partake of the precious sacrament. When we partake worthily, thoughtfully, and reverently of the holy sacrament, we are enabled to become “partakers of the divine nature”<sup>9</sup> because of the Atonement of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

As Stan returned to activity in the Church, he received a calling and, some months later, was ordained an elder. In July 2007, Stan and his wife knelt across the altar in a house of the Lord and, by the authority and eternal law of God, were married for time and for all eternity.<sup>10</sup>

### **The power of small and simple things**

Brothers and sisters, may we discover anew the divine power of daily prayer and the convincing influence of the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures. On Sundays, when partaking of the sacrament, may we do so in the spirit of true devotion to Him who is the giver of all things.<sup>11</sup>

In the wake of our best and very limited efforts and because of the Lord's infinite goodness, "great things [are] brought to pass" by the "small and simple things."

Finally, as to these sacred things, may I add my personal witness and assurance in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See 3 Nephi 27:13–18; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
2. See Matthew 11:28–30; Jacob 4:14; Alma 37:44; Doctrine and Covenants 133:57–58.
3. Alma 37:6–7.
4. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 414.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:461.
6. Luke 11:11, 13; see Joseph Smith Translation in footnote 13a.
7. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 468.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 60–61.
9. 2 Peter 1:4; see also 3 Nephi 18:1–14.
10. See Matthew 19:3–6; Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
11. See Moroni 6.

## **Elder David A. Bednar**

### **Clean hands and a pure heart**

I have fond childhood memories of my mother reading Book of Mormon stories to me. She had a way of making the scriptural episodes come alive in my youthful imagination, and I did not doubt that my mother had a witness of the truthfulness of that sacred record. I especially remember her description of the Savior's visit to the American continent following His resurrection and of His teachings to the people in the land of Bountiful. Through the simple consistency of her example and testimony, my mother kindled in me the first flames of faith in the Savior and in His latter-day Church. I came to know for myself that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ and

contains the fulness of His everlasting gospel (see D&C 27:5).

Today I want to review with you one of my favorite Book of Mormon events, the Savior's appearance in the New World, and discuss His instruction to the multitude about the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. I pray for the guidance of the Spirit for me and for you.

### **The Savior's ministry in the New World**

During the Lord's three-day ministry in the New World, He taught His doctrine, authorized His disciples to perform priesthood ordinances, healed the sick, prayed for the people, and lovingly blessed the children. As the Savior's time with the people was drawing to a close,



He succinctly summarized the fundamental principles of His gospel.

Said He, “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20).

The basic principles outlined by the Master in this scripture are essential for us to understand and apply in our lives. First was repentance, “a turning of the heart and will to God, and a renunciation of sin” (Bible Dictionary, “Repentance,” 760). As we appropriately seek for and receive the spiritual gift of faith in the Redeemer, we then turn to and rely upon the merits, the mercy, and the grace of the Holy Messiah (see 2 Nephi 2:8). Repentance is the sweet fruit that comes from faith in the Savior and involves turning toward God and away from sin.

The risen Lord next explained the importance of coming unto Him. The multitude gathered together at the temple was invited literally to come forth unto the Savior “one by one” to feel the prints of the nails in the Master’s hands and feet and to thrust their hands into His side (3 Nephi 11:15). Each individual who had this experience “did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he” (v. 15), even Jesus Christ, who had come.

The Savior also taught the people to come unto Him through sacred covenants, and He reminded them that they were “the children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26). He emphasized the eternal importance of the ordinances of baptism (see 3 Nephi 11:19–39) and of receiving the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:6; 18:36–38). In a similar manner, you and I are admonished to turn toward and learn from Christ and to come unto Him through the covenants and ordinances of His restored gospel. As we do so, we will eventually and ultimately come to know Him (see John 17:3), “in his own time,

and in his own way, and according to his own will” (D&C 88:68), as did the people in the land of Bountiful.

Repenting and coming unto Christ through the covenants and ordinances of salvation are prerequisite to and a preparation for being sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost and standing spotless before God at the last day. I now want to focus our attention on the sanctifying influence the Holy Ghost can be in our lives.

### Our spiritual journey

The gate of baptism leads to the strait and narrow path and to the destination of putting off the natural man and becoming a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19). The purpose of our mortal journey is not merely to see the sights on earth or to expend our allotment of time on self-centered pursuits; rather, we are to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), to become sanctified by yielding our hearts unto God (see Helaman 3:35), and to obtain “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

We are commanded and instructed to so live that our fallen nature is changed through the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. President Marion G. Romney taught that the baptism of fire by the Holy Ghost “converts [us] from carnality to spirituality. It cleanses, heals, and purifies the soul. . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and water baptism are all preliminary and prerequisite to it, but [the baptism of fire] is the consummation. To receive [this baptism of fire] is to have one’s garments washed in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (*Learning for the Eternities*, comp. George J. Romney [1977], 133; see also 3 Nephi 27:19–20).

Hence, as we are born again and strive to always have His Spirit to be with us, the Holy Ghost sanctifies and refines our souls as if by fire (see 2 Nephi 31:13–14, 17). Ultimately, we are to stand spotless before God.

The gospel of Jesus Christ encompasses much more than avoiding, overcoming, and being cleansed from sin and the bad influences in our lives; it also essentially entails doing good, being good, and becoming better. Repenting of our sins and seeking forgiveness are spiritually necessary, and we must always do so. But remission of sin is not the only or even the ultimate purpose of the gospel. To have our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit such that “we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2), as did King Benjamin’s people, is the covenant responsibility we have accepted. This mighty change is not simply the result of working harder or developing greater individual discipline. Rather, it is the consequence of a fundamental change in our desires, our motives, and our natures made possible through the Atonement of Christ the Lord. Our spiritual purpose is to overcome both sin and the desire to sin—both the taint and the tyranny of sin.

Prophets throughout the ages have emphasized the dual requirements of (1) avoiding and overcoming bad and (2) doing good and becoming better. Consider the penetrating questions posed by the Psalmist:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3–4).

Brothers and sisters, it is possible for us to have clean hands but not have a pure heart. Please notice that both clean hands and a pure heart are required to ascend into the hill of the Lord and to stand in His holy place.

Let me suggest that hands are made clean through the process of putting off the natural man and by overcoming sin and the evil influences in our lives through

the Savior’s Atonement. Hearts are purified as we receive His strengthening power to do good and become better. All of our worthy desires and good works, as necessary as they are, can never produce clean hands and a pure heart. It is the Atonement of Jesus Christ that provides both a *cleansing and redeeming power* that helps us to overcome sin and a *sanctifying and strengthening power* that helps us to become better than we ever could by relying only on our own strength. The infinite Atonement is for both the sinner and for the saint in each of us.

In the Book of Mormon, we find the masterful teachings of King Benjamin concerning the mission and Atonement of Jesus Christ. The simple doctrine he taught caused the congregation to fall to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

“And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive *forgiveness of our sins*, and our *hearts may be purified*; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 4:2; italics added).

Again in this verse we find the two-fold blessing of both forgiveness of sin, suggesting clean hands, and the transformation of our nature, signifying pure hearts.

As King Benjamin concluded his instruction, he reiterated the importance of these two basic aspects of spiritual development.

“And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of *retaining a remission of your sins from day to day*, that *ye may walk guiltless before God*—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor” (Mosiah 4:26; italics added).



Our sincere desire should be to have both clean hands *and* a pure heart—both a remission of sins from day to day *and* to walk guiltless before God. Clean hands alone will not be enough when we stand before Him who is pure and who, as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), freely spilled His precious blood for us.

### Line upon line

Some who hear or read this message may think the spiritual progress I am describing is not attainable in their lives. We may believe these truths apply to others but not to us.

We will not attain a state of perfection in this life, but we can and should press forward with faith in Christ along the strait and narrow path and make steady progress toward our eternal destiny. The Lord’s pattern for spiritual development is “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30). Small, steady, incremental spiritual improvements are the steps the Lord would have us take. Preparing to walk guiltless before God is one of the primary purposes of mortality and the pursuit of a lifetime; it does not result from sporadic spurts of intense spiritual activity.

I witness that the Savior will strengthen and assist us to make sustained, paced progress. The example in the Book of Mormon of “many, exceedingly great many” (Alma 13:12) in the ancient Church who were pure and spotless before God is a source of encouragement and comfort to me. I suspect those members of the ancient Church were ordinary men and women just like you and me. These individuals could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence, and they “were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God” (v. 12). And these principles and this process of spiritual progress apply to each of us equally and always.

### Moroni’s concluding invitation

The requirement to put off the natural man and become a saint, to avoid and overcome bad and to do and become good, to have clean hands and a pure heart, is a recurring theme throughout the Book of Mormon. In fact, Moroni’s concluding invitation at the end of the book is a summary of this theme.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ. . . .

“And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the *remission of your sins*, that *ye become holy, without spot*” (Moroni 10:32–33; italics added).

May you and I repent with sincerity of heart and truly come unto Christ. I pray that we will seek through the Savior’s Atonement to have both clean hands and a pure heart, that we may become holy, without spot. I witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Eternal Father and our Savior. He who is without spot redeems us from sin and strengthens us to do good and to become better. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “God So Loved the World.”

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### President Hinckley

The choir has just sung “God So Loved the World.” We express our thanks to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “How Firm a Foundation.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wolfgang

H. Paul of the Seventy, and the concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, my brothers and sisters, we live with an interesting phenomenon. A soloist sings the same song again and again. An orchestra repeats the same music. But a speaker is expected to come up with something new every time he speaks. I am going to break that tradition this morning and repeat in a measure what I have said on another occasion.

### Marvelous growth of the Church

The Church has become one large family scattered across the earth. There are now more than 13 million of us in 176 nations and territories. A marvelous and wonderful thing is coming to pass. The Lord is fulfilling His promise that His gospel shall be as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which would roll forth and fill the whole earth, as Daniel saw in vision (see Daniel 2:31–45; D&C 65:2). A great miracle is taking place right before our eyes.

I take you back 184 years to the year 1823. The month was September—the night of September 21–22, to be exact.

The boy Joseph Smith had prayed that night before going to sleep. He asked the Lord for forgiveness of his light-mindedness. A miraculous thing then happened. He says:

“While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noon-day, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside. . . .

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from

the presence of God . . . and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:30, 33).

The boy must have been stunned by what he heard. In the eyes of those who knew him, he was simply a poor, unlearned farm boy. He had no wealth. His neighbors were in the same condition. His parents were struggling farmers. The area where they lived was rural and largely unknown. They were simply ordinary people trying to survive through hard work.

And yet an angel of God said that Joseph’s “name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.” How could it be? That description fits the entire world.

Now, as we look back 177 years to the organization of the Church, we marvel at what has already happened. When the Church was organized in 1830 there were but six members, only a handful of believers, all residing in a largely unknown village. Today we have become the fourth or fifth largest church in North America, with congregations in every city of any consequence. Stakes of Zion today flourish in every state of the United States, in every province of Canada, in every state of Mexico, in every nation of Central America, and throughout South America.

Congregations are found throughout the British Isles and Europe, where thousands have joined the Church through

the years. This work has reached out to the Baltic nations and on down through Bulgaria and Albania and other areas of that part of the world. It reaches across the vast area of Russia. It reaches up into Mongolia and all down through the nations of Asia into the islands of the Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand, and into India and Indonesia. It is flourishing in many of the nations of Africa.

Our general conferences are carried by satellite and other means in 92 different languages.

And this is only the beginning. This work will continue to grow and prosper and move across the earth. It must do so if Moroni's promise to Joseph is to be fulfilled.

This work is unique and wonderful. It is fundamentally different from every other body of religious doctrine of which I know.

### **The glorious First Vision**

When Jesus walked the earth, He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Joseph, when he was 14 years of age, had an experience in that glorious First Vision that was different from any other recorded experience of any man. At no other time of which we have any record have God, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son, the risen Lord, appeared on earth together.

At the time of the baptism of Jesus by John in the river Jordan, the voice of God was heard, but He was not seen. At the Mount of Transfiguration, again the voice of God was heard, but there is no record of His appearance. Stephen saw the Lord on the right hand of the Father, but They did not address or instruct him.

Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere. The voice of the Almighty was heard three times, introducing the

risen Christ, but there was no appearance of the Father.

How truly remarkable was that vision in the year 1820 when Joseph prayed in the woods and there appeared before him both the Father and the Son. One of these spoke to him, calling him by name and, pointing to the other, said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Nothing like it had ever happened before. One is led to wonder why it was so important that both the Father and the Son appear. I think it was because They were ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the last and final dispensation of the gospel, when there would be gathered together in one the elements of all previous dispensations. This was to be the final chapter in the long chronicle of God's dealing with men and women upon the earth.

### **The nature of Deity**

Following the Savior's death, the Church He had established drifted into apostasy. Fulfilled were the words of Isaiah, who said, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).

Realizing the importance of knowing the true nature of God, men had struggled to find a way to define Him. Learned clerics argued with one another. When Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century, he called together a great convocation of learned men with the hope that they could reach a conclusion of understanding concerning the true nature of Deity. All they reached was a compromise of various points of view. The result was the Nicene Creed of A.D. 325. This and subsequent creeds have become the declaration of doctrine concerning the nature of Deity for most of Christianity ever since.

I have read them all a number of times. I cannot understand them. I think others cannot understand them. I am sure that the Lord also knew that many would not understand them. And so in 1820, in that incomparable vision, the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph. They spoke to him with words that were audible, and he spoke to Them. They could see. They could speak. They could hear. They were personal. They were of substance. They were not imaginary beings. They were beings tabernacled in flesh. And out of that experience has come our unique and true understanding of the nature of Deity.

No wonder that when Joseph in 1842 wrote the Articles of Faith, he stated as number one, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1).

### **Great influence of the Book of Mormon**

As all of you well know, there followed through the years a veritable "cloud of witnesses," as Paul described prophetically (see Hebrews 12:1).

First came Moroni with the plates from which was translated the Book of Mormon. What a singular and remarkable thing this was. Joseph's story of the gold plates was fantastic. It was hard to believe and easy to challenge. Could he have written it of his own capacity? It is here, my brothers and sisters, for everyone to see, to handle, to read. Every attempt to explain its origin, other than that which he gave, has fallen of its own weight. He was largely unschooled, and yet in a very brief time he brought forth the translation which in published form comes to more than 500 pages.

Paul declares that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Bible had stood for centuries. It is a precious and wonderful book. Now

there was a second witness declaring the divinity of Christ. The Book of Mormon is the only book ever published, of which I know, that carries in it a promise that one who reads it prayerfully and asks concerning it in prayer will have revealed to him by the power of the Holy Ghost a knowledge that it is true (see Moroni 10:4).

Since its first publication in a rural print shop in Palmyra, New York, there have been more than 133 million copies produced. It has been translated into 105 languages. Not long ago it was named one of the 20 most influential books ever published in North America. Recently a first edition sold for \$105,000. But the cheapest paperback edition is as valuable to the reader who loves its language and message.

Through all of these years, critics have tried to explain it. They have spoken against it. They have ridiculed it. But it has outlived them all, and its influence today is greater than at any time in its history.

### **Priesthood and Church restored**

In this series of events came next the restoration of the priesthood, bestowed by resurrected beings who held it when the Savior walked the earth. This occurred in 1829, when Joseph was only 23.

Following receipt of the priesthood, the Church was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, when Joseph was a young man not yet 25. Again, the organization is unique and different from that of traditional Christianity. It is largely operated by a lay ministry. Voluntary service is its genius. As it has grown and spread abroad, thousands upon thousands of faithful and able men have directed its efforts.

### **Witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith**

Today I stand in wonder at the marvelous things which God revealed to His

appointed prophet while he was yet young and largely unknown. The very language of these revelations is beyond the capacity of even a man of great learning.

Scholars not of our faith, who will not accept our singular doctrines, are puzzled by the great unrolling of this work, which is touching the hearts of people across the earth. We owe it all to Joseph the Prophet, the seer and the revelator, the Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was foreordained to come forth in this generation as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth that which the Savior taught when He walked the roads of Palestine.

To you this day, I affirm my witness of the calling of the Prophet Joseph, of his works, of the sealing of his testimony with his blood as a martyr to the eternal truth. Each of you can bear witness of the same thing. You and I are faced with the stark question of accepting the truth of the First

Vision and that which followed it. On the question of its reality lies the very validity of this Church. If it is the truth—and I testify that it is—then the work in which we are engaged is the most important work on the earth.

I leave with you my testimony of the truth of these things, and I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you. May the windows of heaven be opened and blessings showered upon you as the Lord has promised. Never forget that this was His promise and that He has the power and the capacity to see that it is fulfilled. I so pray as I leave my blessing and love with you in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Wolfgang H. Paul offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 7, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Andrew Unsworth and Richard Elliott were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinck-

ley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, and satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Andrew Unsworth and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Our Prayer to Thee,” with soloist Scott Miller. Elders Robert D. Hales

and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Brother Daniel K. Judd, first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, and Elder Octaviano Tenorio of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Our Prayer to Thee.”

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## Elder Robert D. Hales

### **The need for personal revelation**

As we begin the concluding session of this historic conference, I join you in expressing gratitude for the privilege of sustaining President Henry B. Eyring as a counselor in the First Presidency, Elder Quentin L. Cook in the Quorum of the Twelve, and Elder Walter F. González in the seven Presidents of the Seventy. I offer them my love and support and testify that they are called of God by a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, “according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.”<sup>1</sup>

The events of the past two days teach us the need for revelation in the Lord’s work and personal revelation in our own lives. Personal revelation is the way we know for ourselves the most important truths of our existence: the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ; the truthfulness of the restored gospel; and God’s purpose and direction for us.

Much of what I know about personal revelation I have learned from the examples of the prophets, both ancient and modern. This afternoon I would like to share a few of these personal examples and pray that they will inspire each of us to seek the blessings of personal revelation in our own lives.

As a young regional representative, I was assigned to assist Elder Marion G. Romney in reorganizing a stake. During the long, quiet ride to the conference, our

conversation turned to the spiritual dimensions of our assignment. Elder Romney taught me about how the Lord blesses us with revelation. “Robert,” he said, “I have learned that when we are on the Lord’s errand, we have His blessings to accomplish whatever we are asked to do.” Elder Romney further explained that we would arrive in the distant city, kneel in prayer, interview priesthood holders, kneel in prayer again, and the Holy Ghost would reveal to us the person whom the Lord had chosen to be the new stake president. He promised me it would be one of the great spiritual experiences of my life, and it was.

Each of us has been sent to earth by our Heavenly Father to merit eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup> How do we know the Father and the Son for ourselves? By personal revelation. Personal revelation is the way Heavenly Father helps us know Him and His Son, learn and live the gospel, endure to the end in righteousness, and qualify for eternal life—to return back into Their presence.

### **How to seek revelation**

You may ask, “How do we seek personal revelation?” Paul counseled the Saints to rely on the Spirit rather than the wisdom of the world.<sup>3</sup> To obtain that Spirit, we begin with prayer. President Lorenzo Snow had studied the gospel for



several years before joining the Church. But he did not receive a witness until two or three weeks after his baptism when he retired in secret prayer. “The Spirit of God descended upon me,” he said. “O, the joy and happiness I felt . . . [for] I then received a perfect knowledge that God lives, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and of the restoration of the holy Priesthood, and the fulness of the Gospel.”<sup>4</sup>

I have learned that prayer provides a firm foundation for personal revelation. But more is required. While still a regional representative, I had the opportunity to learn from another Apostle, Elder Boyd K. Packer. We were assigned to reorganize a stake and began by kneeling in prayer together. After interviewing priesthood leaders and having prayer, Elder Packer suggested that we walk around the building together. As we walked, he demonstrated a vital principle of seeking personal revelation—the principle the Lord taught Oliver Cowdery: “Behold, . . . you must study it out in your mind.”<sup>5</sup> We pondered our assignment, counseled together, and listened to the voice of the Spirit. When we went back, we prayed and studied further, and then we were prepared to receive revelation.

### **On the Lord’s timetable**

Revelation comes on the Lord’s timetable, which often means we must move forward in faith, even though we haven’t received all the answers we desire. As a General Authority, I was assigned to help reorganize a stake presidency under the direction of Elder Ezra Taft Benson. After praying, interviewing, studying, and praying again, Elder Benson asked if I knew who the new president would be. I said I had not received that inspiration yet. He looked at me for a long time and replied he hadn’t either. However, we *were* inspired to ask three worthy priesthood holders to speak in the Saturday evening session of conference. Moments

after the third speaker began, the Spirit prompted me that he should be the new stake president. I looked over at President Benson and saw tears streaming down his face. Revelation had been given to both of us—but only by continuing to seek our Heavenly Father’s will as we moved forward in faith.

### **More frequently than we know**

Early in my Church service, Elder Harold B. Lee taught this lesson when he came to organize a new stake in the district where we were living. Elder Lee asked me, as a newly sustained bishop, if I would join him at a press conference. There an intense young reporter challenged Elder Lee. He said to him, “You call yourself a prophet. When was the last time you had revelation, and what was it about?” Elder Lee paused, looked directly at him, and responded in a sweet way, “It was yesterday afternoon about three o’clock. We were praying about who should be called as the president of the new stake, and it was made known to us who that individual should be.” The reporter’s heart changed. I will never forget the Spirit that came into that room as Elder Lee bore his powerful witness of revelation that can be received by those faithfully seeking to do the Lord’s will.

As faithful children, youth, parents, teachers, and leaders, we may receive personal revelation more frequently than we realize. The more we receive and acknowledge personal revelation, the more our testimonies grow. When I served as a bishop, my testimony grew each time I received revelation to extend callings to ward members. That testimony has been strengthened each time I have witnessed General Authorities and officers, Area Seventies, and stake presidents called or given new assignments. More importantly, I am strengthened by the personal revelations I receive in my role as a son of God, a husband, and a father. I am so

thankful for the guidance and direction of the Spirit in our home as we seek for direction in family matters.

### **Pattern of revelation shown by prophets**

For all of us, our personal revelations reflect the pattern of revelation received by prophets, as recounted in the scriptures. Adam and Eve called upon the name of the Lord and received personal revelation, including knowledge of the Savior.<sup>6</sup> Enoch, Abraham, and Moses sought for the welfare of their people and were given marvelous revelations recorded in the Pearl of Great Price.<sup>7</sup> Elijah's personal revelation came through the still, small voice;<sup>8</sup> Daniel's came in a dream.<sup>9</sup> Peter's personal revelation gave him a testimony that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>10</sup> Lehi and Nephi received revelations about the Savior and the plan of salvation, and virtually all of the Bible and Book of Mormon prophets received revelations to warn, teach, strengthen, and comfort them and their people.<sup>11</sup> After much prayer in the temple, President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation on the priesthood.<sup>12</sup> And after praying about providing temple blessings to more members of the Church, President Hinckley received revelation about the building of smaller temples.<sup>13</sup>

Prophets receive personal revelations to help them in their own lives and in directing the earthly affairs of the Church. Our responsibility is to seek personal revelations for ourselves and for the responsibilities the Lord has given us.

These past weeks President Hinckley has been seeking revelation about the callings that would be announced in this conference. About a month ago in our Thursday temple meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, I listened as President Hinckley offered a simple, sincere prayer for spiritual guidance. The answer to his heartfelt prayer has now been presented to all of us.

Do we see the pattern of revelation in the lives of prophets? Are the threads of that pattern also woven through our lives?

We know that the pattern centers on the Atonement.<sup>14</sup> We receive the blessings of the Atonement when we repent of our sins and keep the commandments. This we covenanted to do when we were baptized, and we renew that covenant each week as we partake of the sacrament. As we continue in righteousness, we qualify ourselves to say with Samuel, "Speak, [Lord]; for thy servant heareth."<sup>15</sup> And the Lord answers, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."<sup>16</sup>

### **Faith is the key to revelation**

We prepare to receive personal revelation as the prophets do, by studying the scriptures, fasting, praying, and building faith. Faith is the key. Remember Joseph's preparation for the First Vision:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. . . .

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."<sup>17</sup>

By unwavering faith, we learn for ourselves that "it is by faith that miracles are wrought."<sup>18</sup>

Generally, those miracles will not be physical demonstrations of God's power—parting of the Red Sea, raising of the dead, breaking down prison walls, or the appearance of heavenly messengers. By design, most miracles are spiritual demonstrations of God's power—tender mercies gently bestowed through impressions, ideas, feelings of assurance, solutions to problems, strength to meet challenges, and comfort to bear disappointments and sorrow.

These miracles come to us as we endure what the scriptures call a "trial of [our] faith."<sup>19</sup> Sometimes that trial is the time it takes before an answer is received. When President David O. McKay was a



young man herding cattle, he sought a witness, but it did not come until many years later while serving his mission in Scotland. He wrote, "It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed . . . on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered 'some-time, somewhere.'"<sup>20</sup>

The answer may be "Not now—be patient and wait."

I testify that on the hillside or in the meadow, in the grove or closet, now or in the eternities to come, the Savior's words to each of us will be fulfilled: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."<sup>21</sup> While we are commanded not to seek after signs, we are commanded to "seek . . . earnestly the best gifts."<sup>22</sup> These gifts include the Holy Ghost and personal revelation. That revelation will come "line upon line, precept upon precept," as the Savior said, and "unto him that receiveth [the Lord] will give more."<sup>23</sup>

### Seek more of the Spirit of God

As we go forth from this conference, I call on each of us to seek more and receive more of the Spirit of God. The Savior prayed that His disciples in the New World would receive that Spirit. Then, as an example to all of us, He departed from His disciples and in prayer thanked His Heavenly Father for bestowing it.<sup>24</sup> Let us follow His example and pray for the Spirit of God, giving thanks for its marvelous blessings in our lives.

I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ lives and leads His Church through a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know—I know—that President Hinckley leads this Church by revelation. In the words of Alma:

"Behold, I say unto you [these things] are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and

prayed many days. . . . And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me . . . ; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me."<sup>25</sup>

That each of us may receive that Spirit, obtain the blessings of personal revelation, and know for ourselves that these things are true is my heartfelt prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Alma 8:24.
2. John 17:3.
3. See 1 Corinthians 2:11–16.
4. Quoted in Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
6. See Moses 5:4–11.
7. See Genesis 18:23–33; Exodus 3:1–3; 32:31–33; Moses 1:1–2, 24; 6:26–37; 7:2–4; Abraham 1:1–2, 15–19.
8. See 1 Kings 19:11–12.
9. See Daniel 2:16–20.
10. See Matthew 16:15–17.
11. See 1 Nephi 2:16; 11:1–2; for additional examples, see Mosiah 3:1–4; Alma 43:23; Helaman 7–8; 10:2–4; 3 Nephi 1:10–13; Mormon 8:34–35; Ether 3:1–6, 13–14, 25.
12. See Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 16.
13. See Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 68–69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 49.
14. See Acts 9; Mosiah 27; Alma 36.
15. 1 Samuel 3:10.
16. Matthew 13:16.
17. James 1:5–6.
18. Moroni 7:37.
19. Ether 12:6.
20. Quoted in Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 50.
21. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; see also 3 Nephi 14:7.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.
23. 2 Nephi 28:30.
24. See 3 Nephi 19:19–23.
25. Alma 5:46.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### How to find truth

Since truth is the only meaningful foundation upon which we can make wise decisions, how then can one establish what is really true? Increasingly more people are finding that making wise decisions is becoming more and more difficult because of the ultra-interconnected world in which we live. Constantly forced into our consciousness is an incessant barrage of counsel, advice, and promotions. It is done by a bewildering array of media, Internet, and other means. On a given subject we can receive multiple strongly delivered, carefully crafted messages with solutions. But often two of the solutions can be diametrically opposed. No wonder some are confused and are not sure how to make the right decisions.

To further complicate matters, others try to persuade us that our decisions must be socially acceptable and politically correct. Some pondering of that approach will reveal how wrong it is. Since social and political structures differ widely over the world and can dramatically change with time, the folly of using that method to make choices is apparent.

There are two ways to find truth—both useful, provided we follow the laws upon which they are predicated. The first is the scientific method. It can require analysis of data to confirm a theory or, alternatively, establish a valid principle through experimentation. The scientific method is a valuable way of seeking truth. However, it has two limitations. First, we never can be sure we have identified absolute truth, though we often draw nearer and nearer to it. Second, sometimes, no matter how earnestly we apply the method, we can get the wrong answer.

The best way of finding truth is simply to go to the origin of all truth and ask or respond to inspiration.<sup>1</sup> For success,

two ingredients are essential: first, unwavering faith in the source of all truth; second, a willingness to keep God's commandments to keep open spiritual communication with Him. Elder Robert D. Hales has just spoken to us about that personal revelation and how to obtain it.

### Scientific approach<sup>2</sup>

What have we learned from the scientific approach to discovering truth? An example will illustrate. Try as I might, I am not able, even in the smallest degree, to comprehend the extent, depth, and stunning grandeur of what our holy Heavenly Father, Elohim, has permitted to be revealed by the scientific method. If we were capable of moving outward into space, we would first see our earth as did the astronauts. Farther out, we would have a grandstand view of the sun and its orbiting planets. They would appear as a small circle of objects within an enormous panorama of glittering stars. Were we to continue the outward journey, we would have a celestial view of our Milky Way spiral, with over 100 billion stars rotating in a circular path, their orbits controlled by gravity around a concentrated central region. Beyond that, we could look toward a group of galaxies called the Virgo Cluster, which some feel includes our Milky Way, estimated to be about 50 million light-years away. Beyond that, we'd encounter galaxies 10 billion light-years away that the Hubble telescope has photographed. The dizzying enormity of that distance is suggested by noting that light travels 700 million miles an hour. Even from this extraordinary perspective there would not be the slightest evidence of approaching any limit to God the Father's creations.

As awe inspiring as this incredible view of the heavens would present, there

is another consideration equally capable of confirming the unfathomable capacities of our Father in Heaven. Were we to move in the opposite direction to explore the structure of matter, we could get a close-up view of a double helix molecule of DNA. That is the extraordinary, self-duplicating molecular structure that controls the makeup of our physical body. Further exploration would bring us to the level of an atom, composed of the protons, neutrons, and electrons we've heard about.

Were we to penetrate further into the mysteries of the most fundamental makeup of creation, we would come to the limit of our current understanding. In the last 70 years much has been learned about the structure of matter. A Standard Model of Fundamental Particles and Interactions has been developed. It is based on experimentation that has established the existence of fundamental particles designated as quarks and others called leptons. This model explains the patterns of nuclear binding and decay of matter, but it does not yet provide a successful explanation for the forces of gravity. Also, some feel that even more powerful tools than those used to acquire our current understanding of matter might reveal additional fundamental particles. So there are yet more of Father in Heaven's creations to be understood by the scientific method.

We can see the scientific method has brought about an extraordinary expansion of our understanding as the Lord has inspired gifted men who may not understand who created these things nor for what purpose. Many of these may not even recognize such inspiration or give credit to God for the origin of their contributions. I was comforted recently as President Henry B. Eyring shared an experience that his gifted father had in a meeting with other outstanding scientists. He asked them if their research indicated

the existence of a superior organizing intelligence. They all confirmed their conviction that such an intelligence exists.

Limited as it is, our understanding of our Father's creations indicates that it is mostly vacant space. Even those things we consider as solid, firm, and tangible, when viewed at enormous magnification in the heavens or in minute matter, are mostly vacant space that God, our Father, perfectly controls and uses for His exalted purposes.

### **Revealed truth approach**

What have we learned about truth through revelation?

Centuries ago, God the Father permitted some of His prophets to view His vast creations perfectly, through the eye of the Holy Spirit. He also explained why He had created them: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>3</sup> Enoch was one of those prophets. He observed the God of heaven weep as He saw how the power and influence of Satan had turned many on earth to evil.

Enoch declared:

"How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

"And were it possible that man could number the . . . millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet . . . thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever;

". . . And naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?

"The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, . . . and . . . gave I unto man his agency;

"And unto thy brethren have I . . . given commandment, that they should

love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.”<sup>4</sup>

Well did God the Father say unto Moses:

“Worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. . . .

“... There are many worlds . . . , and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.”<sup>5</sup>

A knowledge of truth is of little value unless we apply it in making correct decisions. Consider for a moment a man, heavily overweight, approaching a bakery display. In his mind are these thoughts: The doctor told you not to eat any more of that. It's not good for you. It just gives you momentary gratification of appetite. You'll feel uncomfortable the rest of the day after it. You've decided not to have any more. But then he hears himself say, “I'll have two of those almond twists and a couple of those chocolate doughnuts. One more time won't hurt. I'll do it just once more, and this will be the last time.”

### **Faith and character**

The process of identifying truth sometimes necessitates enormous effort coupled with profound faith in our Father and His glorified Son. God intended that it be so to forge your character. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to respond obediently to the direction of the Spirit as you make vital decisions. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of your spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely

important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering.

I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you can do that through disobedience.

Understand and apply this vital principle to your life: Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise greater faith. Thus, your confidence in making correct decisions is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith for yet stronger character.

### **Our Father and His Son**

With the enormity of what we can in just the smallest way begin to understand and certainly in no way fully comprehend, how grateful we must be that this God of unfathomable capacities is our Father. He is a loving, understanding, compassionate, patient Father. He created us as His children. He treats us as a beloved son or daughter. He makes us feel loved, appreciated, valuable, and dear to Him. He has given us His plan of mercy<sup>6</sup> and equipped us, when we are obedient, to make correct decisions. He has provided through His holy Son a means for us to live, to grow, to develop, and to place ourselves squarely on the path to be eternally under His guidance and influence.

I love our Father in Heaven beyond my capacity to express. In all humility, I solemnly bear witness that this creative Master of unparalleled capacities is our compassionate, holy Father. His Beloved Son laid His life down in absolute obedience to His Father to break the bonds of death and to become our Master, our Redeemer, our Savior. While I do not fully comprehend all Their capacities, I understand something of Their power to express intensely Their love. Humbly I bear

solemn witness that They live and love us.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Jacob 4:8.
2. For further information see *McGraw-Hill Concise Encyclopedia of Physics* (2005);

Philip Morrison and others, *Powers of Ten* (1982); [www.particleadventure.org](http://www.particleadventure.org); and [www.atlasoftheuniverse.com](http://www.atlasoftheuniverse.com).

3. Moses 1:39.
4. Moses 7:29–33.
5. Moses 1:33, 35.
6. See Alma 42:31.

## Daniel K Judd

### Nourished by the good word of God

As a young man I worked with my father and brothers raising cattle and horses on our ranch in southern Utah and northern Arizona. My father taught us that when we wanted to catch one of our horses to ride, all we had to do was to put a handful of grain into a bucket and shake it for several seconds. It didn't matter if the horses were in a corral or a large field; they would come on the run to eat the grain. We could then gently slip a bridle over their heads while they were eating. I was always amazed that such a simple process worked so well.

On some occasions, when we didn't want to take the time to get the grain from the barn, we would put dirt in the bucket and shake it, attempting to trick the horses into thinking that we had grain for them to eat. When they discovered our deception, some of the horses stayed, but others would run away and be nearly impossible to catch. It often took several days to regain their trust. We learned that taking the time to consistently feed our horses grain made them much easier to work with and provided them with increased nourishment and greater strength.

Even though many years have passed since my days on the ranch, the experience I have just described has helped me as I have considered the following question: What can we as teachers and leaders in the Church do to provide increased doctrinal and spiritual nourishment for those we serve?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught: “Most people don’t come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven. Those of us who are called on to speak or teach or lead have an obligation to help provide that, as best we possibly can.”<sup>1</sup>

### Vital keys for teaching and leading

The Savior and His servants have not only taught us the importance of helping others be “nourished by the good word of God” (Moroni 6:4); they have also provided inspired direction concerning how teaching and leading can best be accomplished. Section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants is one of many references that provide such valuable counsel. After acknowledging the concerns that existed in some of the early branches of the Church, the Savior instructed a group of leaders concerning the solution to the problems they were facing. His instructions began by asking a vital question: “Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?” (D&C 50:13). The Lord’s familiar answer follows in verse 14: “To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.”

The answers to the problems the Saints were facing in 1831 are the same for the challenges we are facing today—we are to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Teach the truths that are most important*

Section 50 includes several vital keys to providing nourishment for those we teach and those we lead. The first key is found in the Savior's admonition to "preach *my* gospel" (D&C 50:14; italics added). The scriptures clearly teach that the gospel we are to preach is not the "wisdom of the world" (Mosiah 24:7) but the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:21). While the gospel of Jesus Christ embraces all truth, not all truths are of equal value.<sup>2</sup> The Savior clearly taught that *His* gospel, first and foremost, is His atoning sacrifice. His gospel is also an invitation to receive the blessings of the Atonement through faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring faithfully to the end.<sup>3</sup>

Just as I learned as a young man that grain was more appealing to our horses than a dirt-filled bucket, I also learned that grain was more nourishing than hay, that hay was more nourishing than straw, and that it was possible to *feed* a horse without *nourishing* him. As teachers and leaders, it is vital that we nourish those we teach and lead by focusing on the fundamental doctrines, principles, and applications emphasized in the scriptures and the words of our latter-day prophets instead of spending precious time on subjects and sources of lesser importance.

As a teacher I have learned that a class discussion focused on the Atonement of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important than discussing topics such as the precise location of the ancient city of Zarahemla in today's geography. As a leader I have learned that leadership meetings are more meaningful if our highest priority is an *integrated* effort to build

faith in Christ and strengthen families, and not simply a *correlated* calendar.

The Lord's words in section 50 contain a warning that if we teach "by some other way" than the way the Lord has directed, "it is not of God" (D&C 50:18). The Lord has taught those of us who serve in the Church to teach "none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith" (D&C 52:9). Does this mean that following the Savior's admonition to "preach my gospel" requires that every class we teach or meeting we lead be limited to teaching faith and repentance?

President Henry B. Eyring responded to a similar question by answering: "Of course not. But it does mean that the teacher and those who participate must always desire to bring the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of the members in the room to produce faith and a determination to repent and to be clean."<sup>4</sup>

*Teach by the Spirit*

A second key to ensuring those we teach and lead are "nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4) is also found in the Savior's direction "to preach my gospel *by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth*" (D&C 50:14; italics added). Not only are the Savior's words directing us to follow the guidance of the Spirit as we prepare and as we teach; He is also teaching that *it is the Spirit that is the most effective teacher in any given situation*.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "The Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth with greater effect and understanding than the truth can be imparted by personal contact even with heavenly beings."<sup>5</sup>

Several months ago I attended a training meeting where a number of General

Authorities had spoken. After commenting on the excellent instruction that had been given, Elder David A. Bednar asked the following question: “What are we learning that has not been said?” He then explained that in addition to receiving the counsel that had been given by those who had *spoken* or who would yet speak, we should also carefully listen for and record the *unspoken* impressions given by the Holy Ghost.

The following statement from our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, provides additional counsel concerning teaching by the Spirit:

“We must . . . get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love for the Lord and this precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Nourish those we teach and lead**

The Lord’s words in section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants also provide an inspired standard by which each of us can

evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching, leading, and learning. In verse 22 we read, “Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.”

My dear brothers and sisters, with all of my heart I pray that each of us will take great care to nourish those we teach and those we lead by fortifying them with the bread of life and the living water found within the restored gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 26.
2. See Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 7.
3. See 3 Nephi 27:13–22; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11–12; 39:6; 76:40–42.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 43–44.
5. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:47–48.
6. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 619–20.

## **Elder Octaviano Tenorio**

### **Power of godliness manifested in temples**

My dear brothers and sisters, one of the things which I am most grateful to my Heavenly Father for is the opportunity I had to work for 15 years as recorder in the Mexico City Mexico Temple. In this sacred place, as in all temples, ordinances are performed for the living and the dead by the power of the priesthood. In 1832 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation about the priesthood:

“And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:19–20).

I have had wonderful experiences within the walls of the temple that verify this.

### **Story of being sealed to parents**

In 1993, after I had served as president of the Mexico Tuxtla Gutiérrez Mission, we traveled as a family to see my parents, who lived in northern Mexico. During the trip we talked about the joy of serving the Lord and seeing the change in people who had accepted the gospel



during the three years we were in the mission. We were commenting about those people who were baptized, confirmed, and had received the priesthood and the ones we knew had entered the temple and were sealed as families for eternity.

My youngest son asked a question that made me reflect: "Dad, are you sealed to your parents?" I told him that because my father had been less active for many years, he and my mother were not sealed in the temple. To help him become active, I thought up a plan. It involved my children, and I explained to them how we would do it: Every Sunday my father would get up early to take my mother and sister to church, only to return home, wait for the services to end, then go back to pick them up. So I assigned my children to go with him and say, "Grandpa, would you do us a favor?" I knew his answer would be, "Whatever you want, my children." Then they would ask him if he would go with them to church and stay with them so he could listen to their testimonies. It was the first Sunday of the month. I also knew my father would give any excuse not to go, so I planned to enter the room to help my children convince him.

The time soon came for executing the plan. My daughter, Susana, approached my father and asked him about the favor. Sure enough, my father told her he would do anything he could for them. Then came the invitation to go to church, and just as we had predicted, he used this excuse: "I can't because I haven't even showered." That's when my wife and I, who were hiding behind the door, shouted, "We'll wait for you!"

When we realized he was not making a decision, my wife and I entered the room and, together with our children, began to insist, "Shower! Shower!" Then what we expected happened. My father came with us, he stayed for the services, listened to the testimonies of my children, his heart was softened, and from

that Sunday on he never missed church. Months later, at the age of 78, he and my mother were sealed, and we, his children, were sealed to them.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifest in the ordinances of the temple, I can now be reunited with my parents for all eternity, even after death.

### **Story of daughter's birth and death**

Many times we don't comprehend the meaning of the ordinances of the temple in their fulness until after we have known affliction or passed through experiences that could have been extremely sad without the knowledge of the plan of salvation.

When my wife and I had been married only a year and a half, she was ready to deliver our first baby. We had decided that she would have the baby in the Chihuahua colonies, where she had been born. At that time I was working in Mexico City, and we decided that she would be there a month ahead of the delivery date. I was planning to join her later.

The delivery date arrived. I was at work when I received a call from my father-in-law. The news was good: "Octaviano, your wife has given birth, and you now have a little daughter who is beautiful." So, in my happiness, I began to announce this to my friends and partners at work, who in turn asked me for chocolates to celebrate the birth of my little one.

The next day I began to give out chocolates throughout the four floors of our office building. When I reached the second floor, I received another call from my father-in-law. This time the news was different: "Octaviano, your wife is fine, but your daughter has passed away. The funeral will be today, and you don't have time to come. What are you going to do?"

I asked to speak with Rosa, my wife, and then asked her if she was OK. She



replied that she was fine, depending on how I was feeling. Then we talked about the plan of salvation, remembering this scripture:

“And I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (D&C 137:10).

I asked her, “Do you believe that?” And she said, “Yes, I do.” Then I replied, “We should be happy then. I love you. And if you are OK with that, I’ll take my vacation in two weeks, spend some time with you, and return back together to Mexico.”

We knew that one day we would be reunited with our daughter because we were sealed by the power of the priesthood in the temple. We ended the telephone call, and I resumed giving out the chocolates in my office building.

Seeing me do this, one of my co-workers was surprised and asked me how I could do this after such terrible news. I answered, “If you have three hours, I can explain why I am not feeling too sad and about my knowledge of what happens after death.” He didn’t have three hours at that moment but did later. We ended up talking for four hours. He accepted the gospel and, together with his mother and brother, was baptized into the Church after receiving the discussions.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifested in the ordinances of the temple, I will now be able to know my daughter. I will embrace her, and we will be with her for eternity, just as we are now with our three surviving children.

### **Priesthood makes eternal families possible**

I rejoice in the words of Malachi:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6).

This priesthood makes eternal families possible. It allows me, a son, to turn my heart to my father, who passed away last year, and to be calm in my hope through the Savior that I will see him again. This priesthood allows me, as a father, to turn my heart to our two children who died as infants and to be calm in my hope through the Savior that I will know them, and they will know I was their earthly father as I look into their eyes and tell them I love them. It is this priesthood which has allowed me to see, in the holiness of the temple, how the power of godliness is manifested to all people who, after exercising faith in Christ, repenting of their sins, and searching fervently for happiness, come to make sacred covenants with our Heavenly Father and receive His holy ordinances that bind on earth as well as bind in heaven.

I love temple work. I know that God lives, that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Claudio D. Zivic and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Claudio D. Zivic

### Being more than ordinary

I have heard that no one has ever died giving a talk in a general conference. If that is the case today, I sincerely apologize.

While serving in the required military service in Argentina, I read a book whose author I do not remember. He wrote, “I choose not to be an ordinary man; it is my right to be someone out of the ordinary, if I am able.”

To be someone out of the ordinary means to be successful, unique, and outstanding.

That phrase has remained written in my mind and heart. My feelings were and are that we, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, have chosen not to be ordinary men and women. The last words, “if I am able,” made me think that it is not enough to go through the motions of being baptized and confirmed, but rather we have to fulfill and honor the commitment that we made with the Lord on that memorable day.

### Becoming free from sin

Lehi taught his son Jacob, saying: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Undoubtedly, freedom and eternal life are what we seek. We tremble at the very thought of dying and being captives of the devil.

Nephi taught clearly what we ought to do. He said, “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

I believe that the first thing we have to keep in mind in doing “all we can” is to repent of our sins. We will never be able to reach our divine potential if we remain in our sins.

I have fond memories of the day of my baptism when I was eight years old. It was performed in the Liniers Branch, the first chapel of the Church built in South America. After my baptism, as I was returning home along with my family, my oldest brother started wrestling with me, as he often did. I exclaimed, “Do not touch me! I cannot sin!” As the days passed, I realized that it was not possible to remain sinless for the rest of my life.

It is difficult to bear the sufferings that are inflicted upon us, but the real torment in life is to suffer the consequences of our own shortcomings and sins which we inflict upon ourselves.

There is only one way to rid ourselves of this suffering. It is by means of sincere repentance. I learned that if I could present unto the Lord a broken heart and a contrite spirit, feeling a godly sorrow for my sins, humbling myself, being repentant of my faults, He, through His miraculous atoning sacrifice, could erase those sins and remember them no more.

The Argentine poet José Hernández, in his famous book *Martín Fierro*, wrote:

A man loses a lot of things  
and sometimes finds them again,  
but it's my duty to inform you,  
and you'll do well to remember it,  
if once your sense of shame gets lost  
it will never again be found.

[*La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, part 2 of *Martín Fierro* (1879), canto 32; bilingual ed., trans. C. E. Ward (1967), 493]

If we don't experience the godly sorrow that results from our sins or unrighteous actions, it will be impossible for

us to remain on the way of outstanding people.

### **Doing all we can to share the gospel**

Another important principle to remember in doing “all we can do” is to look for and develop the opportunities that life within the gospel constantly offers us and recognize that the Lord has given us all that we have. He is responsible for all that is good in our lives.

Another thing that must be our permanent responsibility is to do “all we can do” to share the gospel of happiness with all mankind.

Some time ago I received a letter from Brother Rafael Pérez Cisneros of Galicia, Spain, telling me about his conversion. Part of his letter said the following:

“I had no concept of the purpose of life or what the family really is. When I finally allowed the missionaries to come into my home, I told them, ‘Give me your message, but I warn you that nothing is going to make me change religions.’ On this first occasion my children and my wife were listening attentively. I felt separated from the group. I felt afraid, and without thinking I went to my bedroom. I closed the door and began to pray from the depths of my soul like I had never prayed before. ‘Father, if it is true that these young men are Your disciples and have come to help us, please make it known to me.’ It was in that very moment that I began to cry like a small child. My tears were abundant, and I felt happiness like I had never before experienced. I was absorbed in a sphere full of joy and happiness that penetrated my soul. I understood that God was answering my prayer.

“All of my family was baptized, and we had the blessing of being sealed in the Swiss Temple, making me the happiest man in the world.”

I think this story should motivate us to do “all we can do” to share the blessings of joy that come from living the gospel of happiness.

### **Serving the Lord until the end of our lives**

The final concept I want to share is that we should do “all we can do” until the end of our mortal probation. Without question, we have living examples like President Gordon B. Hinckley and many other men and women who continue to faithfully serve at ages that others may consider inconvenient.

When I served as president of the Spain Bilbao Mission, I was impressed with the quality of members and missionaries that I met, who moved the work forward with great ability and love, as do many faithful members of the Church in other parts of the world. To all of them, I express my sincere respect and admiration.

The Lord has said He is “delight[ed] to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory” (D&C 76:5–6).

May we always have in our minds and hearts the words of Nephi: “Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. . . . My soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation” (2 Nephi 4:28, 30).

It is my humble prayer that the Lord may bless us to do “all we can do” in this “out of the ordinary” path that we have chosen, which I testify to be true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Douglas L. Callister

### Gaining our own witness

Years ago a man was accused of a serious crime. The prosecution presented three witnesses, each of whom saw the man commit the crime. The defense then presented three witnesses, none of whom had seen its commission. The simple jury was confused. Based on the number of witnesses, the evidence seemed to the jury equally divided. The man was acquitted. It was irrelevant, of course, that untold millions had never seen the crime. There needed to be only one witness.

In the genius of the gospel plan, there ultimately only has to be one witness, but that witness must be you. The testimony of others may initiate and nourish the desire for faith and testimony, but eventually every individual must find out for himself. None can permanently endure on borrowed light.

The restored gospel is not truer today than when a solitary boy walked out of the Sacred Grove in 1820. Truth has never been dependent on the number who embrace it. When Joseph left the grove, there was only one person on earth who knew the truth about God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. It is necessary, however, that each find out for himself and carry that burning testimony into the next life.

### Heber J. Grant's testimony

When 23-year-old Heber J. Grant was installed as president of the Tooele Stake, he told the Saints that he believed the gospel was true. President Joseph F. Smith, a counselor in the First Presidency, inquired, "Heber, you said you believe the gospel with all your heart, . . . but you did not bear your testimony that you know it is true. Don't you know absolutely that this gospel is true?"

Heber answered, "I do not." Joseph F. Smith then turned to John Taylor, the

President of the Church, and said, "I am in favor of undoing this afternoon what we did this morning. I do not think any man should preside over a stake who has not a perfect and abiding knowledge of the divinity of this work."

President Taylor replied, "Joseph, Joseph, Joseph, [Heber] knows it just as well as you do. The only thing that he does not know is that he does know it."

Within a few weeks that testimony was realized, and young Heber J. Grant shed tears of gratitude for the perfect, abiding, and absolute testimony that came into his life.<sup>1</sup>

It is a grand thing to know—and to know that you know and that the light has not been borrowed from another.

### A missionary recognizes his testimony

Years ago I presided over a mission headquartered in the Midwest. One day, with a handful of missionaries, I spoke with an esteemed representative of another Christian faith. This gentle soul spoke of his own religion's history and doctrine, eventually repeating the familiar words: "By grace ye are saved. Every man and woman must exercise faith in Christ in order to become a saved being."

Among those present was a new missionary. He was altogether unfamiliar with other religions. He had to ask the question, "But, sir, what happens to the little baby who dies before he is old enough to understand and exercise faith in Christ?" The learned man bowed his head, looked at the floor, and said, "There ought to be an exception. There ought to be a loophole. There ought to be a way, but there isn't."

The missionary looked at me and, with tears in his eyes, said, "Goodness, President, we do have the truth, don't we!"

The moment of testimony realization—when you know that you know—is sweet and sublime. That testimony, if nurtured, will rest upon you as a mantle. When we see light, we are engulfed by it. Lights of understanding turn on within.

### **Paying the price to know**

I once conversed with a fine young man who was not of our faith, although he had attended most of our worship services for more than a year. I asked why he had not joined the Church. He replied, “Because I do not know whether it is true. I think it may well be true, but I cannot stand and testify, as you do, ‘I actually know it is true.’”

I inquired, “Have you read the Book of Mormon?” He answered that he had read in the book.

I asked whether he had prayed about the book. He answered, “I have mentioned it in my prayers.”

I told my friend that as long as he casually read and prayed, he never would find out, worlds without end. But when he set aside a period for fasting and pleading, the truth would be burned into his heart, and he would know that he knew. He said nothing more to me but told his wife the next morning that he would be fasting. The following Saturday he was baptized.

If you want to know that you know that you know, a price must be paid. And you alone must pay that price. There are proxies for ordinances but none for the acquisition of a testimony.

Alma spoke of his conversion in these beautiful words:

“I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me” (Alma 5:46).

### **Bearing testimony to others**

When a testimony has been realized, there is a burning urge on the part of the possessor to bear that testimony to others. When Brigham Young left the waters of baptism, he said: “The spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I felt as though my bones would consume within me unless I spoke to the people. . . . The first discourse I ever delivered I occupied over an hour. I opened my mouth and the Lord filled it.”<sup>2</sup> As a fire will not burn except the flame be revealed, a testimony cannot abide except it be expressed.

Brigham Young later said of Orson Pratt, “If Brother Orson [were] chopped up in inch pieces, each piece would cry out, ‘Mormonism [is] true.’”<sup>3</sup> Father Lehi eulogized his noble son Nephi in these words: “But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it” (2 Nephi 1:27).

The opportunity and responsibility for testimony bearing exist first in the family setting. Our children should be able to remember the light in our eyes, the ring of our testimonies in their ears, and the feeling in their hearts as we bear witness to our most precious audience that Jesus was truly God’s own Son and Joseph was His prophet. Our posterity must know that we know, because we oft tell them.

Early Church leaders paid a great price to establish this dispensation. Perhaps we will meet them in the next life and listen to their witness. When we are called upon to testify, what will we say? There will be spiritual infants and spiritual giants in the next life. Eternity is a long time to live without light, especially if our spouses and descendants also live in darkness because there was no light within us, and others, therefore, could not light their lamps.

## Plead in prayer to keep testimony strong

We should be on our knees every morning and night pleading with the Lord that we never lose our faith, our testimony, or our virtue. There only has to be one witness, but it must be yourself.

I have a testimony. It urges to be expressed. I bear witness that the power of the living God is in this Church. I know

what I know, and my witness is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 191–93.
2. In *Deseret News*, Aug. 3, 1870, 306.
3. President Brigham Young's Office Journal, Oct. 1, 1860, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; punctuation and capitalization modernized.

## Elder Steven E. Snow

### Tribute to mother's service

President David O. McKay once quoted Abraham Lincoln as saying, "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother."<sup>1</sup> These words well explain my feelings about my own mother. Viola Jean Goates Snow—Jeanie to all who knew her—was born in 1929 and died shortly after her 60th birthday in 1989. She taught me and encouraged me. She truly convinced me I could accomplish anything I wanted. She also disciplined me. As my own sons say of their mother, "She was the travel agent for guilt trips." Mom was a wonderful mother, a great role model, and scarcely a day passes I do not think of her and miss her.

A few years before she passed away, she was diagnosed with cancer, a disease she fought with great courage. As a family we learned, strangely enough, that cancer is a disease of love. It provides opportunities to mend fences, say good-byes, and express love. A few weeks before my mother's death, we were visiting in the family room of my boyhood home. Mom had fine taste and liked nice things. She also longed to travel, but our family lived on a modest budget, and these dreams were not quite realized. Knowing this, I asked her if she had any regrets. I fully

expected to hear she had always wanted a larger, more beautiful home or perhaps an expression of sadness and disappointment over never having traveled. She pondered my question for a few moments and replied simply, "I wish I had served more."

I was shocked at her response. My mother had always accepted Church callings. She served as ward Relief Society president, Sunday School teacher, visiting teacher, and in the Primary. As children we were always delivering casseroles, jam, and bottled fruit to neighbors and members of the ward. When I reminded her of all this, she was undeterred. "I could have done more" was all she said.

### Actively look for opportunities to serve

My mother had lived an exemplary and full life. She was loved by family and friends. She had accomplished much in a life that was often hard and which was cut short by disease and sickness. In spite of all of this, her greatest regret was she had not given enough service. Now, I have no doubt my mother's earthly sacrifice has been accepted by the Lord and that she has been welcomed by Him. But why was it foremost in her mind just

days before her passing? What is service, and why is it so important in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

First, we are commanded to serve one another. The first commandment is to love God. “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>2</sup>

We demonstrate our love when we help and serve each other.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: “No man can be a true Latter-day Saint who is unneighborly, who does not reach out to assist and help others. It is inherent in the very nature of the gospel that we do so. My brothers and sisters, we cannot live unto ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

The Savior taught His disciples this important principle in Matthew:

“Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>4</sup>

This service is to be given unselfishly, with no thought of personal gain or reward. It is to be given as needed, not just when convenient. Opportunities to serve may not always seem obvious, as it is human nature to worry about our own wants and needs. We must resist such tendencies and look for opportunities to serve. When we visit with those who are suffering from sickness, loss of loved ones, or other heartbreak, it is not enough to simply say, “Call if there is anything I can do.” Rather, look for ways to bless the lives of others through seemingly simple acts of service. It is better to do even things of little consequence than to do nothing at all.

## **Bless others through Church service**

Second, we have an obligation as members of the Church to accept callings to serve in building the kingdom of God on earth. As we serve in our various callings, we bless the lives of others. In missionary work, lives are changed as people learn of the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive a testimony of its truth. By the sacred work in the temple we bless the lives of those who have gone on before us. In gospel service we have the privilege to teach others, to strengthen the youth, and to bless the lives of the little children as they learn the simple truths of the gospel. In Church service we learn to give of ourselves and to help others.

President Spencer W. Kimball, a great example of service, said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom.”<sup>5</sup> The responsibility of service in the Church, however, does not relieve us of our responsibility to serve our families and our neighbors. President Kimball went on to warn:

“None of us should become so busy in our formal Church assignments that there is no room left for quiet Christian service to our neighbors.”<sup>6</sup>

## **Bless others through community service**

Finally, we have a responsibility to render service in our communities. We should work to improve our neighborhoods, our schools, our cities, and our towns. I commend those in our midst who, regardless of their political persuasion, work within our local, state, and national governments to improve our lives. Likewise, I commend those who volunteer their time and resources to support worthy community and charitable causes, which bless the lives of others and make the world a better place. My grandfather



taught me at an early age, “The public service we render is the rent we pay for our place on earth.”

### A boy shares a piece of candy

Service requires unselfishness, sharing, and giving. My wife and I learned a valuable lesson during our time of service in Africa. We were assigned to a district conference in Jinja, Uganda. Early Saturday morning before our meetings began, we took the opportunity to tour a new chapel in the area. As we arrived at the building, we were greeted by a young boy of three to four years of age. He had come to the Church grounds to see what was going on. Struck by his broad smile, Sister Snow reached into her purse and handed him a wrapped piece of hard butterscotch candy. He was delighted.

We spent a few minutes touring the chapel before returning outside. We were met by more than a dozen smiling children who each wanted to meet the new neighborhood candy lady.

Phyllis was heartbroken, as she had given the boy her last piece of candy. She disappointedly gestured to the children there was no more. The small boy who initially greeted us then handed the candy back to Sister Snow, gesturing for her to unwrap it. With a heavy heart, Phyllis

did so, fully expecting the boy to pop the butterscotch candy into his mouth in full view of his envious friends.

Instead, to our great surprise, he went to each of his friends, who stuck out their tongues and received one delicious lick of the butterscotch candy. The young boy continued around the circle, occasionally taking his own lick, until the candy was gone.

Now, one can argue the lack of sanitation with this gesture of sharing, but no one can dispute the example set by this young boy. Unselfishness, sharing, and giving are essential to service. This child learned that lesson well.

It is my hope and prayer that we can all do more in giving service. If we fail to serve, we fail to receive the fulness of the privileges and blessings of the restored gospel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 183.
2. Matthew 22:39.
3. “Latter-day Prophets Speak: Service,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 49.
4. Matthew 25:37–40.
5. “Small Acts of Service,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1974, 5.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 71; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 47.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Good, better, best

Most of us have more things expected of us than we can possibly do. As breadwinners, as parents, as Church workers and members, we face many choices on what we will do with our time and other resources.

We should begin by recognizing the reality that just because something is *good* is not a sufficient reason for doing

it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives.

Jesus taught this principle in the home of Martha. While she was “cumbered about much serving” (Luke 10:40), her sister, Mary, “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (v. 39). When Martha complained that her sister had left her



to serve alone, Jesus commended Martha for what she was doing (v. 41) but taught her that “one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (v. 42). It was praiseworthy for Martha to be “careful and troubled about many things” (v. 41), but learning the gospel from the Master Teacher was more “needful.” The scriptures contain other teachings that some things are more blessed than others (see Acts 20:35; Alma 32:14–15).

A childhood experience introduced me to the idea that some choices are good but others are better. I lived for two years on a farm. We rarely went to town. Our Christmas shopping was done in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. I spent hours poring over its pages. For the rural families of that day, catalog pages were like the shopping mall or the Internet of our time.

Something about some displays of merchandise in the catalog fixed itself in my mind. There were three degrees of quality: good, better, and best. For example, some men’s shoes were labeled *good* (\$1.84), some *better* (\$2.98), and some *best* (\$3.45).<sup>1</sup>

As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best. Even though a particular choice is more costly, its far greater value may make it the best choice of all.

Consider how we use our time in the choices we make in viewing television, playing video games, surfing the Internet, or reading books or magazines. Of course it is good to view wholesome entertainment or to obtain interesting information. But not everything of that sort is worth the portion of our life we give to obtain it. Some things are better, and others are best. When the Lord told us to seek learning, He said, “Seek ye out of the *best* books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118; italics added).

### Choosing the best for the family

Some of our most important choices concern family activities. Many breadwinners worry that their occupations leave too little time for their families. There is no easy formula for that contest of priorities. However, I have never known of a man who looked back on his working life and said, “I just didn’t spend enough time with my job.”

In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. “The thing I liked best this summer,” the boy said, “was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked.” Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent.

The amount of children-and-parent time absorbed in the good activities of private lessons, team sports, and other school and club activities also needs to be carefully regulated. Otherwise, children will be overscheduled, and parents will be frazzled and frustrated. Parents should act to preserve time for family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and the other precious togetherness and individual one-on-one time that binds a family together and fixes children’s values on things of eternal worth. Parents should teach gospel priorities through what they do with their children.

Family experts have warned against what they call “the overscheduling of children.” In the last generation, children

are far busier and families spend far less time together. Among many measures of this disturbing trend are the reports that structured sports time has doubled, but children's free time has declined by 12 hours per week, and unstructured outdoor activities have fallen by 50 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The number of those who report that their "whole family usually eats dinner together" has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together "eating meals at home [is] the strongest predictor of children's academic achievement and psychological adjustment."<sup>3</sup> Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children's smoking, drinking, or using drugs.<sup>4</sup> There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: what your children really want for dinner is you.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has pleaded that we "work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it."

He continued: "I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisperings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting."<sup>5</sup>

The First Presidency has called on parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. . . . The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place . . . in . . . this God-given responsibility." The First Presidency has declared that "however worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform."<sup>6</sup>

### **Choosing the best in Church activities**

Church leaders should be aware that Church meetings and activities can become too complex and burdensome if a ward or a stake tries to have the membership do everything that is good and possible in our numerous Church programs. Priorities are needed there also.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve have stressed the importance of exercising inspired judgment in Church programs and activities. Elder L. Tom Perry taught this principle in our first worldwide leadership training meeting in 2003. Counseling the same leaders in 2004, Elder Richard G. Scott said:

"Adjust your activities to be consistent with your local conditions and resources. . . . Make sure that the essential needs are met, but do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. . . . Remember, don't magnify the work to be done—simplify it."<sup>7</sup>

In general conference last year, Elder M. Russell Ballard warned against the deterioration of family relationships that can result when we spend excess time on ineffective activities that yield little spiritual sustenance. He cautioned against complicating our Church service "with needless frills and embellishments that occupy too much time, cost too much money, and sap too much energy. . . . The instruction to magnify our callings is not a command to embellish and complicate them. To innovate does not necessarily mean to expand; very often it means to simplify. . . . What is most important in our Church responsibilities," he said, "is not the statistics that are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed."<sup>8</sup>

Stake presidencies and bishoprics need to exercise their authority to weed

out the excessive and ineffective busyness that is sometimes required of the members of their stakes or wards. Church programs should focus on what is best (most effective) in achieving their assigned purposes without unduly infringing on the time families need for their “divinely appointed duties.”

But here is a caution for families. Suppose Church leaders reduce the time required by Church meetings and activities in order to increase the time available for families to be together. This will not achieve its intended purpose unless individual family members—especially parents—vigorously act to increase family togetherness and one-on-one time. Team sports and technology toys like video games and the Internet are already winning away the time of our children and youth. Surfing the Internet is not better than serving the Lord or strengthening the family. Some young men and women are skipping Church youth activities or cutting family time in order to participate in soccer leagues or to pursue various entertainments. Some young people are amusing themselves to death—spiritual death.

Some uses of individual and family time are better, and others are best. We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.

### **Best home teaching, visiting teaching**

Here are some other illustrations of good, better, and best:

It is *good* to belong to our Father in Heaven’s true Church and to keep all of His commandments and fulfill all of our duties. But if this is to qualify as *best*, it should be done with love and without arrogance. We should, as we sing in a great hymn, “crown [our] good with brotherhood,”<sup>9</sup> showing love and concern for all whom our lives affect.

To our hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers, I suggest that it is *good* to visit our assigned families; it is *better* to have a brief visit in which we teach doctrine and principle; and it is *best* of all to make a difference in the lives of some of those we visit. That same challenge applies to the many meetings we hold—it’s *good* to hold a meeting, *better* to teach a principle, but *best* to actually improve lives as a result of the meeting.

### **Best gospel teaching**

As we approach 2008 and a new course of study in our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies, I renew our caution about how we use the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manuals. Many years of inspired work have produced our 2008 volume of the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of this dispensation. This is a landmark among Church books. In the past, some teachers have given a chapter of the *Teachings* manuals no more than a brief mention and then substituted a lesson of their own choice. It may have been a good lesson, but this is not an acceptable practice. A gospel teacher is called to teach the subject specified from the inspired materials provided. The best thing a teacher can do with *Teachings: Joseph Smith* is to select and quote from the words of the Prophet on principles that are specially suited to the needs of class members and then direct a class discussion on how to apply those principles in the circumstances of their lives.

I testify of our Heavenly Father, whose children we are and whose plan is designed to qualify us for “eternal life, . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7; see also D&C 76:51–59). I testify of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it possible. And I testify that we are led by prophets—our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, and his counselors—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog, fall and winter 1944–45, 316E.
2. See Jared R. Anderson and William J. Doherty, “Democratic Community Initiatives: The Case of Overscheduled Children,” *Family Relations*, Dec. 2005, 655.
3. Anderson and Doherty, *Family Relations*, Dec. 2005, 655.
4. See Nancy Gibbs, “The Magic of the Family Meal,” *Time*, June 12, 2006, 51–52; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, “Family Dinner,” *Church News*, Sept. 8, 2007, 5.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 109–10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 100.
6. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; printed in *Church News*, Feb. 27, 1999, 3.
7. “The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 5, 7–8; see also *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 62, 67.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 17, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 18–20.
9. “America the Beautiful,” *Hymns*, no. 338.

**President Monson**

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Young Women choir, and the father-and-son choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following his remarks, the choir will favor us with “Sing We Now at Parting.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

**A magnificent conference**

My beloved brothers and sisters, we now conclude a great conference. We have been edified, uplifted. We have been inspired and lifted to a higher appreciation of this wonderful gospel. The music, the spoken word, and the prayers have all been magnificent.

We now return to our homes. If we are driving, let us be careful. Let no tragedy mar the experience we have enjoyed.

All of the proceedings of this conference will appear in a subsequent issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*. We encourage you again to read the talks in your family home evenings and discuss them together as families. They are the products of much

prayer and meditation and are well worthy of careful consideration.

Now the conference is adjourned for six months. We look forward to seeing you again next April. I’m 97, but I hope I’m going to make it. May the blessings of heaven attend you in the meantime as our humble and sincere prayer in the name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Sing We Now at Parting.”

Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Andrew Unsworth were the organists.

A Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Manu Harris directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A father-and-son choir from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Boun-

tiful, Utah, provided music for the priesthood session. Stephen P. Shank directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-eighth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 5 and 6, 2008**



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of the  
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April 5 and 6, 2008

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# Report of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 2008, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, 2008. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 5, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday morning, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Saturday and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, and L. Whitney Clayton

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Sheldon F. Child, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zaballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, Kent D. Watson, and Robert S. Wood

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

### Solemn Assembly

The first session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “How Wondrous and Great.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

#### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you to the first general session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television, radio,

satellite, and Internet providers for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “How Wondrous and Great” and will now favor us with “Lead, Kindly Light.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Lead, Kindly Light.”

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen offered the invocation.

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#### **President Monson**

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote. At the conclusion of the sustaining, we will hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Then the choir will sing “Praise to the Man.”

## The Sustaining of Church Officers

#### **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Brothers and sisters, President Monson has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. Dating from Oc-

tober 10, 1880, when John Taylor was sustained to succeed Brigham Young as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church, each of these occasions has been designated a formal solemn assembly of the body of the Church to express the voice of the Church.

We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand



when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be presented. You should vote only when asked to stand.

The General Authorities assigned to the Tabernacle and to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. Should there be any contrary votes, we ask that we be so advised. We shall now proceed with the business of this solemn assembly.

The First Presidency will please arise. It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church. Those in favor may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Those in favor may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson. Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Please manifest it. The First Presidency will be seated. We invite Elder Christofferson to now take his place with the Quorum of the Twelve.

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, please arise. It is proposed that the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. You may be seated.

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric will please arise. It is proposed that the members of the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. You may be seated.

The following will please arise wherever you may be participating around the world: all Area Seventies, ordained patriarchs, and all members of high priests and elders quorums. It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it. Please be seated.

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor may please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed may so indicate. You may be seated.

Will all members of the Relief Society—that is, all women 18 years of age and older—please arise. It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

Will the young women—that is, all young women ages 12 to 18—please arise. It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

Now, will the entire membership, wherever assembled, including all of those who have stood previously, please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed may so indicate. You may all be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we release and sustain other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church.

It is proposed that we release Elder D. Todd Christofferson as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those who can join with us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2008:

A. Venâncio Caleira, Marco A. Cardenas, José A. Castro, Gérald Caussé, Luis G. Chaverri, Timothy J. Dyches, Jaime Ferreira, José A. García, Francisco I. Gímenez, Carlos A. Godoy, James J. Hamula, Frederick C. Ihesiene, Glen O. Jenson, Robert Koch, Kuen (Tony) Ling, Richard D. May, Ross H. McEachran, Yasuo Niiyama, Timothy M. Olson, Fernando D. Ortega, Luigi S. Peloni, Rafael E. Pino, Gelson Pizzirani, Alejandro M. Robles, Gerold Roth, M. Gonzalo Sepúlveda, Su Kiong Tan, Anthony R. Temple, Larry Y. Wilson, Tsung Ting (Jared) Yang, Willy F. Zuzunaga. Those who wish to join us in expressing our gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Sisters Susan W. Tanner, Elaine S. Dalton, and Mary N. Cook as the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of the Young Women general board. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder L. Whitney Clayton as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest this too.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy William R. Walker, Craig C. Christensen, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Gérald Caussé, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, James J. Hamula, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Rafael E. Pino, Gary E. Stevenson, José A. Teixeira, F. Michael Watson, and Jorge F. Zeballos and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Tad R. Callister and Kent D. Watson. All in favor, please manifest it. If there be any contrary, by the same sign, please.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Pedro E. Abularach, Koichi Aoyagi, Juan C. Barros, Colin H. Bricknell, Victor Kah Keng Chen, Kuo Chiang Chung, J.

Devn Cornish, Wynn R. Dewsnup, Matthew J. Eyring, G. Guillermo Garcia, Robert C. Gay, Alfredo L. Gessati, James B. Gibson, Julio C. González, Paulo H. Itinose, Douglas W. Jessop, Faustino López, Declan O. Madu, Per G. Malm, Fernando Maluenda, James B. Martino, Sergiy N. Mikulin, Abelardo Morales, W. T. David Murray, Satoshi Nishihara, Norbert K. Ounleu, Michael D. Pickerd, Anatoly K. Reshetnikov, William F. Reynolds, Michael A. Roberts, Fernando A. R. Da Rocha, A. Ricardo Sant'Ana, Robert B. Smith, Ysrael A. Tolentino, Ruben D. Torres, J. Romeo Villarreal, Louis Weidmann, Chi Hong (Sam) Wong. All in favor, please signify. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elaine S. Dalton as the new general president of the Young Women, with Mary N. Cook as

first counselor and Ann M. Dibb as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

We invite the newly called members of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to come forward and take their places on the stand.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

Gratefully we welcome Elder D. Todd Christofferson to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Wholeheartedly we sustain this wonderful First Presidency and all who have been called.

Brethren and sisters, when we received the news that President Gordon B. Hinckley had passed away, each of us immediately felt a deep sense of loss. Knowing that his destiny was in the hands of the Lord, however, we have felt our mood shift from grief to gratitude. We are very grateful for what we have learned from this great prophet of God.

### Foundation of apostles and prophets

Today, at this solemn assembly, we have complied with the will of the Lord, who said that “it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by . . . one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.”<sup>1</sup> This law of

common consent<sup>2</sup> has been invoked, and the Church will move forward on its prescribed course.

Members throughout the world sustain President Thomas S. Monson and his able counselors. We are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord revealed why “he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets.” It is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus the ministry of the Apostles—the First Presidency and the Twelve—is to bring about that unity of the faith and to proclaim our knowledge of the Master. Our ministry is to bless the lives of all who will learn and follow the “more excellent way” of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> And we are to help

people prepare for their potential salvation and exaltation.

### Meaning of salvation and exaltation

The third article of faith declares that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

To be saved—or to gain salvation—means to be saved from physical and spiritual death. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people will be resurrected and saved from physical death. People may also be saved from individual spiritual death through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, by their faith in Him, by living in obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel, and by serving Him.

To be exalted—or to gain exaltation—refers to the highest state of happiness and glory in the celestial realm. These blessings can come to us after we leave this frail and mortal existence. The time to prepare for our eventual salvation and exaltation is now.<sup>6</sup>

As part of that preparation, one must first hear and understand the gospel. For this reason the gospel of Jesus Christ is being taken to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>7</sup>

### Individual responsibility

Some years ago I met with a tribal king in Africa. When he realized that he was being taught by an Apostle of the Lord, he was deeply moved. He said that throngs of his people would be baptized if he were to give them such a mandate. I thanked him for his kindness but explained that the Lord does not work in that way.

The development of faith in the Lord is an individual matter. Repentance is also an individual matter. Only as an individual can one be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. Each of us is born individually; likewise, each of us is “born again”<sup>8</sup>

individually. Salvation is an individual matter.

### Family responsibilities

Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>9</sup> The home is to be God’s laboratory of love and service. There a husband is to love his wife, a wife is to love her husband, and parents and children are to love one another.

Throughout the world, the family is increasingly under attack. If families fail, many of our political, economic, and social systems will also fail. And if families fail, their glorious eternal potential cannot be realized.

Our Heavenly Father wants husbands and wives to be faithful to each other and to esteem and treat their children as an heritage from the Lord.<sup>10</sup> In such a family we study the scriptures and pray together. And we fix our focus on the temple. There we receive the highest blessings that God has in store for His faithful children.

Thanks to God’s great plan of happiness,<sup>11</sup> families can be together forever—as exalted beings. Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>12</sup> Both of His objectives were enabled by the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. His Atonement made resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility for all who would ever live.

Resurrection, or immortality, comes to every man and every woman as an unconditional gift.

Eternal life, or celestial glory or exaltation, is a conditional gift. Conditions of this gift have been established by the Lord, who said, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>13</sup> Those qualifying conditions include faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and

remaining faithful to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.

No man in this Church can obtain the highest degree of celestial glory without a worthy woman who is sealed to him.<sup>14</sup> This temple ordinance enables eventual exaltation for both of them.

### Teaching our children

In Church callings we are subject to release. But we cannot be released as parents. From the first days of human history, the Lord has commanded parents to teach the gospel to their children.<sup>15</sup> Moses wrote, “Thou shalt teach . . . diligently . . . thy children, and shalt talk of [God’s words] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>16</sup>

In our day the Lord has added, “Bring up your children in light and truth.”<sup>17</sup> The Church is to assist and not to replace parents in their responsibilities to teach their children.

In this day of rampant immorality and addictive pornography, parents have a sacred responsibility to teach their children the importance of God in their lives.<sup>18</sup> Those evils, so highly destructive of divine potential, are to be strictly shunned by children of God.

We are also to teach our children to honor their parents. The fifth commandment states, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”<sup>19</sup>

How can we best teach our children? The Lord has given us specific instruction:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproofed, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy.”<sup>20</sup>

When a child needs correction, you might ask yourself, “What can I say or do that would persuade him or her to choose a better way?” When giving necessary correction, do it quietly, privately, lovingly, and not publicly. If a rebuke is required, show an increase of love promptly so that seeds of resentment may not remain. To be persuasive, your love must be sincere and your teachings based on divine doctrine and correct principles.

Do not try to control your children. Instead, listen to them, help them to learn the gospel, inspire them, and lead them toward eternal life. You are God’s agents in the care of children He has entrusted to you. Let His divine influence remain in your hearts as you teach and persuade.

### Ancestors

Any discussion of family responsibilities to prepare for exaltation would be incomplete if we included only mother, father, and children. What about grandparents and other ancestors? The Lord revealed that we cannot become perfect without them; neither can they without us be made perfect.<sup>21</sup> Sealing ordinances are essential to exaltation. A wife needs to be sealed to her husband; children need to be sealed to their parents; and we all need to be connected with our ancestors.<sup>22</sup>

What about those who are not able to marry in this life or those who cannot be sealed to their parents in this life? We know that the Lord will judge each of us according to the desires of our hearts, as well as our works,<sup>23</sup> and that the blessings of exaltation will be given to all who are worthy.<sup>24</sup>

## Children of the covenant

We as children of the covenant are highly favored. In our hearts have been planted the promises made to Fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord has said:

“Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God. . . .

“Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel.”<sup>25</sup>

This life is the time to prepare for salvation and exaltation.<sup>26</sup> In God’s eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter; exaltation is a family matter.

As children of the covenant, we have met in this morning’s solemn assembly. Attention has been focused upon the sacred titles of prophets and apostles. But the final responsibility to prepare for salvation and exaltation rests upon each person, accountable for individual agency, acting in one’s own family, bearing another sacred title of mother, father, daughter, son, grandmother, or grandfather.

In those responsible roles, may we go forward in faith, led by Jesus Christ, whose Church this is, and by His prophet, through whom He speaks, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; italics added.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 26:2; 28:13.
3. Ephesians 2:19–20.
4. Ephesians 4:11–13.
5. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.
6. See Alma 34:32–33.
7. Revelation 14:6.
8. John 3:3, 7; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
10. See Psalm 127:3.
11. See Alma 42:8.
12. Moses 1:39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 15:9. The Book of Mormon further explains the conditional nature of this great gift. It states that “ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, *if* ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20; italics added).
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
15. See Moses 6:57–58. Also note the teaching of King Benjamin: “Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin. . . . But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:14–15).
16. Deuteronomy 6:7.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40. The Lord also said, “Teach [your] children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28).
18. So taught Paul to Timothy: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. . . . From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14–15).
19. Exodus 20:12. Remember that parental proverb: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21; see also Rudger Clawson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 29; Joseph F. Smith, *Deseret News*, May 1, 1878, 2; Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 102; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 75.



25. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9, 11.  
 26. See Alma 12:24.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

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### **President Monson**

Our hearts have been touched by that beautiful rendition. "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!"

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy, followed by Sister Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy will then address us, and he will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder Ronald A. Rasband**

I would like to add my testimony and witness on this special day that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord's prophet on the earth. I am grateful to have this privilege to speak in general conference.

### **Experiences that build faith and testimony**

I am grateful, as you are, for the experience we have in this historic conference as we sustain, in an orderly and patterned way, our new prophet, First Presidency, and other leaders of the Church.

This kind of experience fortifies our testimonies and increases our faith in the knowledge that this is indeed the Lord's true and living Church.

Our personal journey through life provides us with many special experiences that become building blocks of faith and testimony. These experiences come to us in vastly different ways and at unpredictable times. They can be powerful spiritual events or small enlightening moments. Some experiences will come as serious challenges and heavy trials that test our ability to cope with them. No matter what the experience may be, each gives us a chance for personal growth, greater wisdom, and, in many cases, service to others with more empathy and love. As the Lord stated to the Prophet Joseph Smith in a reassuring way during one of his most significant trials at Lib-

erty Jail, "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

As experiences accumulate in our lives, they add strength and support to each other. Just as the building blocks of our homes support the rest of the structure, so too do our personal life experiences become building blocks for our testimonies and add to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This very conference session illustrates the value of a life full of experiences. As we follow the wise counsel of our leaders and marvel at their teachings and spirit, is it any wonder that the Lord chooses His senior Apostle, after years of preparation, to become His chosen prophet?

My patriarchal blessing indicates that I would be given special experiences that would strengthen my own testimony. Brothers and sisters, think of the special experiences you have been blessed with in your life that have given you conviction and joy in your heart. Remember when you first knew that Joseph Smith was God's prophet of the Restoration? Remember when you accepted Moroni's challenge and knew that the Book of Mormon was indeed another testament of Jesus Christ? Remember when you received an answer to fervent prayer and realized that your Heavenly Father knows

and loves you personally? As you contemplate such special experiences, don't they give you a sense of gratitude and resolve to go forward with renewed faith and determination?

### **An experience in Puno, Peru**

Not long ago Sister Rasband and I had an experience we shall never forget. I was assigned to preside at two stake conferences in Peru. While there, we went to the city of Puno, high in the Andes Mountains, on Lake Titicaca. At 12,000 feet above sea level, we were amazed at this simple and beautiful city, high on this Andean lake. We met with stake presidents in the area and had a wonderful youth fireside with hundreds of young people from the Puno area.

One morning we were invited to visit a small group of local members who lived out on the floating reed islands of Lake Titicaca. The people who live there are known as the Uros Indians of Bolivia and Peru.

We were told that a few Latter-day Saint families had joined together and built their own small, new floating island. With excitement, we took a boat out to the island and were greeted warmly by these wonderful members.

We held their babies wrapped in the most beautiful, colorful handmade blankets. We ate the fish they caught that very day from the lake, which had been so carefully prepared and generously shared. We saw their wares and handicrafts and exchanged gifts with one another.

As we visited, we learned that their children paddled by canoe 45 minutes to and from Puno for seminary and school each day. We were also pleased that these members knew the scriptures well, understood them, and loved them. Eagerly they showed us their current temple recommends, having been endowed and sealed in the Cochabamba Bolivia Temple.

Before we were to leave, one of the mothers asked if we would kneel with them and have a family prayer. I remember well kneeling on the spongy reeds with these faithful Saints. As we knelt, she asked if I would say the prayer and, using the Melchizedek Priesthood, dedicate their new island and home.

I was deeply humbled that, there on the floating islands of Lake Titicaca, these faithful Latter-day Saint families would ask me to pray for the little island of Apu Inti and ask the Lord to bless the homes and families of the Lujanos and Jallahuis.

As I consider this special experience that the Lord blessed us with, I know a new building block has been added to my house of faith. I often think of that experience in Puno as another reminder of the fulfillment of my own patriarchal blessing.

### **A personal treasury of valued experiences**

From the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants, written in 1831, foretelling the expansion of the Lord's work in our day, the Lord revealed:

"But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

"That faith also might increase in the earth;

"That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

"That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:20–23).

Brothers and sisters, the weak and the simple members of the Church, like you and me, are taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, to Puno, Peru, and other far-off places. Faith is increasing among God's covenant people, and I believe it is through having a personal treasury of such valued experiences that an increase of faith can happen for each of us.



President Monson said: “[The Lord] commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and . . . they shall learn in their *own experience* Who He is” (in “The Way of the Master,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 7; quoting Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* [1948], 401; italics added).

In these days of worldly intrusions into our lives, when trials and difficulties may seem to engulf us, let us remember our own special spiritual experiences. These building blocks of faith will bring us conviction and reassurance of a caring, loving Father in Heaven, of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and of Their restored true and living Church. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Cheryl C. Lant

### Family traditions

For as long as I can remember, my father wore a beautiful red ruby ring on his left hand. It was passed on to my only brother. I suppose it will become a tradition in our family—a legacy passed from generation to generation. It will be a good tradition, with sweet memories associated with it.

Each of us has traditions in our families. Some of them are material. Some of them have deep meaning. The most important traditions are connected with the way we live our lives and will last beyond us as our children’s lives are influenced and shaped. In the Book of Mormon we read of the Lamanites who were deeply affected by the traditions of their fathers. King Benjamin said they were a people who knew nothing about the principles of the gospel “or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct” (Mosiah 1:5).

What kinds of traditions do we have? Some of them may have come from our fathers, and now we are passing them along to our own children. Are they what we want them to be? Are they based on actions of righteousness and faith? Are they mostly material in nature, or are they eternal? Are we consciously creating righteous traditions, or is life just happening

to us? Are our traditions being created in response to the loud voices of the world, or are they influenced by the still, small voice of the Spirit? Are the traditions that we are creating in our families going to make it easier for our children to follow the living prophets, or will they make it difficult for them?

### “Be steadfast and immovable”

How should we determine what our traditions will be? The scriptures give us a great pattern. In Mosiah 5:15 it states, “Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works.”

I love this because we know that traditions are formed over time as we repeat the same actions over and over again. As we are steady and unchanging in doing that which is good, our traditions become firmly rooted in righteousness. But I have a question. How do we determine what is good or, more importantly, what is good enough? Another scripture that gives us a little more information is found in 3 Nephi 6:14. It speaks of people “who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.”

We learn that our conversion to the “true faith” precedes our ability to remain firm, steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments. This conversion is a firm belief in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. A witness of this is found in the Book of Mormon, which is another witness of Jesus Christ. It goes hand in hand with the Bible in proclaiming the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ as well as the reality of a living Father in Heaven. Every prophet recorded in these sacred books gives his personal witness of these things, as well as teachings on how we need to live our lives in order to partake of the Atonement and find personal peace and happiness.

There is only one way to become personally converted. It is through a witness of the Spirit as we study these very scriptures that testify of Jesus Christ. It comes as we pray and as we fast. It comes only when we have a deep desire to know the truth. Our motivation must be to openly seek truth rather than justify our actions by finding fault with the scriptures, the teachings of the prophets, or the Church itself. Our effort must be toward hearing the interpretations of the Spirit rather than the understandings of the world. We must be willing to open our hearts and minds, accept the Lord’s way, and, if need be, change our lives. Our personal conversion comes as we begin to live the way the Lord wants us to live—steadfast and immovable in keeping all of the commandments, not just those that are convenient. This then becomes a process of refinement as we strive to make each day a little better than the last. Thus our traditions become traditions of righteousness.

### **The effects of our traditions**

I would invite all of us to take a moment to reflect on the traditions in our lives and how they might be affecting our families. Our traditions of Sabbath day observance, family prayer, family scrip-

ture study, service and activity in the Church, as well as patterns of respect and loyalty in the home, will have a great effect on our children and on their future. If our parenting is based on the teachings of the scriptures and of the latter-day prophets, we cannot go wrong. If every time there is a challenge our hearts turn first and always to our Father in Heaven for direction, we will be in a safe place. If our children know where we stand and we always stand on the Lord’s side, we know we are where we need to be.

Now, the important thing is that we consistently work to do these things. We will not be perfect at it, and our families will not always respond positively, but we will be building a strong foundation of righteous traditions that our children can depend on. They can hold to that foundation when things get difficult, and they can return to that foundation if they should stray for a period of time.

### **A legacy of righteousness and truth**

At the end of my father’s life, he passed much more on to us, his children, than a red ruby ring. His body was spent, but in reality he stood as a pillar of strength, an example of righteousness and truth. His very life held the traditions that strengthen us today, even though he is no longer with us. He was “steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.”

Can we do this for our children? What is the legacy we are giving them today? What will it be tomorrow? It can start with us. Will their hearts and lives be full of traditions that make it easy for them to accept and follow the Lord and the latter-day prophets? Will we as families be able to claim the blessings promised, “that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life”? (Mosiah 5:15).

Brothers and sisters, I know that we can! I know that God loves us and is waiting to help us come unto Him. Each of us can know that these things are true. I know that they are! I know that God lives; Jesus Christ is His Son and our Redeemer. The gospel of Jesus Christ is true; the scriptures contain it and testify of it. And we have a true and living prophet today—President Thomas S. Monson. He has been prepared and brought forth in this day to lead the Lord's Church.

As we become “steadfast and immovable” in keeping the commandments of the Lord, we will secure the blessings of heaven for ourselves and for our families.

I pray that we will feel this deep in our hearts and in our lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Kenneth Johnson

### Restoring faith in the family

With knowledge of the “great plan of happiness,”<sup>1</sup> we have the opportunity and also the responsibility to help restore faith in the family.

In many ways our commission is comparable to those who work in the field of medicine and scientific research. Using established laws, they determine how suffering can be alleviated and the quality of life improved.

In the realm of religious belief, men and women of faith, using proven principles,<sup>2</sup> can help to heal a grieving heart, restoring hope and assurance to the troubled mind.

The scientist's success has been achieved by complying with what are often referred to as natural laws. The great scientists of the past and present did not create the laws associated with these naturally occurring processes; they discovered them.

In a letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul poses a thought-provoking question concerning the source of man's intellectual capacity: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?”<sup>3</sup>

Through logic and learning, knowledge is increased and understanding enhanced. Using this process, theories and

laws are identified and accepted as authentic.

One thing that becomes clear to the enlightened mind is that there are laws that keep life and living things in balance. Discovering the laws of physics and complying with them brings progress, enabling man to rise to higher levels of attainment than would otherwise be possible.

I believe that this premise also applies to ethical standards and moral values. It is, therefore, our responsibility to safeguard the home as a center of learning where these virtues can be instilled in an atmosphere of love and through the power of example.<sup>4</sup>

### Learning values in the home

President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “Youth need fewer critics and more models.”<sup>5</sup>

Reflecting on my own life, I realize how I gained an appreciation for the core values that are necessary for the development of a sound character. Where did I learn loyalty, integrity, and dependability? I learned these qualities in the home from the example of my parents. How did I gain an appreciation for the value of selfless service? I did so by observing and enjoying my mother's devotion to her family. Where did I learn honor and respect for

daughters of God? I learned from the example of my father.

It was in the home that I learned principles of provident living and the dignity of work. I can still visualize my mother spending numerous nights at home, using a foot-treadle sewing machine to stitch shoes for a local shoe factory. This was not to enable her to purchase anything for herself but to help to provide financial support so that my brother and I could attend college. She later expressed how this act of service was a source of satisfaction for her.

My father was a wise, industrious man. He taught me how to cut timber using a handsaw, how to replace or attach a plug to a power cord of a domestic appliance, and many other practical skills.

All of these lessons carried a common theme: never be satisfied with anything less than your best efforts.

I developed the ability to make important decisions by talking with my parents and learning from their counsel. Add to the aforementioned accountability, consideration for others, and encouragement to pursue educational opportunities, and the list would still be incomplete.

I was introduced to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in my teenage years by Pamela, who later became my wife. She has helped make of my life a soaring symphony from a simple melody.<sup>6</sup>

I have enjoyed 67 years of happiness in marriage and family life—21 as a son in the home of my parents and 46 as a husband, culminating in the joy of being a father and grandfather. What more could one hope for? Simply stated, that these same opportunities would be enjoyed by everyone.

### **Spiritual truths**

Returning to the teachings of Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians, we find these words: “Even so the things of God knoweth no man [except he has] the Spirit of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth

not the things of . . . God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>7</sup>

Scientists gain their knowledge mainly through research, conducting experiments, and the application of intellect.

Disciples of Christ receive their witness by studying His words, observing His works, putting gospel principles into practice, and receiving the spirit of inspiration.<sup>8</sup>

“There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”<sup>9</sup>

Although spiritual truths may appear less tangible, to the humble heart their impact is undeniable. It is important to understand that natural laws were not determined on the basis of popularity. They were established and rest on the rock of reality.

There are also moral verities that did not originate with man.<sup>10</sup> They are central to a divine plan which, when discovered and applied, brings great happiness and hope on our mortal journey.<sup>11</sup>

For example, I believe, as stated in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”<sup>12</sup> and defined in divine revelation, that marriage and family are ordained of God. The scriptures declare, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”<sup>13</sup>

Wise men have provided a legacy of learning from the past. We must hand down to future generations a foundation of faith in the family, as defined by Deity.<sup>14</sup>

### **Happiness comes from living the gospel**

We should never forget that freedom and happiness in all aspects of life come by understanding and living in harmony with eternal gospel principles. They provide a sure foundation upon which to build a productive and happy life.<sup>15</sup>

Following the pattern prescribed through the plan of the Father has enabled me to experience what it means to live “after the manner of happiness”<sup>16</sup> and “with joy . . . draw water out of the wells of salvation.”<sup>17</sup>

The Savior taught, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”<sup>18</sup>

Our outlook or attitude can sometimes restrict our ability to enjoy life’s greatest opportunities.

The question could be asked, “What of those who have not experienced a positive family environment?”

Stable families provide the fabric that holds society together, benefiting all mankind, even those who may feel they live in less-favorable circumstances.

For those who faithfully live<sup>19</sup> and patiently pray for such sociality,<sup>20</sup> I share the simple, soothing words of Helen Steiner Rice:

When God makes a promise,  
It remains forever true,  
For everything God promises  
He unalterably will do.  
When you’re disillusioned  
And every hope is blighted  
Recall the promises of God  
And your faith will be relighted.<sup>21</sup>

It is my prayer that we can stand together, with courage and conviction, as guardians of the God-given gift of family. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Alma 42:8; see also Alma 24:14.
2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Principle,” [www.scriptures.lds.org](http://www.scriptures.lds.org)
3. 1 Corinthians 2:11.
4. See Proverbs 22:6.
5. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 57.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:19.
7. 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14.
8. See John 7:16–17; Jacob 4:8.
9. Job 32:8.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
11. Like a compass, principles provide points of reference on life’s journey.
12. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
13. Genesis 2:24.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28.
16. 2 Nephi 5:27.
17. 2 Nephi 22:3.
18. John 10:10.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:2.
21. From Helen Steiner Rice, *Expressions of Comfort* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2007), 187–88. Used by permission.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I am grateful for the opportunity to be with you today in this magnificent Conference Center. As vast as this congregation is, it’s humbling to realize that it is merely a fraction of the millions who will see, hear, and read the words spoken at this great conference.

Of course, we will miss our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley. We are all better people, however, because of his influence. The Church is stronger because of his guidance. Indeed, the world is a bet-

ter place because there was such a leader as President Gordon B. Hinckley.

## New First Presidency

I would like to say a few words about our new First Presidency.

I have known President Monson for a long time. He is a mighty man of Israel who was foreordained to preside over this Church. He is well known for his captivating stories and parables, but we who know him best understand that his life is

a practical and exemplary model of the application of those stories. While it is a compliment to him that many of the great and mighty of this world know and honor him, perhaps it is an even greater tribute that many of the lowly call him friend.

To his core, President Monson is kind and compassionate. His words and deeds exemplify his concern for the one.

President Eyring is a wise, learned, and spiritual man. He is known and respected not only in the Church but by those not of our faith. He is the kind of man who, when he speaks, everyone listens. He has added stature to the name *Eyring*.

I knew President Uchtdorf when I was serving as Area President in Europe. From the moment I met him, I recognized in him a man of immense spiritual depth and tremendous capability. I knew the Lord was mindful of him. Twenty-three years ago, I had the honor of extending to him the Lord's calling to serve as a stake president in Frankfurt, Germany. As I have watched over the years, I have noticed that everything under his direction has succeeded. The Lord is with him. When I think of President Uchtdorf, two words come to mind: *Alles wohl*—that's German for "All is well."

### Concern for the one

*True disciples of Jesus Christ have always been concerned for the one.* Jesus Christ is our greatest example. He was surrounded by multitudes and spoke to thousands, yet He always had concern for the one. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost,"<sup>1</sup> He said. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"<sup>2</sup>

This instruction applies to all who follow Him. We are commanded to seek out those who are lost. We are to be our brother's keeper. We cannot neglect this

commission given by our Savior. We must be concerned for the one.

Today I would like to talk about those who are lost—some because they are different, some because they are weary, and some because they have strayed.

### Those who are different

*Some are lost because they are different.* They feel as though they don't belong. Perhaps because they are different, they find themselves slipping away from the flock. They may look, act, think, and speak differently than those around them, and that sometimes causes them to assume they don't fit in. They conclude that they are not needed.

Tied to this misconception is the erroneous belief that all members of the Church should look, talk, and be alike. The Lord did not people the earth with a vibrant orchestra of personalities only to value the piccolos of the world. Every instrument is precious and adds to the complex beauty of the symphony. All of Heavenly Father's children are different in some degree, yet each has his own beautiful sound that adds depth and richness to the whole.

This variety of creation itself is a testament of how the Lord values all His children. He does not esteem one flesh above another, but He "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God."<sup>3</sup>

I remember when I was young, there was an older boy who was physically and mentally disabled. He had a speech impediment and walked with difficulty. The boys used to make fun of him. They teased and taunted him until sometimes he would cry.

I can still hear his voice: "You're not kind to me," he said. And still they would ridicule him, push him, and make jokes about him.



One day I could bear it no longer. Although I was only seven years old, the Lord gave me the courage to stand up to my friends.

"Don't touch him," I said to them. "Stop teasing him. Be kind. He is a child of God!"

My friends stepped back and turned away.

I wondered at the time if my boldness would jeopardize my relationship with them. But the opposite happened. From that day onward, my friends and I became closer. They showed increased compassion for the boy. They became better human beings. To my knowledge, they never taunted him again.

Brothers and sisters, if only we had more compassion for those who are different from us, it would lighten many of the problems and sorrows in the world today. It would certainly make our families and the Church a more hallowed and heavenly place.

### **Those who are weary**

*Some are lost because they are weary.* It's easy to feel overwhelmed. With all the pressures and demands on our time and the stress we face each day, it's little wonder we get tired. Many feel discouraged because they have not measured up to their potential. Others simply feel too weak to contribute. And so, as the flock moves on, gradually, almost imperceptibly, some fall behind.

Everyone has felt tired and weary at one time or another. I seem to feel more so now than I did when I was younger. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, even Jesus Christ knew what it meant to be tired. I do not wish to underestimate the weight that members of the Church bear upon their shoulders, nor do I minimize the emotional and spiritual trials they face. These can be heavy and often difficult to bear.

I do, however, have a testimony of the renewing power of the gospel of Jesus

Christ. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the Lord "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."<sup>4</sup> When I feel tired, I remember the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. . . .

"... Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; . . . and let all the sons of God shout for joy!"<sup>5</sup>

For you members of the Church who hold back because of feelings of inadequacy, I plead with you to step forward, put your shoulder to the wheel, and push. Even when you feel that your strength can add little, the Church needs you. The Lord needs you. Remember that the Lord often chooses "the weak things of the world" to accomplish His purposes.<sup>6</sup>

To all who are weary, let the comforting words of the Savior console you: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>7</sup> Let us rely on that promise. The power of God can infuse our spirits and bodies with energy and vigor. I urge you to seek this blessing from the Lord.

Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you, for He has promised that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."<sup>8</sup>

When we show concern for those who are weary, we "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>9</sup> Caring Church leaders are mindful of individual limitations yet eager to utilize members to the extent of their strength and abilities. Leaders teach and support but do not bring pressure to "run faster or labor more than" strength allows.<sup>10</sup>

Remember, sometimes those who start out the slowest end up going the farthest.

### **Those who have strayed**

*Some are lost because they have strayed.* Except for the Lord, we have all made mistakes. The question is not whether we will trip and fall but, rather, how will we respond? Some, after making mistakes, stray from the fold. This is unfortunate. Do you not know that the Church is a place for imperfect people to gather together—even with all their mortal frailties—and become better? Every Sunday in every meetinghouse throughout the world, we find mortal, imperfect men, women, and children who meet together in brotherhood and charity, striving to become better people, to learn of the Spirit, and to lend encouragement and support to others. I am not aware of any sign on the door of our meetinghouses that reads “Restricted Entrance—Perfect People Only.”

Because of our imperfections, we need the Lord’s Church. It is there that His redemptive doctrines are taught and His saving ordinances are administered. The Church encourages and motivates us to be a better and happier people. It is also a place where we can lose ourselves in the service of others.

The Lord knows we will make mistakes. That is why He suffered for our sins. He wants us to get back on our feet and strive to do better. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

To you who have strayed because you have been offended, can you not set your hurt and anger aside? Can you not fill your hearts with love? There is a place for you here. Come, join the fold, consecrate your abilities, talents, and skills. You will be better for it, and others will be blessed by your example.

To those who have strayed because of doctrinal concerns, we cannot apologize

for the truth. We cannot deny doctrine given to us by the Lord Himself. On this principle we cannot compromise.

I understand that sometimes people disagree with doctrine. They even go so far as to call it foolish. But I echo words of the Apostle Paul, who said that sometimes spiritual things can appear as foolishness to men. Nevertheless, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”<sup>11</sup>

In truth, things of the Spirit are revealed by the Spirit. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>12</sup>

We testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ is here upon the earth today. He taught of His Father’s doctrine, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Worthy of the name of Jesus Christ**

I know that each of you bears a concern for a loved one. Give encouragement, service, and support to them. Love them. Be kind to them. In some cases, they will return. In others, they will not. But in all cases, let us ever be worthy of the name we take upon ourselves, even that of Jesus Christ.

To all who inhabit this beautiful earth, I raise my voice and bear solemn witness that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and King! He restored His truth and His gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He speaks to His prophets and apostles. President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s anointed and guides His Church today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Matthew 18:11.
2. Luke 15:4.
3. 2 Nephi 26:33.
4. Isaiah 40:29.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22–23.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.



7. Matthew 11:28.
8. Isaiah 40:31.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 10:4.
11. 1 Corinthians 1:25; see also v. 18.
12. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
13. John 7:17.

### President Monson

I enjoy hearing from my Brethren. It was my opportunity to supervise Brother Wirthlin for a number of years when I had European responsibility and he was in Frankfurt. He called me quite regularly, always at the same time. He said it was the best time to get me. It was 8:00 in Frankfurt, Germany; midnight in Salt Lake.

We are grateful for all the speakers who have spoken today and grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

The choir will now sing for us "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." Following the singing, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

The choir will then sing "Come, Follow Me." After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder Ulisses Soares of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon. Thank you, my brothers and sisters.

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The choir sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

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## President Henry B. Eyring

### The true and living Church

As we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church, and D. Todd Christofferson as an Apostle and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we have seen and felt evidence that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is both true and living. The Lord spoke to those through whom He restored the Church in the latter days. He said of them that they "might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually—

"For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;

"And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has

received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts."<sup>1</sup>

This is the true Church, the only true Church, because in it are the keys of the priesthood. Only in this Church has the Lord lodged the power to seal on earth and to seal in heaven as He did in the time of the Apostle Peter. Those keys were restored to Joseph Smith, who then was authorized to confer them upon the members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

When the Prophet Joseph was murdered, the enemies of the Church thought the Church would die. They thought it was the creation of a mortal man and therefore would perish with him. But their hopes were dashed. It was the true Church, and it also had the power to live on, even when those chosen for a time to lead it died.

We have seen today a demonstration that this is the true and living Church. The keys of the priesthood are held by mortals, but the way has been prepared by the Lord for the keys to remain functioning on the earth so long as the people exercise

faith both that the keys are on the earth and that they have been passed on by the will of God to His chosen servants.

### **Being worthy of faith to sustain leaders**

God's people have not always been worthy of the marvelous experience we have shared today. The Apostles, after the Ascension of Christ, continued to exercise the keys He left with them. But because of disobedience and loss of faith by the members, the Apostles died without the keys being passed on to successors. We call that tragic episode "the Apostasy." Had the members of the Church in those days had the opportunity and the will to exercise faith as you have today, the Lord would not have taken the keys of the priesthood from the earth. So this is a day of historical significance and of eternal importance in the history of the world and to the children of our Heavenly Father.

Now our obligation is to remain worthy of the faith necessary for us to fulfill our promise to sustain those who have been called. The Lord was well pleased with the Church at the beginning of the Restoration, as He is today. But He cautioned the members then, as He does now, that He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. For us to sustain those who have been called today, we must examine our lives, repent as necessary, pledge to keep the Lord's commandments, and follow His servants. The Lord warns us that if we do not do those things, the Holy Ghost will be withdrawn, we will lose the light which we have received, and we will not be able to keep the pledge we have made today to sustain the Lord's servants in His true Church.

Each of us must make an individual evaluation. First, we need to measure the depth of our gratitude for membership in the true Church of Jesus Christ. Second, we need to know by the power of the Holy Ghost in what ways we can do better in keeping the commandments.

We know from prophecy that not only will the true and living Church not be taken from the earth again, but it will become better. Our lives will be transformed for the better as we exercise faith unto repentance, always remember the Savior, and try ever harder to keep His commandments. The scriptures contain promises that when the Lord comes again to His Church, He will find it spiritually prepared for Him. That should make us both determined and optimistic. We must do better. We can. And we will.

### **Sustaining with faith, prayers, and service**

On this day especially it would be wise to determine to sustain with our faith and our prayers all those who serve us in the kingdom. I am personally aware of the power of the faith of members of the Church to sustain those who have been called. In the last few weeks I have felt in powerful ways the prayers and the faith of people whom I do not know and who know me only as someone called to serve through the keys of the priesthood. President Thomas S. Monson will be blessed by your sustaining faith. His family will likewise have blessings poured out upon them because of your faith and your prayers. All those who were sustained by you today will be sustained by God because of their faith and yours.

Every member will have opportunities to sustain through service given in the name of God. The Church is a powerful force for the blessing of its members and all people across the earth. For instance, the Church has done remarkable humanitarian work across the earth. All of that is possible because of the faith of members and of friends that God lives and that the Lord wishes to succor all of those in need whom He can reach through His faithful disciples.

Additionally, it is through the Church and the ordinances which are in it that the blessings of the sealing power reach

into the spirit world. This is a true and living Church, reaching even to those who are no longer living. As you have the faith to find the names of your ancestors, as you go to the house of the Lord to offer them vicarious ordinances, you sustain this great work, whose purpose is to offer salvation to all of Heavenly Father's children who come into this world.

I would like to speak of some of the reasons I see for gratitude for a true and living Church. Then I will suggest some ways in which I see the Church being prepared for the Savior's return. And finally, I will bear my testimony of how I have come to know that this is the true and living Church.

### **Gratitude for the Church**

Most of all I am grateful for my experience of the cleansing power available through the ordinances performed by the power of priesthood. I have felt forgiveness and cleansing through baptism by those with authority. I have felt the burning in my bosom that is possible only because of words spoken by servants of God: "Receive the Holy Ghost."

My sense of gratitude stems also from blessings to my family. It is the sealing power and our knowledge of it which changes and transforms our family life here and our expectations for the joy of family life in the world to come. The thought and the hope that I can have eternal relationships carries me through the trials of separation and the loneliness which are part of mortal existence. The promise to the faithful in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that we may have associations and an expansion of families in the eternities. That assurance changes forever and for the better all of our associations in families.

For example, I am at a stage in my life when, because of great distances, I cannot come to know well grandchildren and, in time, great-grandchildren. There are also

people who have never had the opportunity for marriage and parenthood who have the same yearning as I do to somehow be close to family. Because of the restoration of the knowledge of eternal families, we are more hopeful and more kindly in all our family relations. The greatest joys in this life center in families, as they will in the worlds to come. I am so grateful for the assurance I have that if we are faithful, the same sociality which we enjoy here in this life will be forever with us in the world to come, in eternal glory.<sup>2</sup>

### **Improvements coming to the Church**

I can see evidence of the prophesied perfecting of the Church. For example, as I travel and come to know the members of the Church, I see that there is a steady improvement in their lives. In their simple faith and obedience, the Atonement is changing and edifying the members. Frequently I am in meetings with obviously humble people who are allowed to teach lessons and give sermons which have in them power like that given to Lehi and Nephi, the sons of Helaman. You remember the account:

"And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did preach unto the Lamanites with such great power and authority, for they had power and authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them."<sup>3</sup>

I am confident that the repeated wish of President Gordon B. Hinckley will be granted. He taught that all who come into the Church might be retained in full fellowship if they are nourished by the good word of God. I remember him saying that the last words that he might speak at the end of his service would be "retention, retention, retention." His words live on in the leadership of President Monson and in all of us as we qualify to have the power of a Lehi and a Nephi to nourish with the good word of God. I am confident that you will continue, as I will, to be amazed

by humble Latter-day Saints who home teach, visit teach, and speak to their non-member friends with ever greater power.

For years we have remembered the words of President David O. McKay: “Every member a missionary.” I am confident that the day is coming that through the faith of the members we will see increasing numbers of people invited to hear the word of God who will then come into the true and living Church.

There is another improvement that I am confident will come. Families across the Church are searching for ways to strengthen and protect their children against the evils around them. In some cases those parents are desperately trying to bring back some in their family who have wandered. I am confident that there will be, increasingly, a reward given by God for their efforts. Those who never give up will find that God never gave up and that He will help them.

Much of that help will come from those called to serve in the Church. The spirit of reaching out will increase so that many will be as the young Bishop Thomas Monson was, inspired with practical ways to invite and encourage those who may, for a time, not recognize the blessings God has in store for them. President Monson to this day remembers people he labored to rescue when he was their bishop. My hope would be that all of us would have the confidence that God will guide us in reaching out, and back, to those He would have us bring with us as we go home to Him.

Another improvement I see coming in the kingdom is a desire and a capacity to reach out to the poor and those in need. I have seen an amazing increase among the members of the Church in sympathy for victims of natural disasters across the world. In obituary notices I see families asking that donations be sent to the Perpetual Education Fund or to the Church’s Humanitarian Fund.

The Prophet Joseph Smith saw that wonderful development. He said that as a

person becomes truly converted, he or she will want to range across the earth caring for Heavenly Father’s children.<sup>4</sup> That is already beginning to happen among more of the members of the Church. What is remarkable to me is that the pattern of giving to those in need extends to those who have less themselves and seems to be unaffected by whether we are in good or difficult economic times. That is evidence to me that the Atonement is working ever more effectively among the members.

### **Testimony regarding the Church**

My testimony that this is the true and living Church began in my childhood. One of my earliest memories is of a conference meeting held not in some place like this but in a rented room of a hotel. A man was speaking whom I did not know, nor do I know his name today. I knew only that he was someone sent to our little district in the mission field by someone who held the priesthood. I do not know what he said. But I received a powerful, certain witness before I was eight, even before I was baptized, that I was hearing a servant of God in the true Church of Jesus Christ. It was not the rental room nor the size of the congregation, which was small, but it was a witness that I had been blessed at that moment to be in a meeting of the true Church.

When I moved with my family to the organized stakes of the Church in my teen years, for the first time I felt the power of priesthood quorums and of a loving bishop. I still remember and can feel the assurances that came when I sat in a priests quorum next to a bishop and knew that he had the keys of a true judge in Israel.

That same witness came early in my life on two Sundays, one in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the other in Boston, Massachusetts. In each case I was present on the day that a stake was organized from a district. Seemingly ordinary men

whom I knew well were called as stake presidents. I raised my hand on those days as you did today and had a witness come to me that God had called His servants and that I would be blessed by their service and for sustaining them. I have now felt that same miracle countless times across the Church.

I saw in the days and months that followed their being sustained that those stake presidents were lifted up to their callings. I have seen the same miracle in the service of President Monson as he received the call to preside as the prophet and President of the Church and to exercise all the keys of the priesthood in the earth. Revelation and inspiration have come to him in my presence, which confirms to me that God is honoring those keys. I am an eyewitness. They are keys of a priesthood which is “without beginning or end.”<sup>5</sup>

I bear you my solemn witness that this is the true and living Church of Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father will answer your fervent prayers to know that for yourself. You can have a witness that the calls which you sustained today were from

God. Even more, you can know that within this Church, ordinances are performed which can cleanse souls and bind on earth and in heaven, as they were in the days of Peter, James, and John. Those keys and ordinances are now restored in their fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith and have been passed on through his successors. Jesus is the Christ. He lives. I know that. I testify that Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it lives on. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30–33.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:2.
3. Helaman 5:18.
4. See Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:227.
5. Alma 13:8.

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The choir sang “Come, Follow Me.”

Elder Ulisses Soares offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 178th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2008. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

### President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at

this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “The Morning Breaks.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “The Morning Breaks.”

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the invocation.

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### **President Uchtdorf**

The choir will now sing “Lean on My Ample Arm.” Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing

Department Report. Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who this morning was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2007. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

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The choir sang “Lean on My Ample Arm.”

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## **Church Auditing Department Report for 2007**

### **Robert W. Cantwell**

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren:

As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. After receiving the council’s authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy

of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets.

The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations. The staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2007 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## **Church Statistical Report for 2007**

### **Elder F. Michael Watson**

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2007:

### **Number of Church units**

Stakes	2,790
Missions	348
Districts	618
Wards and branches	27,827

**Church membership**

Total membership . . . . .	13,193,999
Increase in children of record during 2007 . . . . .	93,698
Converts baptized during 2007 . .	279,218

**Missionaries**

Full-time missionaries . . . . .	52,686
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**Temples**

Temples rededicated during 2007 . . . . .	1
(Nuku'alofa Tonga)	
Temples in operation . . . . .	124

**Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April**

*President Gordon B. Hinckley*, 15th President of the Church, at age 97, on January 27, 2008; *President James E. Faust*, counselor in the First Presidency and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Inis Bernice Egan Hunter*, widow of President Howard W. Hunter, former President of the Church; *Sister Ruth W. Faust*, widow of President James E. Faust, former counselor in the First Presidency; *Sister LeAnn C. Neuenschwander*, wife of Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy; *Sister Eunice N. Kay*, widow of Elder F. Arthur Kay, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Janath R. Cannon*, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency; *Brother Richard L. Warner*, former counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

A testimony of the gospel is a personal witness borne to our souls by the Holy Ghost that certain facts of eternal significance are true and that we know them to be true. Such facts include the nature of the Godhead and our relationship to its three members, the effectiveness of the Atonement, and the reality of the Restoration.

A testimony of the gospel is not a travelogue, a health log, or an expression of love for family members. It is not a sermon. President Kimball taught that the moment we begin preaching to others, our testimony is ended.<sup>1</sup>

**Questions about testimony**

Various questions arise as we hear others bear testimony or as we consider bearing testimony ourselves.

1. In a testimony meeting a member says, "I know that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith."

A visitor wonders, "What does he mean when he says he *knows* that?"

2. A young man preparing for a mission wonders whether his testimony is strong enough that he can serve as a missionary.

3. A young person hears the testimony of a parent or teacher. How does such a testimony help a person who hears it?

**Spiritual knowledge**

What do we mean when we testify and say that we *know* the gospel is true? Contrast that kind of knowledge with "I know it is cold outside" or "I know I love my wife." These are three different kinds of knowledge, each learned in a different way. Knowledge of outside temperature can be verified by scientific proof. Knowledge that we love our spouse is personal and subjective. While not capable of scientific proof, it is still important. The idea



that all important knowledge is based on scientific evidence is simply untrue.

While there are some “evidences” for gospel truths (for example, see Psalm 19:1; Helaman 8:24), scientific methods will not yield spiritual knowledge. This is what Jesus taught in response to Simon Peter’s testimony that He was the Christ: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). The Apostle Paul explained this. In a letter to the Corinthian Saints, he said, “The things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11; see also John 14:17).

In contrast, we know the things of man by the ways of man, but “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Book of Mormon teaches that God will manifest the truth of spiritual things unto us by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 10:4–5). In modern revelation God promises us that we will receive “knowledge” by His telling us in our mind and in our heart “by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 8:1–2).

One of the greatest things about our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children is that each of us can know the truth of that plan for ourselves. That revealed knowledge does not come from books, from scientific proof, or from intellectual pondering. As with the Apostle Peter, we can receive that knowledge directly from our Heavenly Father through the witness of the Holy Ghost.

When we know spiritual truths by spiritual means, we can be just as sure of that knowledge as scholars and scientists are of the different kinds of knowledge they have acquired by different methods.

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided a wonderful example of this. When he was

persecuted for telling people about his vision, he likened his circumstance to the Apostle Paul, who was ridiculed and reviled as he made his defense before King Agrippa (see Acts 26). “But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision,” Joseph said. “He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise. . . . So it was with me,” Joseph continued. “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me. . . . I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I” (Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25).

### Obtaining a testimony

That was Joseph Smith’s testimony. What about ours? How can we come to know and testify that what he said was true? How does one gain what we call a testimony?

The first step in gaining any kind of knowledge is to really desire to know. In the case of spiritual knowledge, the next step is to ask God in sincere prayer. As we read in modern revelation, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61).

Here is what Alma wrote about what he did: “Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit” (Alma 5:46).

As we desire and seek, we should remember that acquiring a testimony is not a passive thing but a process in which we are expected to *do* something. Jesus taught, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).



Another way to seek a testimony seems astonishing when compared with the methods of obtaining other knowledge. We gain or strengthen a testimony by bearing it. Someone even suggested that some testimonies are better gained on the feet bearing them than on the knees praying for them.

A personal testimony is fundamental to our faith. Consequently, the things we must do to acquire, strengthen, and retain a testimony are vital to our spiritual life. In addition to those already stated, we need to partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:9) to qualify for the precious promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). Of course, that Spirit is the source of our testimonies.

### **The duty to bear testimony**

Those who have a testimony of the restored gospel also have a duty to share it. The Book of Mormon teaches that we should “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9).

One of the most impressive teachings on the relationship between the gift of a testimony and the duty to bear it is in the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In describing different kinds of spiritual gifts, this revelation states:

“To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

“To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful” (verses 13–14; see also John 20:29).

Those who have the gift to *know* have an obvious duty to bear their witness so that those who have the gift to *believe on their words* might also have eternal life.

There has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly (see D&C 60:2). Though some profess atheism, there are many who are

open to additional truths about God. To these sincere seekers, we need to affirm the existence of God the Eternal Father, the divine mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the reality of the Restoration. We must be valiant in our testimony of Jesus. Each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our spiritual convictions to friends and neighbors, to fellow workers, and to casual acquaintances. We should use these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of His divine mission, and our determination to serve Him.<sup>2</sup> Our children should also hear us bear our testimonies frequently. We should also strengthen our children by encouraging them to define themselves by their growing testimonies, not just by their recognitions in scholarship, sports, or other school activities.

### **Responding to misrepresentation**

We live in a time when some misrepresent the beliefs of those they call Mormons and even revile us because of them. When we encounter such misrepresentations, we have a duty to speak out to clarify our doctrine and what we believe. We should be the ones to state our beliefs rather than allowing others the final word in misrepresenting them. This calls for testimony, which can be expressed privately to an acquaintance or publicly in a small or large meeting. As we testify of the truth we know, we should faithfully follow the caution to speak “in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41). We should never be overbearing, shrill, or reviling. As the Apostle Paul taught, we should speak the truth in love (see Ephesians 4:15). Anyone can disagree with our personal testimony, but no one can refute it.

### **Obedience and knowledge**

In closing, I refer to the relationship between obedience and knowledge. Members who have a testimony and who act

upon it under the direction of Church leaders are sometimes accused of blind obedience.

Of course we have leaders, and of course we are subject to their decisions and directions in the operation of the Church and in the performance of needed priesthood ordinances. But when it comes to learning and knowing the truth of the gospel—our personal testimonies—we each have a direct relationship with God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, through the powerful witness of the Holy Ghost. This is what our critics fail to understand. It puzzles them that we can be united in following our leaders and yet independent in knowing for ourselves.

Perhaps the puzzle some feel can be explained by the reality that each of us has two different channels to God. We have a channel of governance through our prophet and other leaders. This channel, which has to do with doctrine, ordinances, and commandments, results in obedience. We also have a channel of personal testimony, which is direct to God. This has to do with His existence, our relationship to Him, and the truth of His restored gospel. This channel results in knowledge. These two channels are mutually reinforcing: knowledge encourages obedience (see Deuteronomy 5:27; Moses 5:11), and obedience enhances knowledge (see John 7:17; D&C 93:1).

We all act upon or give obedience to knowledge. Whether in science or religion, our obedience is not blind when we act upon knowledge suited to the subject of our action. A scientist receives and acts upon a trusted certification of the content or conditions of a particular experiment. In matters of religion, a believer's source of knowledge is spiritual, but the principle is the same. In the case of Latter-day Saints, when the Holy Ghost gives our souls a witness of the truth of the restored gospel and the calling of a modern

prophet, our choice to follow those teachings is not blind obedience.

In all of our testifying we must avoid arrogance and pride. We should remember the Book of Mormon rebuke to a people who had such pride in the greater things God had given them that they afflicted their neighbors (see Jacob 2:20). Jacob said this was “abominable unto him who created all flesh” because “the one being is as precious in his sight as the other” (Jacob 2:21). Later, Alma cautioned that “ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7).

I close with my testimony. I know that we have a Heavenly Father, whose plan brings us to earth and provides the conditions and destiny of our eternal journey. I know that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, whose teachings define the plan and whose Atonement gives the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. I know that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith to restore the fulness of the gospel in these latter days. And I know that we are led today by a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who holds the keys to authorize priesthood holders to perform the ordinances prescribed for our progress toward eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 138.
2. For example, see Jeanne Newman, “With the Sound of a Trump,” *New Era*, Aug. 1985, 9–11.

#### President Uchtdorf

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Gerald N. Lund of the Seventy.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

Like you, I appreciated the participation in the solemn assembly. But I thought I might give one point of doctrine and help. When we raised our hands to the square in the solemn assembly, it was not just a vote in that we gave of ourselves a private and personal commitment, even a covenant, to sustain and to uphold the laws, ordinances, commandments, and the prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. I so appreciated participating with you and raising my right hand to the square.

### A testimony of the Godhead

My brothers and sisters, over the past few months I have had a humbling experience which has given me the opportunity to reflect with gratitude on the gift of life. In the course of this experience, I have continually pondered my testimony of God our Eternal Father and His eldest Son, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and how I gained my testimony of the Father and the Son.

People all over the world, of every creed and persuasion, search and struggle to know, Who is God? What is His relationship to Jesus Christ? And what is our relationship with Them?

I know with surety that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live. The Atonement is real. God the Father and Jesus Christ are distinct, separate, immortal beings. They know us as individuals, and They hear and answer our sincere prayers. The Savior testified to the inhabitants of the New World, “I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me.”<sup>1</sup> The Holy Ghost has testified to me that these things are true.

I began to gain my testimony in my youth when I reflected on 13 prophetic statements called the Articles of Faith,

written by Joseph Smith. It was in Primary that we memorized them. They describe the basic beliefs of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The first of these statements reads, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

### Experience of the First Vision as a guide

Joseph Smith knew the nature of the three members of the Godhead by personal experience. As a 14-year-old boy he wanted to know which of the many Christian churches he should join. In the Bible, in the book of James of the New Testament, he read, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.”<sup>3</sup> Obediently he knelt in prayer and was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. He described Them as “two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above [Joseph] in the air. One of them [God the Father] spake unto [him], calling [him] by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>4</sup>

Since my own boyhood, Joseph Smith’s experience has been a guide to me—and can be for all of us. The young prophet learned the truth about our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, because he sought to know from the scriptures his Heavenly Father’s will and then he faithfully obeyed.

This pattern was set and perfectly exemplified by the Savior as recorded in the Bible. When Jesus was a 12-year-old boy, His mother, Mary, and His earthly father, Joseph, found Him teaching in the temple. Jesus asked them, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”<sup>5</sup> But Jesus was not speaking of Joseph’s business. He was speaking of the business of His literal and Eternal Father in Heaven.

## The Father's introductions of the Son

The manner by which God the Father introduced His Son on several occasions is significant: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. . . . And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>6</sup> And again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."<sup>7</sup>

When Jesus appeared on the American continent, He was introduced in the same way by His Father: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him."<sup>8</sup> And then nearly two millennia later, the same words were spoken to the young Joseph Smith: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"<sup>9</sup>

It is of special significance that whenever Heavenly Father wants to introduce His Son to us, He commands us to listen—to "hear" the words of Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? He participated with His Father in the Creation of the world and was responsible, under the direction of His Father, to create all things on the face of the earth. "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."<sup>10</sup> Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Mediator with the Father. He is the Savior who laid down His life for us and pleads our cause with the Father. Therefore, we pray to Heavenly Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son, is not the same being as His Father, but He is *like* His Father. He too is a glorified being of power and authority.

## The Savior's Intercessory Prayer

It is very enlightening and touching to me to consider how Jesus talks to His Father. In His great Intercessory Prayer, which is found in the Bible in the book of

John, it is unmistakably clear that Jesus acknowledges He is the Son. Listen to His words as He reports the obedient completion of His earthly mission to His Father in Heaven:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

"For I have given unto them [the disciples] the words which thou gavest me . . . , and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . .

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. . . .

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."<sup>11</sup>

Through the course of the Savior's ministry, the disciples did indeed become one but not in their physical bodies. They became one in unity of purpose and love. This is the oneness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, spoken of in the scriptures. They too are distinct beings, but They are united in purpose, in Their love for us, and in the work They are doing on our behalf.

The Savior also prayed:

"O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. . . .

". . . That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

". . . For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."<sup>12</sup>

Oh, how Jesus wanted us to know the Father as He did. He prayed:

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these [the disciples] have known that thou hast sent me.

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus showed His great love for those who choose to follow Him as He prayed

for their protection: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”<sup>14</sup> He was praying for us, brothers and sisters.

And then our Savior tenderly asks that they, meaning us, may be with Him again: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.”<sup>15</sup>

### **The Savior obeyed His Father’s will**

In preparation for the atoning sacrifice, Jesus prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane as He took upon Himself the sins, sorrows, and sufferings of all mankind. In those hours alone, He again made it clear that He was not performing His own work. He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>16</sup> In this most crucial moment for Him and for all of us, He was not talking to Himself or relying on His own strength. He was calling upon His Father, God Omnipotent, to sustain Him and allow Him to do His Father’s will; and His Father sent an angel “from heaven, strengthening him.”<sup>17</sup> I so love the love that the Father has for His Son and for all of us.

From before the foundation of the world to the final moments on the cross, the Savior had been about His Father’s business. He completed the work He had been sent to do. Therefore, we do not wonder to whom He was talking when, upon the cross, “he said, It is finished,”<sup>18</sup> and “cried with a loud voice, . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”<sup>19</sup> We know He was praying to His Heavenly Father.

I testify that our Savior lives. He is the Only Begotten of the Father, and He will come again on this earth to reign. He is Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, “full of grace, and mercy, and truth. . . . It is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who

steadfastly believeth on his name.”<sup>20</sup> He is the literal Son of God, who rose from the dead on the third day, bringing the reality of resurrection to all who will come to earth. I also testify that God our Eternal Father lives and loves each of us, for we are His children. So great is His love that He sent His Only Begotten Son into the world “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>21</sup>

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify of the truth of what is in the scriptures and what has been told to me and can be told to you by the Holy Spirit. It will be revealed according to your obedience and desires. The Savior taught us during His earthly ministry this great truth that applies to all of us: “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.”<sup>22</sup> I testify that I do know these things, and I know with surety that these things which I have spoken of are true. That you may seek for that same surety is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. 3 Nephi 11:32.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. James 1:5.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Luke 2:49.
6. Matthew 3:16–17.
7. Luke 9:35.
8. 3 Nephi 11:7.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
10. Moses 1:33.
11. John 17:4, 8, 18, 22.
12. John 17:5, 23–24.
13. John 17:25–26.
14. John 17:15.
15. John 17:24.
16. Matthew 26:39.
17. Luke 22:43.
18. John 19:30.
19. Luke 23:46.
20. Alma 5:48.
21. John 3:16.
22. 3 Nephi 18:20.

## Elder Gerald N. Lund

### The Holy Ghost speaks to the heart

Today I should like to speak on the importance of opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

After baptism we are confirmed and given the Holy Ghost. This is a supernal gift. The Holy Ghost comforts, teaches, warns, enlightens, and inspires us. Nephi put it very simply: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”<sup>1</sup> We need the help of the Holy Ghost if we are to make our way safely through what the Apostle Paul called the “perilous times”<sup>2</sup> in which we now live.

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, which allows Him to dwell in our hearts and communicate directly with our spirits.<sup>3</sup> The voice of the Spirit is described as still and small and one that whispers.<sup>4</sup> How can a voice be still? Why is it likened to a whisper? Because the Spirit almost always speaks to our minds and to our hearts<sup>5</sup> rather than to our ears. President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*.”<sup>6</sup>

We feel things in our hearts. In the scriptures, the prophets teach that personal revelation is closely linked to the heart. For example:

Mormon taught, “Because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>7</sup>

Alma said, “He that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.”<sup>8</sup>

Mormon wrote of the Nephites, “[Their souls were filled] with joy and consolation . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”<sup>9</sup>

And then the Psalmist simply wrote, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.”<sup>10</sup>

Isn’t that something we all seek, brothers and sisters—to be visited by the Holy Ghost, to have the Lord draw closer to us, to find joy and consolation in our lives? If so, then carefully assessing the condition of our hearts is one of the most essential things we can do in this life.

### Gateway to the heart

The heart is a tender place. It is sensitive to many influences, both positive and negative. It can be hurt by others. It can be deadened by sin. It can be softened by love. Early in our lives, we learn to guard our hearts. It is like we erect a fence around our hearts with a gate in it. No one can enter that gate unless we allow him or her to.

In some cases the fence we erect around our hearts could be likened to a small picket fence with a Welcome sign on the gate. Other hearts have been so hurt or so deadened by sin that they have an eight-foot chain-link fence topped with razor wire around them. The gate is padlocked and has a large No Trespassing sign on it.

Let us apply the idea of a gateway to the heart to receiving personal revelation. Nephi taught, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it *unto* the hearts of the children of men.”<sup>11</sup> Elder David A. Bednar noted the use of the word *unto*: “Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. . . . Ultimately, . . . the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.”<sup>12</sup>

Why just *unto* the heart? Individual agency is so sacred that Heavenly Father will never force the human heart, even with all His infinite power. Man may try to do so, but God does not. To put it another way, God allows us to be the guardians,

or the gatekeepers, of our own hearts. We must, of our own free will, open our hearts to the Spirit, for He will not force Himself upon us.

### **Eliminating impurity and pride**

So how do we open our hearts?

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."<sup>13</sup> If something is pure, it is not polluted or tainted by things which do not belong to it. Purity of heart is certainly one of the most important qualifications for receiving inspiration from God. While none of our hearts are perfect, the more diligently we strive to eliminate impurity, or push out things which do not belong there, the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Note this sweet promise of the prophet Jacob: "O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love."<sup>14</sup>

While in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that describes a condition of some hearts:

"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men."<sup>15</sup>

Many in the world now live in prosperous and peaceful circumstances. In the Book of Mormon, prosperity often led the people away from the Lord. Mormon warned, "We may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art . . . , then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God."<sup>16</sup>

The Lord noted three natural consequences of having one's heart set on the things of the world: First, we seek to hide our sins instead of repenting of them. Next, we seek to gratify our pride and vain

ambitions rather than seeking the things of God. Finally, we begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over others.<sup>17</sup>

Note that pride is a natural consequence of setting our hearts on the things of the world. Pride quickly desensitizes our hearts to spiritual promptings. For example, the Lord said, "I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart, and received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit."<sup>18</sup> Compare that to this promise: "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."<sup>19</sup>

In the Liberty Jail revelation, the Lord described the effect of a worldly heart: "Behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and . . . behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself."<sup>20</sup> Brothers and sisters, in these very "perilous times," we cannot afford to grieve the Spirit and be left to ourselves.

### **Choosing to open our hearts**

I say again, the condition of our hearts directly affects our sensitivity to spiritual things. Let us make it a part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit. Since we are the guardians of our hearts, we can choose to do so. We choose what we let in or hold out. Fortunately the Lord is anxious to help us choose wisely.

I close in testimony with two of the promises made to those who seek to come unto the Lord: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with [His] love, . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure."<sup>21</sup>

And finally this stirring declaration of Paul the Apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."<sup>22</sup>

May we ever ask Christ to strengthen our hearts and fill them with His love is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 32:5.
2. 2 Timothy 3:1.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
6. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60.
7. Moroni 8:26.
8. Alma 12:10.
9. Helaman 3:35.
10. Psalm 34:18.
11. 2 Nephi 33:1; italics added.
12. David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61.
13. Matthew 5:8.
14. Jacob 3:2.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–35.
16. Helaman 12:2.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–37.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 63:55.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37–38.
21. Moroni 7:48.
22. Philippians 4:13.

**President Uchtdorf**

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Elders Carlos H. Amado and William R. Walker of the Seventy will then address us. They will be followed by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Redeemer of Israel."

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## Elder Carlos H. Amado

### Purposes of the Savior's mortal ministry

All the things that Christ did for our salvation are unique. He was able to perform His redeeming work in approximately three years of ministry. Today I would like to highlight three purposes for the Savior's life on earth.

#### 1. His atoning sacrifice

The first and greatest purpose was the unrivaled and amazing assignment that He received from His Father: to carry out an infinite and eternal sacrifice for all humanity.

As Heavenly Father's Only Begotten Son in the flesh, He inherited all of His Father's divine qualities, and from His earthly mother, Mary, He inherited mortal characteristics.

Only His sacrifice could rescue us from our mortal and fallen state (see Alma 34:8–14). He came to the world with the specific purpose to give His life, since only His life could give us eternal life.

No other mortal being, in the past, present, or future of the existence of the earth, has lived or will live to carry out the Atonement for our sins. He is our Savior and Redeemer (see John 3:16).

He will return again to govern and rule among us with great power and glory.

#### 2. His doctrine

The second purpose for His having dwelt among us was to teach the doctrine that He learned from His Father, which includes the ordinances and covenants of salvation and exaltation (see Mark 1:27; John 7:16).

His doctrine is one of love, forgiveness, and mercy. It is the way to live in peace and harmony among men and the way to return to live with God.

#### 3. His service to the children of God

His third purpose was to build the kingdom by serving others. This was a different type of leadership. Service is a characteristic of His followers—a divine quality.



“Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am.

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:13–15).

He lived to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to heal all manner of sickness (see Matthew 4:23–24). To teach His doctrine and to serve our fellowmen are two responsibilities that we accepted when we were baptized. This converts us into true servants of Christ.

On one occasion after teaching His doctrine, He had compassion on the people and performed the miracle of multiplying the loaves of bread and fish and feeding the multitude, revealing to us His character of compassion and service. The next day the multitude was even greater because of the food that they had received. He taught them with determination and with eternal vision:

“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:26–27).

As a Church we should feed the hungry, relieve the sick, clothe the naked, and give shelter to the destitute. With fast offerings we alleviate the basic and immediate needs of the members, and with the welfare plan we help meet their long-term needs. When there are natural disasters, through humanitarian service we provide assistance for our brothers and sisters who are not of our faith.

Without neglecting these temporal needs, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by commandment of the Lord, maintains the most sublime and lofty labor of service, which is to bless all men by teaching them the doctrine of Christ and inviting them to receive the saving ordinances so that they might gain

“immortality and eternal life” (Moses 1:39).

### **A change of thought and attitude**

I know that God loves us. He allows us to exercise our moral agency even when we misuse it. He permits us to make our own decisions.

Christ cannot help us if we do not trust Him; He cannot teach us if we do not serve Him. He will not force us to do what’s right, but He will show us the way only when we decide to serve Him. Certainly, for us to serve in His kingdom, Christ requires that we experience a change of thought and attitude.

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Moses 5:13).

### **Blessings of service**

I testify that through serving our fellowmen we come to know the Lord.

Service makes us strong in our faith and useful in His kingdom. Service gives us purpose and courage in life. It brings us closer to God and helps us refine our divine nature. It teaches us to love and understand our fellowmen, and it helps us forget about our personal desires, eliminating selfishness, pride, and ingratitude. It teaches us to think of the needs of others, which allows us to develop the virtues that the Savior possesses.

Kindness, love, patience, understanding, and unity will increase as we serve, while intolerance, jealousy, envy, greed, and selfishness decrease or disappear. The more we give of ourselves, the more our capacity to serve, understand, and love will grow.

Those who serve will always seek to please God and live in harmony with Him. They will be full of peace; they will have a cheerful countenance and a spirit of kindness.

Those who serve will strive to ennoble, build, and lift their fellowmen; therefore, they will find the good in others, and they will not find reason or have time to become offended. They develop the virtue of praying for those who criticize. They don't expect recognition or reward. They possess the love of Christ.

Those who serve will always be willing to share what they possess and what they know at all times, in all places, and with all people.

Those who serve even in adversity will maintain a living hope of a better future. They will continue to be firm in the midst of a crisis because their hope is in Christ.

Those who serve will accept their assignments with humility, recognizing their limitations but convinced that two people can do all things they propose to do as long as one of the two people is God.

With divine inspiration, King Benjamin declared, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). Those who serve will have greater understanding of the personality and attributes of God.

Those who serve with devotion, even when things don't turn out the way they

would like, are not easily discouraged, fatigued, or frustrated because the promise of peace of mind and the companionship of the Holy Spirit will never abandon them.

### **Worldwide and local service**

In the Church there are tens of thousands of members who selflessly serve in more than 170 nations in a great diversity of tongues and languages. They give unselfish service through leadership, teaching, and care of others, without salary or material reward, without applause or worldly recognition. They give of their time, their talents, and their resources; they sacrifice all that they have and serve efficiently and marvelously well. After a certain time they are released to give the opportunity of service to others.

Because of His doctrine and His service, the restored Church of Jesus Christ is constantly blessing the lives of its members. We thank God for all of you faithful Saints who have felt the joy of service, who feel it now, and who will feel this joy as you serve others. We pray that God always will bless you for it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder William R. Walker**

### **Importance of the First Presidency**

What a blessing and privilege it is for us to sustain President Thomas S. Monson, President Henry B. Eyring, and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf as the new First Presidency of the Lord's Church.

I first learned the importance of the First Presidency as a boy growing up in western Canada. When I would go to Grandma and Grandpa Walker's home, I was greeted in the entry by a framed photo of the First Presidency of the Church. I remember it well. It seemed that they stood as sentinels, greeting all who entered.

The beautiful color photo was of President George Albert Smith with his counselors, J. Reuben Clark Jr. and David O. McKay. The photo showed them standing together by a large world globe. I loved the picture. They were such handsome and dignified men; I knew them as the prophet of God and his counselors.

That picture hanging in the front foyer of my grandparents' home had a powerful influence on me. I lived in the small prairie town of Raymond, where my grandparents lived. I could walk to their home, so I visited often. I remember frequently standing quietly alone in the foyer, reverently looking at that picture of the

First Presidency. I remember thinking about why my grandparents thought it was so important to honor the First Presidency and have that picture prominently displayed in their home. All who entered would see it. Perhaps most importantly, for their children and grandchildren it was a constant reminder of what was deeply important in the hearts and lives of Grandma and Grandpa.

Years later I concluded that displaying the picture of the First Presidency was equivalent to Joshua's beautiful expression: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

All who entered the home of James and Fannye Walker knew that written upon their hearts were the words "As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord." As their grandson, I knew it, and I have never forgotten it.

### **The order of presidencies**

As a boy I didn't understand so well the significance of there being three in the First Presidency rather than having one President. I knew, of course, that Jesus had selected Peter, James, and John, not just Peter. I knew that my father was one of three men in the bishopric, serving as a counselor to Bishop J. O. Hicken. I knew my grandfather was the stake president and that he had two counselors who stood beside him (President John Allen and President Leslie Palmer).

In every case, *a presidency*—not just consisting of one man as the leader but as three who led together.

In Primary I had learned the Articles of Faith and grew to love them. The Articles of Faith give our youth comfort and confidence as they learn the fundamental doctrines of the Church. I then knew that "a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5).

In 1835 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith the proper order of presidencies in the Church:

"Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers. . . .

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:21–22).

"A quorum of three presidents" (D&C 107:29)—not a president and two vice presidents but three presiding high priests. A quorum of three presidents—the First Presidency of the Lord's Church.

The world does not organize itself this way, but this is how the Lord organized and structured His Church.

It brings to mind the scripture: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

At about the time of my seventh birthday, I learned a little about succession in the Presidency when President George Albert Smith passed away. Sometime later the picture in Grandma and Grandpa's foyer was replaced by a beautiful picture of President David O. McKay and his counselors, Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark Jr.

As a boy I certainly didn't understand the deep significance or the process of succession in the Presidency—but I knew that the prophet had died and that we were led by a new prophet of God, with two counselors at his side.

### **Importance of counselors**

At age 13 I was called into Bishop Murray Holt's office, and he extended a call to me to serve as the president of the deacons quorum. He told me I needed to

go home and pray about who my counselors should be. He taught me that the Lord would help me decide. He did. I then learned about counselors, and I began to see why the Lord has His Church directed by presidencies, not just presidents. I loved my counselors in the deacons quorum, and we prayed and worked hard to help the boys in our quorum. Bishop Holt taught me the pattern of presidencies and taught me how a presidency should operate and function in the Lord's Church.

When I later served as president of other quorums, I already knew the importance of counselors, and I knew that the Lord would help me choose them—just as my bishop had taught me.

As a deacons quorum president and later as a bishop and stake president, I knew that whatever wisdom, understanding, or capacity I had, it would be magnified considerably when I included my counselors in any decision that needed to be made. I learned that the benefits of serving together as a presidency were magnificent and magnifying.

I came to understand why the Lord appointed that His Church should be led by three presiding high priests and why that form of leadership would be prescribed throughout most of the Church.

### The pattern of leadership

The Lord said, "I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived" (D&C 52:14). He has given us the pattern of leadership. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "Every organization in [the] Church is presided over by a presidency of three, except the Seventies [and the Twelve]" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 94).

Additionally, the auxiliaries at all levels are led by a president and two counselors. All the blessings and benefits of serving together as a presidency apply to auxiliaries as well as to the priesthood quorums.

Every one of us who serve in presidencies anywhere in the Church should look to the First Presidency as our pattern and the example that we seek to follow as we carry out our stewardships. We should strive to be like them and to work together in love and harmony as they do.

President Gordon B. Hinckley often spoke of the importance of counselors. He said, "The Lord put [counselors] there for a purpose" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 94).

President Hinckley further instructed us: "Every morning except Monday, the First Presidency meets, when we are in town. I call on President Faust to present his business and we discuss it and make a decision. Then I call on President Monson to present his business and we discuss it and make a decision. Then I present the items which I wish to present and we discuss them and make a decision. We work together. . . . You can't be a one-man operation in a presidency. Counselors—what a wonderful thing are counselors. They save you from doing the wrong things, they help you to do the right things" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 95; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 63–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 48–51).

A counselor to President Joseph F. Smith once described how the First Presidency deliberated: "When a case came before [the President of the Church] to judge, he and his counselors would talk it over and give it their *careful consideration until they came to the same conclusion*" (Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, June 1919, 19; italics added).

That should be our pattern in presidencies.

The revelations teach us to make our decisions in quorums and presidencies "in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity" (D&C 107:30).

The Lord has given us the pattern.

### **Blessings of sustaining our leaders**

We have sustained today the new First Presidency of the Church. They will teach us and show us the pattern that we should follow. Wisdom and strength will come to us as we look to the First Presidency as our ideal and our pattern of leadership.

Great blessings will come to our families as we teach our children and grandchildren to love and sustain the leaders of the Church. As a young boy standing in

my grandparents' home, I knew that we were led by men of God, whom the Lord had placed there to guide us.

And I know it now. I bear witness that this is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that we are led by His apostles and prophets. I bear witness that the senior Apostle, President Thomas S. Monson, has been called of God and that with his two noble counselors at his side, they will lead us in accordance with the mind and will of the Lord, whose Church this is. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

I bear solemn witness of how deeply I love our new prophet, seer, and revelator, President Thomas S. Monson—how deeply I trust him, and how I am willing to do whatever he asks me to do.

### **Healing the consequences of abuse**

Some matters are so sensitive and intensely personal and can awaken such disturbing feelings that they are seldom mentioned publicly. Yet, if tenderly and compassionately treated in the light of truth, discussion of these matters can bring greater understanding, with the easing of pain, the blessing of healing, and even the avoidance of further tragedy.

It is with a deep desire to define a path to relief that I speak to you who suffer the shattering consequences of mental, verbal, physical, and especially sexual abuse. I speak also to those of you who cause it. I will focus on sexual abuse, although the counsel given should help the victims of other mistreatment. My intent is to act as a mirror so that divine, healing light can illuminate the dark clouds of distress caused by others' unrighteous acts. May I be aided to communicate understandably, to provide help, and not further complicate a damaged life. It is also likely that greater understanding, awareness, and sensitivity may permit some of the rest

of us to help resolve or prevent the tragedy of abuse in additional victims.

The rising tide of this vicious, abominable sin may not have touched your life personally. Yet it is pervasive enough in the world that it may have touched someone you love. It frequently causes such profound suffering—that can be overcome—that I want to speak of how healing can be attained. It will be done reverently, for my objective is to help heal and not aggravate painful memories.

### **Agency**

Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. He understood that some of His spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of

another's unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.

### **To the victim**

I testify that I know victims of serious abuse who have successfully made the difficult journey to full healing through the power of the Atonement. After her own concerns were resolved by her faith in the healing power of the Atonement, one young woman who had been severely abused by her father requested another interview with me. She returned with an older couple. I could sense that she loved the two very deeply. Her face radiated happiness. She began, "Elder Scott, this is my father. I love him. He's concerned about some things that happened in my early childhood. They are no longer a problem for me. Could you help him?" What a powerful confirmation of the Savior's capacity to heal! She no longer suffered from the consequences of abuse, because she had adequate understanding of His Atonement, exercised sufficient faith, and was obedient to His law. As you conscientiously study the Atonement and exercise your faith that Jesus Christ has the power to heal, you can receive the same blessed relief. During your journey of recovery, accept His invitation to let Him share your burden until you have sufficient time and strength to be healed.

### *Satan's strategy*

To find relief from the consequences of abuse, it is helpful to understand their source. Satan is the author of all of the destructive outcomes of abuse. He has extraordinary capacity to lead an individual into blind alleys where the solution to extremely challenging problems cannot be found. His strategy is to separate the suffering soul from the healing attainable from a compassionate Heavenly Father and a loving Redeemer.

If you have been abused, Satan will strive to convince you that there is no solution. Yet he knows perfectly well that there is. Satan recognizes that healing comes through the unwavering love of Heavenly Father for each of His children. He also understands that the power of healing is inherent in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Therefore, his strategy is to do all possible to separate you from your Father and His Son. Do not let Satan convince you that you are beyond help.

Satan uses your abuse to undermine your self-confidence, destroy trust in authority, create fear, and generate feelings of despair. Abuse can damage your ability to form healthy human relationships. You must have faith that all of these negative consequences can be resolved; otherwise they will keep you from full recovery. While these outcomes have powerful influence in your life, *they do not define the real you.*

Satan will strive to alienate you from your Father in Heaven with the thought that if He loved you He would have prevented the tragedy. Do not be kept from the very source of true healing by the craftiness of the prince of evil and his wicked lies. Recognize that if you have feelings that you are not loved by your Father in Heaven, you are being manipulated by Satan. Even when it may seem very difficult to pray, kneel and ask Father in Heaven to give you the capacity to trust Him and to feel His love for you. Ask to come to know that His Son can heal you through His merciful Atonement.

It was Satan's proposal that Father's children be forced to obey, that there be no moral agency and therefore no personal growth. To preserve moral agency, the Lord does not restrain individuals from improper use of that agency. However, He will punish them for such acts unless there is full repentance. Through the Holy Ghost, He sends warning promptings to the abuser, but often that individual's degrading appetite is so powerful that it blocks out that spiritual guid-



ance. That is why our Father provided a way to heal the consequences of acts that, through force, misuse of authority, or fear of another, temporarily take away the agency of the abused.

### *The Savior's healing power*

The beginning of healing requires childlike faith in the unalterable fact that Father in Heaven loves you and has supplied a way to heal. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, laid down His life to provide that healing. But there is no magic solution, no simple balm to provide healing, nor is there an easy path to the complete remedy. The cure requires profound faith in Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity to heal. It is rooted in an understanding of doctrine and a resolute determination to follow it.

Healing may begin with a thoughtful bishop or stake president or a wise professional counselor. If you had a broken leg, you wouldn't decide to fix it yourself. Serious abuse can also benefit from professional help. There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.

As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior's healing power in your own life.<sup>1</sup>

If you are currently being abused or have been in the past, find the courage to seek help. You may have been severely

threatened or caused to fear so that you would not reveal the abuse. Have the courage to act now. Seek the support of someone you can trust. Your bishop or stake president can give you valuable counsel and help you with the civil authorities. Explain how you have been abused and identify who has done it. Ask for protection. Your action may help others avoid becoming innocent victims, with the consequent suffering. Get help now. Do not fear—for fear is a tool Satan will use to keep you suffering. The Lord will help you, but you must reach out for that help.

Do not be discouraged if initially a bishop hesitates when you identify an abuser. Remember that predators are skillful at cultivating a public appearance of piety to mask their despicable acts. Pray to be guided in your efforts to receive help. That support will come. Rest assured that the Perfect Judge, Jesus the Christ, with a perfect knowledge of the details, will hold all abusers accountable for every unrighteous act. In time He will fully apply the required demands of justice unless there is complete repentance. Your preoccupation with a need for justice only slows your healing and allows the perpetrator to continue his abusive control. Therefore you should leave punishment for the diabolic acts of abuse to civil and Church authorities.

### **To the perpetrator**

Now, to the perpetrator who has shattered the life of another by abuse: Recognize that you need help with your addiction or it will destroy you. You will not overcome it by yourself. You likely need specialized professional help. I plead with you to seek to be rescued *now*. You likely have deceived yourself in the false, temporary security that you have successfully hidden your transgression from the civil or Church authorities. But know that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely aware of your sins. He has warned: "Whoso shall offend one of these little

ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”<sup>2</sup> Know that even without action by a victim, your act of abuse will be publicly known, for Satan will expose you, then abandon you.

Simplify your life by taking steps *now* to cleanse your soul from such sin and resolve the penalties they evoke. Show your desire to heal the anguish that you have caused others. Talk to your bishop or stake president. The seriousness of your acts may require you to face civil and Church discipline. But full repentance will bring the sweet relief of forgiveness, peace of conscience, and a renewed life. It will also bring relief to the abused and their families. You will be free of the weight of remorse and the accusing thoughts of what you have caused in grief and anguish in another’s life. Recognize that it is much easier to repent in this life than it will be in the next, so repent now. You will be helped when you decide to be freed from your addiction through repentance and the support of others. Be grateful that you didn’t live anciently when abusers were stoned to death without the opportunity for repentance.<sup>3</sup>

### To parents

Parents, in appropriate, sensitive ways, teach your children of the potential danger of abuse and how to avoid it. Be aware of warning signs, such as an abrupt change in a child’s behavior, that may signal a problem. Be alert to a child’s unsettled feelings and identify their origin.

### To judges in Israel

To you who hold the keys of a judge in Israel, painstakingly ensure that every individual that is suffering from abuse receives appropriate help. The Church handbook and the help line listed there are valuable resources to guide your ecclesiastical action and coordination with

civil authorities.<sup>4</sup> Carefully supervise the participation of any individual who may have had past offenses. Recognize that it is very unlikely that a perpetrator will confess his depraved acts. Seek the guidance of the Spirit when you feel that something may be amiss. Enlist the help of ward and stake leaders to avoid potential dangers.

I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will ensure that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. These materials may help in recovering from the tragedy of abuse:

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 71–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 52–54

James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 19–22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 18–20

Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 4–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 6–9

Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 43–46; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 31–33

Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 18–21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–18

Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 14–17; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 15–18

Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 42–45; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 40–42

Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 69–73; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 69–71

“A Conversation on Spouse Abuse,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 22–27

“The Wrongful Road of Abuse,” chapter 28 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1998), 249–55

Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46.



2. Matthew 18:6.
3. See Deuteronomy 22:25–27.
4. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* (2006), 107–8, 110, 120, 122, 147, 186.

### President Uchtdorf

My dear brothers and sisters, the Lord has blessed us greatly today. We have had a significant, historic, and wonderful day of conference.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Stanley G. Ellis of the Seventy.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### The gospel is a recipe for eternal life

The Apostle Paul boldly declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). This same boldness is declared by our full-time missionaries as they serve in many parts of the world.

Essentially, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a five-ingredient recipe for eternal life. First, let us consider what can become of us if we follow this recipe, and then we can consider each of the ingredients.

*What do we know about eternal life?* We learn from Moses 1:39 that the Lord’s work and glory is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life. This teaches us that immortality and eternal life are separate and distinct. The gift of eternal life, which is promised only when certain conditions are met, is so much greater than the gift of immortality.

According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Eternal life is not a name that has reference only to the unending duration of a future life; immortality is to live forever in the resurrected state, and by the grace of God all men will gain this unending continuance of life. But only those

who obey the fulness of the gospel law will inherit eternal life. . . . It is ‘the greatest of all the gifts of God’ . . . , for it is the kind, status, type, and quality of life that God himself enjoys. Thus those who gain eternal life receive exaltation; they are sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ, members of the Church of the Firstborn; they overcome all things, have all power, and receive the fulness of the Father” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 237).

The duty of our missionaries, as stated on page 1 of *Preach My Gospel*, is to “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the . . . Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end” (2004).

### A picture of eternal life

In many cookbooks there are pictures of the perfect dishes that recipes make—the fulness of the joy of cooking. These pictures are important because they help us envision the outcome if we strictly follow the directions as given in the recipe. It is important to begin with the end in mind, but the end represented by pictures

in cookbooks is an end that is only possible if everything is done right. If directions are not followed or an ingredient is left out or miscalculated, the desired taste and appearance are seldom attained. The picture of a perfect dish, however, can serve as motivation to try again to create something that is both delicious and beautiful.

When we think of eternal life, what is the picture that comes to mind? I believe that if we could create in our minds a clear and true picture of eternal life, we would start behaving differently. We would not need to be prodded to do the many things involved with enduring to the end, like doing our home teaching or visiting teaching, attending our meetings, going to the temple, living moral lives, saying our prayers, or reading the scriptures. We would want to do all these things and more because we realize they will prepare us to go somewhere we yearn to go.

### Faith in Jesus Christ

*Why does a missionary's purpose need to begin with helping others receive faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement?* In order to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, people must first embrace Him whose gospel it is. They must trust the Savior and what He has taught us. They must believe that He has the power to keep His promises to us by virtue of the Atonement. When people have faith in Jesus Christ, they accept and apply His Atonement and His teachings.

The Savior taught His disciples, as recorded in the 27th chapter of 3 Nephi, the interdependence of His gospel and His earthly ministry and Atonement when He said:

“Behold I [give] unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. . . .

“And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the

end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (verses 13, 16).

Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement turns us to Him. The world teaches that seeing is believing, but our faith in our Lord leads us to believe so we can see Him and the Father's plan for us.

Our faith also leads to action—it leads to the commitments and changes associated with true repentance. As Amulek taught in the 34th chapter of Alma:

“Therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

“Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

“Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save” (verses 16–18).

### Repentance

*Why must individuals repent before they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost?* The voice of Christ proclaimed to the Nephites an end to the law of sacrifice, and then He said: “And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

This same requirement is discussed in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants in a verse we often use to describe the requirements for baptism. Verse 37 states, “All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins . . . shall be received by baptism into his church.”

These verses of scripture teach essential lessons about the nature of repentance as preparation for baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost. First, repentance involves an attitude of humility. In order to prepare

to be baptized and take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we must humble ourselves before Him—offer our sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and accept His will. Second, we learn that persons must witness before the Church, or a representative of the Church, that they have repented of their sins. Finally, we recognize that repentance, which is a cleansing process, precedes baptism, which is a cleansing ordinance, in order to prepare someone to receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. The gift of the Holy Ghost is available only to those who are cleansed by repentance of the sins of the world.

### **Baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost**

*Why do we need baptism to receive the Holy Ghost?* Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: “Baptism is twofold, and has a double mission to perform. It not only cleanses—it [illuminates] the soul, making manifest the things of God, past, present, future, and imparting a sure testimony of the Truth. The soul, cleansed of sin, is in a condition to enjoy the abiding influence of the Holy Ghost, which ‘dwelleth not in unclean tabernacles.’ Water baptism begins the work of purification and enlightenment. Spirit baptism completes it” (*Baptism—The Birth of Water and of Spirit* [n.d.], 10).

The ordinance of baptism by water and fire is described as a gate by Nephi (see 2 Nephi 31:17). Why is baptism a gate? Because it is an ordinance denoting entry into a sacred and binding covenant between God and man. Men promise to forsake the world, love and serve their fellowmen, visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, proclaim peace, preach the gospel, serve the Lord, and keep His commandments. The Lord promises to “pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us]” (Mosiah 18:10), redeem His Saints both temporally and spiritually, number them with those of the First Resurrection, and offer life eternal.

Baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost are the prescribed ways to enter the strait and narrow path to eternal life.

According to the Apostle Paul, baptism also denotes our descent into a watery grave from which we are raised with “newness of life” (Romans 6:4) in Christ. The ordinance of baptism symbolizes Christ’s death and Resurrection—we die with Him so we can live with Him. In this sense baptism is the first saving ordinance, and receiving the Holy Ghost helps each of us press forward and endure to the end.

### **Enduring to the end**

*How do we endure to the end?* Enduring to the end requires faithfulness to the end, as in the case of Paul, who told Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Obviously, this is not an easy task. It is intended to be difficult, challenging, and, ultimately, refining as we prepare to return to live with our Father in Heaven and receive eternal blessings.

Enduring to the end is definitely not a do-it-yourself project. First, it requires the Savior’s redemptive power. We cannot return to our Heavenly Father’s presence unless we are clean, and so we must continue to repent. Ideally, we repent moment by moment, but we also attend sacrament meeting each week to partake of the sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants.

Second, enduring to the end requires the Holy Ghost, who will both guide and sanctify us.

Third, we must be an integral part of a community of Saints, serving and receiving service from our brothers and sisters in the gospel. With baptism we become part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:11–13); each of us has a role to play, each of us is important, but in order to succeed we must be unified in our Savior.

Fourth, we must share the gospel with others. The promises of bringing even one soul unto the Lord are profound and

eternal (see D&C 18:15). Moreover, the gospel takes deeper root in those who share it frequently.

Finally, we must always maintain faith and hope in Christ to endure to the end, and among the many ways we do this are praying, fasting, and reading the scriptures. These practices will fortify us against the subtle schemes and fiery darts of the adversary.

I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it defines the way we can partake of the fruits of the gospel, experience the “exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12) that only it can bring, and endure to the end through all of the challenges of mortal

life. The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven as resurrected and glorified beings. May all of us maintain in our minds the vision of eternal life. May we be diligent in following the recipe for eternal life that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we endure to the end. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me.”

Elder Stanley G. Ellis offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 178th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes provided the music. J. Nyles Salmond, Lynn Hopkins, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes, under the direction of J. Nyles Salmond, Lynn Hop-

kins, and Jerald F. Simon, with Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Rise Up, O Men of God.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Mervyn B. Arnold of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Mervyn B. Arnold offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

Thank you, Brother Arnold.

The choir will now sing “An Angel from on High.” Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church, and Brother Dean R. Burgess, first counselor in the Young Men general presidency. We shall then hear from Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “An Angel from on High.”

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## Elder Quentin L. Cook

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I am grateful to be with you at this session of general conference on this historic day.

### Heeding the words of the prophets

We admire those who risk their lives to rescue those in danger.<sup>1</sup> When I visited Southern California during the devastating Santa Ana wind fires late last year, I came away with two impressions. The first was how the Church members came to the assistance of those in need. The second was how appreciative they were to the firefighters. One homeowner described what he saw the firefighters do. He pointed out that the Santa Ana winds blow from the warm desert toward the ocean. Once a fire starts, these hot desert winds carry the flames at a speed of up to 60 or 70 miles per hour. The homeowner described his gratitude and admiration as he watched the firefighters standing with their hoses behind a cleared area, facing a wall of fire up to 10 feet high descending upon them at this enormous speed. These brave men and women were able to rescue both people and homes while in constant personal danger.

From time to time, as individuals and as a church, we go through periods of crisis and danger. Some arise quickly like a fire. Others are subtle and go almost undetected before they are upon us. Some require heroic action, but most are less spectacular. The way we respond is crucial. My purpose this evening is to reemphasize to priesthood holders the importance of heeding the words of the prophets. This is one sure way to respond to physical and spiritual dangers of all kinds. Some illustrations may be helpful.

### Lesson of rescue of handcart companies

Many of you have participated in treks to experience and appreciate the dramatic rescue of the Willie and Martin handcart companies. I first became aware of this

rescue when I was a teenager. My mother gave me a book written by Orson F. Whitney, who would later be an Apostle.<sup>2</sup> Elder Whitney's book acquainted me with the heroic effort directed by Brigham Young to rescue the handcart companies. They had been overtaken by winter storms on the high plains of Wyoming. Some had died, and many others were on the verge of death. Brigham Young became aware of their plight, and at the October 1856 general conference he instructed the Saints to drop everything and rescue those stranded on the plains.<sup>3</sup>

The response was dramatic. Elder Whitney reported, "Brave men by their heroism—for it was at the peril of their own lives that they thus braved the wintry storms on the plains—immortalized themselves, and won the undying gratitude of hundreds who were undoubtedly saved by their timely action from perishing."<sup>4</sup>

One reason my mother had given me the book was Elder Whitney had made special mention of my great-grandfather David Patten Kimball, who had participated in the rescue when he was 17 years old. All the rescuers battled deep snow and freezing temperatures during much of the rescue of the handcart companies. At great personal sacrifice, David and his associates helped carry many of the pioneers across the freezing, ice-filled Sweetwater.<sup>5</sup>

This true account greatly impressed me. I wanted to prove my devotion to the Lord through some dramatic act. However, in a visit with my grandfather, he explained that when President Brigham Young sent his father, David, and the other young men on their rescue mission, President Young instructed them to do everything they possibly could to save the handcart companies, even at the peril of their own lives.<sup>6</sup> Their acts of bravery were specifically to "follow the prophet Brigham Young" and by so doing express their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. My grandfather told me that consistent,

faithful dedication to the counsel of a prophet is the real lesson I should learn from my great-grandfather's service. As heroic as it was for David and his associates to help rescue the pioneers, it is also valiant today to follow the counsel of our prophet.

### Story of Naaman and Elisha

An often-told account from the Old Testament illustrates this principle. Naaman, a prominent leader in Syria, was afflicted with leprosy. He became aware that the prophet Elisha in Israel might be able to heal him. Elisha sent word by a messenger that Naaman should wash himself in the river Jordan seven times. Initially, Naaman was upset with this counsel. However, his servants said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" Then Naaman followed the counsel of the prophet Elisha, and he was made clean.<sup>7</sup>

Like Naaman, you young priesthood holders might aspire to "do some great thing" or participate in something dramatic like the handcart rescue. However, your resolve should be to follow the counsel of the prophet. The First Presidency has reaffirmed its commitment to increasing the worthiness of young people who are recommended for missionary service. Keeping yourselves free from the sins of the world and meeting the high standards for missionary service should be one goal. Preparing yourselves to proclaim the gospel and rescue some of Heavenly Father's children spiritually would be both significant and heroic. You can meet this challenge.

### The blessing of having prophets

Throughout history, a loving Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church, have blessed us with prophets who counsel and warn about future dangers.<sup>8</sup> In Doctrine and Covenants, section 21, speaking specifically of the prophet, the Lord declares:

"Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."<sup>9</sup>

We have had the great privilege this morning in a solemn assembly to sustain President Thomas S. Monson as our prophet, seer, and revelator and as the 16th President of the Church in this dispensation. Later in this priesthood session of conference we will be blessed to hear his first general conference address as President of the Church. We will want to sustain him with our hearts and our actions as we pay careful attention to what he teaches and what we feel.

My love and appreciation for our previous prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, is planted deeply in my heart and will remain with me throughout the eternities. But just as there is room in our hearts for all the children who come into our families, we have that same love and devotion for each prophet the Lord calls to lead His Church.

### Prophets give us prophetic priorities

Prophets are inspired to provide us with prophetic priorities to protect us from dangers. As an example, President Heber J. Grant, the prophet from 1918 to 1945, was inspired to emphasize adherence to the Word of Wisdom,<sup>10</sup> the principle with a promise revealed by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph.<sup>11</sup> He stressed the importance of not smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages and directed the bishops to review these principles in temple recommend interviews.

At that time, smoking was accepted by society as an appropriate, even glamorous, behavior. The medical profession accepted smoking with little concern because the scientific studies linking cigarette smoking with several kinds of cancer were far in the future. President Grant coun-



seled with great vigor, and we became known as a people who abstained from drinking and smoking.

Starting in the late 1960s, illegal drug use reached epidemic proportions throughout the world. While there were some members who rebelled, the vast majority of LDS youth were able to avoid the devastating use of drugs.

Obedying the Word of Wisdom gave our members, especially our youth, a preventive inoculation against drug use and the resulting health problems and moral hazards. Unfortunately, there appears to be a resurgence of drug use in our own day. Living the Word of Wisdom today will free you from some of the most serious dangers you can face in this life.

Sometimes prophets teach us prophetic priorities that provide protection for us now and in the future. As an example, President David O. McKay was the prophet from 1951 to 1970. One area of significant focus was his emphasis on the family. He taught that “no other success can compensate for failure in the home.”<sup>12</sup> He encouraged members to strengthen families by increasing religious observance. His teachings were a protection from the disintegration of the institution of marriage that came after his death.<sup>13</sup> Because of President McKay’s teaching, the Latter-day Saints strengthened their commitment to family and eternal marriage.

### **The Lord has prepared President Monson**

As the priesthood holders of the Church, it is our solemn responsibility to follow our prophet. We sustain President Monson and his counselors, President Eyring and President Uchtdorf.

We want you young people to know that President Thomas S. Monson has been prepared by the Lord from his youth to be the prophet.<sup>14</sup> After serving in the navy at the close of World War II, he was ordained as a bishop at age 22 and then served in a stake presidency. At 32 years of age he served as a mission president in

Canada with his sweetheart and companion, Frances Monson. He was called to be an Apostle by President McKay when he was only 36 years old. He is the youngest man called as an Apostle in the past 98 years and has served for over 44 years. The last 22 years he has served as a counselor to Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley.<sup>15</sup>

Section 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants sets forth instructions to a counselor in the First Presidency. It contains important priesthood principles. The first instruction is to be “faithful in counsel.” President Monson has faithfully counseled with each of the three prophets under whom he has served. The unity of the First Presidency in all of their important decisions has been an example to all of us as priesthood holders in the exercise of Church government.

The second instruction is “proclaiming the gospel.” President Monson has been a great missionary all his life. His personal missionary effort, his supervisory work of the Missionary Department, and his calling and training of mission presidents have been undertaken with enthusiasm. He made significant contributions to the new missionary guide, *Preach My Gospel*. In addition to valuable content contributions, he inspired the inclusion of true accounts to make the guide come alive. With his printer’s eye, he improved the design and layout. He is indeed a great missionary.

The third instruction reads, “Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>16</sup> Many of our brothers and sisters face devastating problems in their lives. It is in our Christlike outreach to them that we as priesthood leaders, parents, friends, and home teachers can be like the handcart company rescuers.

President Monson’s rescue efforts in this regard have been particularly exemplary. As a bishop he learned to minister

to the members of his ward. He has kept in touch with and served their children and grandchildren. Despite a demanding schedule, he was able to speak at the funerals of all 84 of the widows who lived in his ward when he was bishop.

He has reached out to those in need in a remarkable and personal way. His long years of oversight of humanitarian efforts have blessed people all over the world, both members and those not of our faith. His personal ministry has been Christlike and has given comfort and peace to countless numbers of people. One friend of mine who lost a grandson in a tragic accident told me that his grief was almost beyond comprehension. President Monson's ministering to him turned almost overwhelming grief to the peace that surpasses understanding. His effort to personally minister to those who are sick and afflicted has been extraordinary.

President Monson has done his very best to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." He has magnified his calling as a counselor in the First Presidency in a remarkable way. He has valiantly testified of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, which is the primary responsibility of all Apostles.

As the then junior member of the Twelve, participating in my first reorganization of the First Presidency in an upper room of the Salt Lake Temple this past February, I experienced the confirmation of the Spirit as the Twelve individually and unanimously sustained President Monson as the Lord's prophet and President of the Church.

I am grateful for our Father in Heaven, who loves us, and for His Son, Jesus Christ,

who is our Savior and, through the Atonement, our ultimate rescuer from the physical and spiritual dangers of life. He is our advocate with the Father. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See John 15:13.
2. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (1945), 413–14.
3. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 88–89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 83–84.
4. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 413.
5. See Chad M. Orton, "The Martin Handcart Company at the Sweetwater: Another Look," *BYU Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2006): 5–37.
6. See Marva Jeanne Kimball Pedersen, *Crozier Kimball: His Life and Work* (1995), 6–7.
7. See 2 Kings 5:1–14.
8. See Amos 3:7.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
10. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2002), 189–97.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 89.
12. David O. McKay quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
13. See Brad Schiller, "The Inequality Myth," *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 10, 2008, A15.
14. See the following examples: 1 Samuel 2:26; Mormon 1:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:7.
15. See *Deseret Morning News 2008 Church Almanac* (2008), 35.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 81:3–5.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### Humanitarian assistance during past year

Good evening. Tonight the scripture passages "As ye have done it unto one of

the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40) and "Remember in all things the poor and the needy" (D&C 52:40) take on special mean-



ing as we review highlights of humanitarian endeavors during the past year.

A briefing on humanitarian assistance was recently given to the General Welfare Committee of the Church. The committee chair, then President Gordon B. Hinckley, expressed profound gratitude for the generosity of members and those not of our faith who have made this outreach possible. In behalf of the General Welfare Committee, we express our deep appreciation to the many individuals, families, quorums, and Relief Society and Young Women groups who are the good Samaritans of today.

### **Natural disasters, public health initiatives**

In 2007 the Church responded to major earthquakes in 5 countries, massive fires in 6 countries, hunger and famine in 18 countries, and flooding and severe storms in 34 countries. In total, the Church and its members responded to 170 major events—nearly one every two days for the entire year. It was a busy year with many opportunities to serve.

In addition to responding to natural disasters, we undertook thousands of public health initiatives during the year. Over 1 million people benefited from Church-sponsored clean water projects in 25 countries. More than 60,500 people received wheelchairs in 60 nations. Early this year Sister Burton and I, with the South America North Area Presidency, participated with the First Lady of Colombia in a wheelchair presentation. Tears came easily as receivers and their caregivers expressed their appreciation. In 11 countries, over 54,000 individuals now enjoy improved vision. Over 16,500 health-care professionals in 23 countries were trained in infant neonatal resuscitation; they, in turn, will train many others. In a quest to eliminate measles, 2.8 million children and youth in 10 countries received immunizations. The combined effects of these outreach endeavors directly touched nearly 4 million people in 85 countries.

### **Help for earthquake victims in Peru**

In August a major 8.0 earthquake killed 520 people and destroyed more than 58,000 homes in southern Peru. In a marvelous display of love and concern, each of the 29 stakes in Lima, Peru, provided basic assistance to ward areas in the devastated region.

With the wonderful assistance of missionaries, a plan is under way to help individuals rebuild their homes and lives and replace several schools. As many as 400 homes may ultimately be built, with individuals, friends, and family doing much of the work. Supervision, coordination, and training are under the direction of Elder and Sister Alan Layton.

### **Response to Southern California wildfires**

Late in the year a combination of dry weather and high winds fueled wildfires in Southern California. These wildfires forced over 1 million people from their homes. At least 1,500 homes were destroyed. In response the Church provided cleaning kits, blankets, hygiene kits, and food. Over 5,000 Mormon Helping Hands along with missionaries cleaned, cooked, comforted, and cared for those affected.

One note of appreciation said: “Please forward a great big thank you to all the Latter-day Saints who have been working so hard in my neighborhood. The Mormons have been here constantly with meals, hugs, prayers, and helping to repair and clear property. They . . . uplift my community, heal hearts, and repair homes in the San Diego hills.”<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting on the experience, one stake president said: “One of our projects was to assist cleaning up around the local Baptist church. . . . We assigned 25 youth. . . . The Baptists said that they would have lots of donuts and coffee for us. We told them the coffee would go stale, but our youth could handle as many donuts as they could provide!”<sup>2</sup>

### Relief for U.S. flood victims

Heavy rains triggered flooding across the midwestern United States, Oregon, and Washington. Volunteers came with supplies from the bishops' storehouse to provide help to those in need.

When Church representatives in Findlay, Ohio, presented a donation to the local Red Cross chapter, a passerby spotted them in their yellow Mormon Helping Hands T-shirts. She walked in and held up her camera phone with a picture of four Helping Hands and exclaimed, "They just saved my home!"<sup>3</sup> Then she hugged everyone in sight.

A shipment of food was delivered to a local food bank. When it arrived, the manager had a startled look on his face and said, "How did you know? I just gave out my last loaf of bread and planned to lock the doors. How did you know?"

### Helping to eliminate measles

Working with the World Health Organization to eliminate measles as a killer of almost a million children each year, over 54,000 Church members volunteered to help organize the effort. A Church member in Nigeria wrote:

"I called our labor the 'rescue of the innocent.' We went house to house and village hall to village hall. A woman told us she had lost three children to measles. She told her story with such grace and passion that there was not a dry eye in the house, mine included." Our volunteer observed, "The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things that you do for others remain as your legacy."<sup>4</sup>

### Continued help for tsunami victims

Our four-year effort to help those devastated by a tsunami in Indonesia and southern Asia also continued. Funding was provided to help build 902 homes, with 3 community centers, 24 village water

systems, 15 schools, and 3 medical centers. A community leader said:

"Community members feel happy and blessed to have the community center. . . . It is a place [where] we can pray . . . and teach the children. . . . Thank you to [the Church] for building this center for our people. . . . We will pray to God to give [the Church] blessings and success in the future. Thank you."<sup>5</sup>

### Providing clean water in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, communities helped to access clean drinking water. The Church drilled wells and constructed storage tanks. Communities organized a water committee and dug the trenches needed to pipe the water from the storage tanks to each village. In some cases this was a distance of over three miles.

Some communities struggled to meet their commitments for trenching. The soil was hard, dry, and full of clay, making digging very difficult. In one community a school of 1,500 students suspended normal school activities for a period of time, and everyone participated in digging the remaining sections of the trench. As they worked, other members of the community joined in. At one point there was over a mile-long line of people digging.

Thank you for your compassion, your goodness, and your generosity. May we press forward to lighten the load of neighbors, encourage and assist the downtrodden, open our purses to assist the poor, and extend our helping hands. I bear witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel and pray that we may continue to enjoy the blessings of true discipleship as we quietly reach out to others. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Laura Ridge-Cosby, San Diego, California, in an unsolicited card received by Welfare Services.
2. Gary Sabin, president of the Poway California Stake, e-mail to Garry Flake.

3. As told by Vincent Jones, bishop of the Findlay Ward, Toledo Ohio Stake.

4. Kalu Iche Kalu, measles campaign coordinator for the Aba Nigeria Stake.

5. Mohammed Johan, Calang, Indonesia.

## Dean R. Burgess

### **“Do you know who you are?”**

I can remember when I was an Aaronic Priesthood young man and the excitement I felt as a newly ordained deacon. I looked forward to being able to fulfill my priesthood assignments. As a young Primary boy, I watched the deacons in my ward very closely in anticipation of the day I would be 12 years old, receive the priesthood, and be able to pass the sacrament. That day finally arrived, and soon after being ordained by my father, who was the bishop of the ward, I felt ready, but nervous, to begin my duties as a new deacon.

I now belonged to a quorum of the Aaronic Priesthood. The members of my quorum became very best friends. That friendship and quorum brotherhood continued to grow through my youth as we learned and served together in our priesthood duties. We were all good friends and experienced a fun and enjoyable time being together in our quorum activities.

One Sunday following one of those warm and long sacrament meetings, the first counselor in our bishopric called me aside to talk to me. This unscheduled priesthood interview became a blessing in my life as I have pondered the question he asked during our brief but significant visit. Brother Bateman looked me in the eye and asked, “Dean, do you know who you are?” There was complete silence, and then he gave me a quick and powerful reminder, “You are the son of Reid Burgess.”

The meaning and significance of that question has burned in my heart for a long time, and I often reflected on it throughout my teenage years. This good brother’s question—“Do you know who you are?”—has given me inspired direction throughout my life and a commitment to bring

respect and honor to my family and to the priesthood.

Tonight I would ask each one of you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood the very same question that I was asked as a young man, “Do you know who you are?”

### **Strength from knowing who you are**

Knowing who you are makes you spiritually strong, sound, and steadfast in your priesthood duties. You become confident, with faith and determination to make right decisions. You have courage to stand up for what you know is right. You realize that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood of God and have the authority to act in His name.

Ammon, a great missionary of the Book of Mormon, was a faithful and valiant servant of King Lamoni. He miraculously preserved King Lamoni’s flocks and did all he could to serve the king. When hearing of Ammon’s powerful acts, Lamoni questioned who Ammon really was. Ammon declared:

“Behold, I am a man, and am thy servant; therefore, whatsoever thou desirest which is right, that will I do.

“Now when the king had heard these words, he marveled again, for he beheld that Ammon could discern his thoughts; but notwithstanding this, king Lamoni did open his mouth, and said unto him: Who art thou? Art thou that Great Spirit, who knows all things?

“Ammon answered and said unto him: I am not.”

Ammon then explained who he was when he said, “I am a man . . . created after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach . . . this people”

(Alma 18:17–19, 34). Ammon knew who he was and what his true mission was.

Finding out who we are is one of life's greatest quests. As parents and leaders, we make a sincere and honest effort to help those we love understand and know the answer to this simple but profound question, "Who am I?"

I ask you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, How do you come to receive a knowledge and witness of who you are?

Please consider the following three questions and related principles that are essential in understanding your true identity.

### **A son of God**

First, do you know that you are a son of God?

You are literally a son of God, "spiritually begotten in the premortal life. As His child, you can be assured that you have divine, eternal potential and that [your Heavenly Father] will help you in your sincere efforts to reach that potential" (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 74).

The knowledge that Heavenly Father loves us and that we are His children gives us strength, comfort, and hope to live this mortal life. In the First Epistle of John we read:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:1–2).

You are important to a loving Father in Heaven! Young men, pray always! Your prayers both morning and night will help you come to know that you are a son of God.

### **Who you are in God's plan**

Second, do you know who you are in God's plan?

Alma called it "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8), a plan that God prepared for you and for each of us. Following this plan makes it possible for each of us to enjoy happiness now and to return to His presence after we die. Heavenly Father sent His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to "loose the bands of death" (Alma 7:12) and atone for our sins and the sins of the world. Allowing the Savior to atone for our sins is the greatest expression of our Heavenly Father's love for each of us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Knowing, believing, and understanding the mission of the Savior helps us know who we are.

As part of Heavenly Father's plan, you are sent to an earthly home and to a family. The covenants you make in God's plan, as an individual and as part of a family, will bind you forever in your family and in the family of God for all eternity. Honor and respect those names you bear. Live the standards and the commandments of God. Allow others to know who you are by the way you live the standards, as found in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. Study, ponder, and live these divine standards. They are for you!

### **Who you are as a Church member**

Third, do you know who you are as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

You have been baptized and have received the Holy Ghost. You are a member of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. It is His Church, and He has given us a prophet of God to teach, lead, and guide us and to direct His work here on earth. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is our prophet in these "perilous times" (2 Timothy 3:1). Listen to him. He and other modern-day prophets will teach you who you are and how to become like the Savior.

You are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have been ordained to hold the priesthood of God. President Monson has said: “We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 59).

You belong to a priesthood quorum of young men, where you can feel the brotherhood and friendship of other priesthood holders. The quorum is a protection for you against worldly influences. You are able to serve one another and

participate in the ordinances of the priesthood. In your quorums you are also taught the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which help you understand who you are. Young men, honor the priesthood of God.

I testify that knowing who you are and keeping your promises and covenants with the Lord will bring you happiness in your life.

May we all be able to know and understand who we really are. May the Spirit we feel tonight bear “witness with our spirit[s], that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder John M. Madsen

### President Hinckley’s experience at age 12

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, as I begin, I would like to direct my remarks to each 12-year-old deacon attending this general priesthood session. Wherever you are, I want to acknowledge your presence and to tell or remind you of the experience that President Gordon B. Hinckley had when he was, like you are, a 12-year-old deacon. From his biography we read:

“Not long after he was ordained a deacon, he attended his first stake priesthood meeting with his father. . . . He felt a little out of place as he found a seat on the back row of the Tenth Ward chapel while [his father] (who was serving in the stake presidency) took his place on the stand. To open the meeting, the three or four hundred men present stood and sang William W. Phelps’s triumphant anthem . . . ‘Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah! / Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer. / Blessed to open the last dispensation, / Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.’ ”

Reflecting back on that experience, President Hinckley said: “Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. It touched my heart. It gave me

a feeling that was difficult to describe. I felt a great moving power, both emotional and spiritual. I had never had it previously in terms of any Church experience. There came into my heart a conviction that the man of whom they sang was really a prophet of God. I knew then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Even as that experience had by President Hinckley as a 12-year-old deacon was “one he would remember for the rest of his life,”<sup>2</sup> I pray that the experience you are having will be one you will remember for the rest of your lives.

### Potential of young men

Now, I invite us all to look at this remarkable cast bronze sculpture entitled *Deacons’ Bench*. For those of you who cannot see it, *Deacons’ Bench* is the likeness of five deacons, caught in a candid moment while seated on a bench in church.

As you look at these five deacons, what do you see? Now, as I read statements by two former Presidents of the Church, I will ask the question a little differently: what *can* you see?

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “Our young people . . . are the nobility of heaven, a choice and chosen generation who have a divine destiny. Their spirits have been reserved to come forth in this day when the gospel is on earth, and when the Lord needs valiant servants to carry on his great latter-day work.”<sup>3</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball declared, “We are rearing a royal generation . . . who have special things to do.”<sup>4</sup>

In light of these prophetic declarations, if we expand our vision beyond five deacons on a bench to include all of the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, then what can you see?

I trust and pray that we can all see their divine potential; that we can see them going forth as bearers of the holy priesthood and as missionaries preaching “the everlasting gospel”<sup>5</sup> by the Spirit<sup>6</sup> “to the nations of the earth”;<sup>7</sup> that we can see them as faithful husbands and fathers and as valiant servants in and leaders of the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days.

### A divine destiny

In order for us to more clearly envision the divine destiny of this chosen and royal generation, we need only to reflect upon the 12-year-old Jesus, who went up to Jerusalem with His parents to celebrate the Feast of the Passover.<sup>8</sup>

Who was this 12-year-old boy? What was His mission and destiny? And how was He able to fulfill it?

We proclaim and the scriptures confirm that He was and is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God;<sup>9</sup> that He “came into the world . . . to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness”<sup>10</sup> “that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name”;<sup>11</sup> that as a youth He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and

man”;<sup>12</sup> that He “grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come”;<sup>13</sup> and that He “was in all points tempted like as we are.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, He faced “temptations of every kind”<sup>15</sup> but “gave no heed unto them.”<sup>16</sup> And when confronted by Lucifer, “the father of all lies,”<sup>17</sup> “the author of all sin,”<sup>18</sup> Jesus was protected not only by His knowledge of the scriptures but also by His absolute obedience to the word and will of His Father,<sup>19</sup> and He commanded, saying, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”<sup>20</sup>

Now, as to how He was able to fulfill His mission and destiny, consider these words of Jesus, who said:

“When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”<sup>21</sup>

That each one of us, as sons of God,<sup>22</sup> can fulfill our mission and destiny is made plain by these words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments . . . may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.”<sup>23</sup>

I so testify, as I also bear my witness that President Thomas S. Monson is indeed a prophet of God and that he and his counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Sheri Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 35–36.



2. "President Gordon B. Hinckley," *In Memoriam: President Gordon B. Hinckley, 1910–2008* (a supplement to the *Ensign*, Mar. 2008), 3.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 6.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 69; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 45.
5. Revelation 14:6; Doctrine and Covenants 68:1; see also Doctrine and Covenants 133:7–8.
6. See Matthew 10:19–20; Luke 24:32; Doctrine and Covenants 42:14; 43:15; 50:13–22; 84:85.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 134:12; see also Revelation 14:6; Doctrine and Covenants 68:8; 133:7–8.
8. See Luke 2:41–42.
9. See Matthew 16:16; 2 Nephi 25:19–20; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 5:48; Helaman 5:9; 3 Nephi 5:13; 11:10–11; 20:31; Doctrine and Covenants 14:9; 68:6.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 76:41.
11. Mosiah 3:9; see also Mosiah 3:12; Doctrine and Covenants 18:17–19, 21–25.
12. Luke 2:52.
13. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24.
14. Hebrews 4:15.
15. Alma 7:11.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:22.
17. 2 Nephi 2:18; Ether 8:25; Moses 4:4.
18. Helaman 6:30; see also Mosiah 4:14.
19. See Matthew 4:1–10.
20. Matthew 4:10.
21. John 8:28–29.
22. See Psalm 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Romans 8:16–17; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 11:30; 35:2; Moses 6:68.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1, 19; see also John 14:6; 2 Nephi 31:7–16; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 76:92–95.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

We invite the choir and congregation to sing at this time "Ye Elders of Israel." President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us, after which we shall hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

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The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, I feel your strength and goodness as we assemble as the priesthood of God. I love you; I admire you. Thank you for your faith, your prayers, and your willingness to serve the Lord.

### The call to serve as Second Counselor

It is now two months since President Thomas S. Monson called me to serve as Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church. I am sure this came as a surprise to many, and it caught me off guard as well. In fact, I would say I may have been the second most surprised person on earth, the first being my wife.

On the day the Quorum of the Twelve met in the temple to sustain President

Monson and ordain and set him apart as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I felt overjoyed to have the opportunity to raise my hand in support of my beloved friend and leader.

After President Monson was sustained, he announced his counselors.

President Eyring was no surprise. He is a man of stature and character—a wonderful choice as First Counselor. How I love and admire him.

Then President Monson announced his Second Counselor. It was a name that sounded strangely familiar. It was my name.

I looked around the room, not sure I had heard correctly. But the smiles from

my Brethren and the look of compassion from President Monson assured me that once again my life was about to change.

We all miss President Hinckley. He continues to bless our lives.

President Monson is the prophet of God for our days; I honor him and pledge my heart, might, mind, and strength to this great work.

### **A matter of a few degrees**

In 1979 a large passenger jet with 257 people on board left New Zealand for a sightseeing flight to Antarctica and back. Unknown to the pilots, however, someone had modified the flight coordinates by a mere two degrees. This error placed the aircraft 28 miles to the east of where the pilots assumed they were. As they approached Antarctica, the pilots descended to a lower altitude to give the passengers a better look at the landscape. Although both were experienced pilots, neither had made this particular flight before, and they had no way of knowing that the incorrect coordinates had placed them directly in the path of Mount Erebus, an active volcano that rises from the frozen landscape to a height of more than 12,000 feet.

As the pilots flew onward, the white of the snow and ice covering the volcano blended with the white of the clouds above, making it appear as though they were flying over flat ground. By the time the instruments sounded the warning that the ground was rising fast toward them, it was too late. The airplane crashed into the side of the volcano, killing everyone on board.

It was a terrible tragedy brought on by a minor error—a matter of only a few degrees.<sup>1</sup>

Through years of serving the Lord and in countless interviews, I have learned that the difference between happiness and misery in individuals, in marriages, and families often comes down to an error of only a few degrees.

### **Saul, the king of Israel**

The story of Saul, the king of Israel, illustrates this point. Saul's life began with great promise, but it had an unfortunate and tragic end. In the beginning, Saul was "a choice young man, . . . and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he."<sup>2</sup> Saul was personally chosen by God to be king.<sup>3</sup> He had every advantage—he was physically imposing,<sup>4</sup> and he came from an influential family.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, Saul had weaknesses, but the Lord promised to bless, uphold, and prosper him. The scriptures tell us that God promised to always be with him,<sup>6</sup> give him another heart,<sup>7</sup> and turn him into another man.<sup>8</sup>

When he had the Lord's help, Saul was a magnificent king. He united Israel and defeated the Ammonites, who had invaded their land.<sup>9</sup> Soon a much greater problem faced him—the Philistines, who had a terrible army with chariots and horsemen "and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude."<sup>10</sup> The Israelites were so terrified of the Philistines that they hid "themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks."<sup>11</sup>

The young king needed help. The prophet Samuel sent word for him to wait and that he, the prophet, would come and offer sacrifice and seek counsel from the Lord. Saul waited seven days, and still the prophet Samuel had not arrived. Finally, Saul felt he could wait no longer. He gathered the people together and did something he had no priesthood authority to do—he offered the sacrifice himself.

When Samuel arrived, he was broken-hearted. "Thou hast done foolishly," he said. If only the new king had endured a little longer and not deviated from the course of the Lord, if only he had followed the revealed order of the priesthood, the Lord would have established his kingdom forever. "But now," Samuel said, "thy kingdom shall not continue."<sup>12</sup>

On that day, the prophet Samuel recognized a critical weakness in Saul's char-



acter. When pressured by outside influences, Saul did not have the self-discipline to stay on course, trust the Lord and His prophet, and follow the pattern God had established.

### **The consequences of small errors**

*Small errors can have a large impact on our lives.* The difference of a few degrees, as with the Antarctica flight or Saul's failure to hold fast to the counsel of the prophet just a little longer, may seem minor. But even small errors over time can make a dramatic difference in our lives.

Let me share with you how I taught the same principle to young pilots.

Suppose you were to take off from an airport at the equator, intending to circumnavigate the globe, but your course was off by just one degree. By the time you returned to the same longitude, how far off course would you be? A few miles? A hundred miles? The answer might surprise you. An error of only one degree would put you almost 500 miles off course, or one hour of flight for a jet.

No one wants his life to end in tragedy. But all too often, like the pilots and passengers of the sightseeing flight, we set out on what we hope will be an exciting journey, only to realize too late that an error of a few degrees has set us on a course for spiritual disaster.

### **Making early and decisive corrections**

*Is there a lesson for our lives in these examples?* Small errors and minor drifts away from the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring sorrowful consequences into our lives. It is therefore of critical importance that we become self-disciplined enough to make early and decisive corrections to get back on the right track and not wait or hope that errors will somehow correct themselves.

The longer we delay corrective action, the larger the needed changes become, and the longer it takes to get back on the

correct course—even to the point where a disaster might be looming.

You men of the priesthood have been entrusted with a great responsibility. Just think of it: our Heavenly Father trusts you young deacons, teachers, and priests with the “key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel.”<sup>13</sup> You men of the Melchizedek Priesthood have received an oath and a covenant in which you have been promised all the Father has if you magnify your priesthood.<sup>14</sup>

The Lord reminds us that “unto whom much is given much is required.”<sup>15</sup> Those who bear the priesthood of God have a great responsibility to be examples of goodness to the world. We live up to these expectations when we quickly recognize the dangers and influences that tempt us to drift from the Lord's way and when we courageously follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost to make decisive corrections that will bring us back on course.

This conference is being translated into 92 languages and broadcast to 96 countries by the miracle of modern technology. Many of you brethren attend general conference by means of the Internet. New technologies such as this make it possible for the gospel message to be spread throughout the world. The Church Web sites are good examples of how you can use this technology as a wonderful resource of inspiration, help, and learning. They can be a blessing for you priesthood holders, your families, and the Church.

But be cautious. These same technologies can allow evil influences to cross the threshold of your homes. These dangerous traps are only a mouse click away. Pornography, violence, intolerance, and ungodliness destroy families, marriages, and individual lives. These dangers are distributed through many media, including magazines, books, television, movies, and music, as well as the Internet. The Lord will help you to recognize and avoid those evils. It is the early recognition of danger and a clear course correction that will keep you in the light of the gospel.

Minor decisions can lead to major consequences.

Entering a strange and risky chat room on the Internet could lead you into the center of a raging storm. Putting a computer in a private room that the rest of the family cannot access could be the starting point for a deceitful and dangerous journey.

But the Lord requires not only outward acts but also your inner thoughts and feelings to be close to the spirit of the law.<sup>16</sup> God “require[s] the heart and a willing mind.”<sup>17</sup>

We, the priesthood of God, have the responsibility and the power of self-direction: “It is not meet that I should command in all things,” saith the Lord. “Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Atonement allows us to make corrections**

Our Heavenly Father knew before we came to this mortal existence that negative forces would tempt us to drift from our course, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”<sup>19</sup> That is why He prepared a way for us to make corrections. Through the merciful process of true repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, our sins can be forgiven and we will “not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>20</sup>

Our willingness to repent shows our gratitude for God’s gift and for the Savior’s love and sacrifice on our behalf. Commandments and priesthood covenants provide a test of faith, obedience, and love *for* God and Jesus Christ, but even more importantly, they offer an opportunity to experience love *from* God and to receive a full measure of joy both in this life and in the life to come.

These commandments and covenants of God are like navigational instructions from celestial heights and will lead us safely to our eternal destination. It is one

of beauty and glory beyond understanding. It is worth the effort. It is worth making decisive corrections now and then staying on course.

Remember: the heavens will not be filled with those who never made mistakes but with those who recognized that they were off course and who corrected their ways to get back in the light of gospel truth.

The more we treasure the words of the prophets and apply them, the better we will recognize when we are drifting off course—even if only by a matter of a few degrees.

### **What if we have drifted far off course?**

Now, brethren, there are those who have neglected to make appropriate course corrections and now believe that they are too far from the Lord’s way to ever make it back. To them we proclaim the good news that is the gospel of redemption and salvation. No matter how terribly off course you are, no matter how far you have strayed, the way back is certain and clear. Come, learn of the Father; offer up a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Have faith, and believe in the cleansing power of the infinite Atonement of Jesus the Christ. If we confess and repent of our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>21</sup> “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be [made] as white as snow.”<sup>22</sup>

It may not be an easy path, and it requires self-discipline and determination, but its end is glorious beyond description. You are not doomed to a tragic end. Many are eager to assist you—your family, bishops and stake presidents, your quorum leaders, and home teachers. Of course, your greatest friend is the all-powerful Creator of the universe. It is His priesthood you bear. He understands your sorrow. He knows your grief. He and our Father in Heaven will bless, comfort, and strengthen you; They will walk beside you and carry you as you strive to right your course.

My dear brethren, you are truly choice and precious sons of Heavenly Father. He has entrusted you with the sacred power of the priesthood. Please do not drift off course, not even a few degrees. Harken unto the Lord your God, and He will do for you what He promised to do for Saul: He will give you a new heart, make of you a new man, and always be with you.

I testify of our Heavenly Father, who knows and loves you. I bear witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who is the head of this Church. President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of God today. I express my love and gratitude for you, my dear friends and brethren of the priesthood. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Arthur Marcel, "Mount Erebus Plane Crash," [www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2007/1814952.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2007/1814952.htm).

2. 1 Samuel 9:2.
3. See 1 Samuel 9:17.
4. See 1 Samuel 10:23.
5. See 1 Samuel 9:1.
6. See 1 Samuel 10:7.
7. See 1 Samuel 10:9.
8. See 1 Samuel 10:6.
9. See 1 Samuel 11:11.
10. 1 Samuel 13:5.
11. 1 Samuel 13:6.
12. 1 Samuel 13:13–14.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38–39.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.
16. See Alma 12:12–14; Doctrine and Covenants 88:109.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28.
19. Romans 3:23.
20. John 3:16.
21. See 1 John 1:9.
22. Isaiah 1:18.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### Oath and covenant of the priesthood

My purpose tonight is to help you grow in your confidence that you can and will rise to the blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It is the magnitude of the possible consequences of that oath and covenant which may require a regular boost in your confidence.

The Lord has made those consequences clear. Rising to the possibilities of the oath and covenant brings the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life. That is a purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Through keeping the covenants as we receive the priesthood and renewing them in the temple ceremonies, we are promised by an oath made by our Heavenly Father, Elohim, that we will gain the fulness of His glory and live as He lives. We will have the blessing of being sealed in a family forever, with the promise of eternal increase.

As you would expect, failing to claim such a blessing would bring tragic consequences. The Lord was clear about that as well. These are the words often read to young men by their leaders when they are approaching the time when they may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. You likely will remember your feelings when you first heard them. They are the words of the Savior Jesus Christ given to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

“Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

“But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.

“And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

“And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, if you are like I was when I first heard those words as a young man, the challenge of accepting the Melchizedek Priesthood could seem daunting. There are at least two reasons why you should be confident rather than discouraged with the penalties that would follow either failing to keep the oath and covenant or deciding not to accept it. Whether you accept the oath and covenant and find it too difficult or if you fail to try, the penalty is the same. There is no question, therefore, that your best course and mine is to receive the holy priesthood and try with all of our hearts to keep its covenants. If we choose not to try, we would certainly lose the opportunity for eternal life. If we try and with God’s help succeed, we will gain eternal life.

### **Blessings of exercising faith**

There is yet another reason to decide now that you will try with all your heart to qualify for that oath and covenant and have confidence that you will succeed. God promises you the help and power which, if you exercise faith, will give you success.

Let me describe some of the blessings you will receive as you go forward in faith.

First, the very fact that you have been offered the oath and covenant is evidence that God has chosen you, knowing your power and capacity. He has known you since you were with Him in the spirit world. With His foreknowledge of your strength, He has allowed you to find the true Church of Jesus Christ and to be offered the priesthood. You can feel confidence because you have evidence of His confidence in you.

Second, as you will try to keep your covenants, the Savior has promised His personal help. He has said that as you go forward in honoring the priesthood, “there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”<sup>2</sup>

You may at times need reassurance, as I do, that you will have the strength to meet your obligations in this sacred priesthood. The Lord foresaw your need for reassurance. He said, “For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.”<sup>3</sup>

I have seen that promise fulfilled in my own life and in the lives of others. A friend of mine served as a mission president. He told me that at the end of every day while he was serving, he could barely make it upstairs to bed at night wondering if he would have the strength to face another day. Then in the morning, he would find his strength and his courage restored. You have seen it in the lives of aged prophets who seemed to be renewed each time they stood to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ and the restored gospel. That is a promise for those who go forward in faith in their priesthood service.

You are also promised that you will be given the power to bear testimony and that in the process you will be cleansed

and made fit for the eternal life which you have been promised:

“For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you.

“Therefore, go ye into all the world; and unto whatsoever place ye cannot go ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature.”<sup>4</sup>

And with that promise the Lord has honored you by saying of you, “Ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Preparation for living in eternal families**

There is another wonderful blessing that will encourage you as you keep your priesthood covenants. Priesthood service will prepare you for living in eternal families. It will change your feelings about what it means to be a husband or a father or a son or a brother. That change in your heart will come as you feel your faith grow and the promise of eternal life through the Melchizedek Priesthood becomes real to you.

That happened to Parley P. Pratt when the Prophet Joseph Smith first taught him the doctrine of eternal families. Parley P. Pratt wrote:

“It was at this time that I received from him the first idea of eternal family organization, and the eternal union of the sexes in those inexpressibly endearing relationships which none but the highly intellectual, the refined and pure in heart, know how to prize, and which are at the very foundation of everything worthy to be called happiness. . . .

“It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. It was

from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore. . . .

“I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling. . . . I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion; a kind ministering angel, given to me as a comfort, and a crown of glory for ever and ever.”<sup>6</sup>

I am a personal witness that priesthood service pursued in faith has such an effect in changing our hearts and our feelings. A young man hearing my words today can have confidence that by honoring his priesthood he will be protected against the temptation to sexual sin so prevalent in the world in which we live. It will be possible for the Aaronic Priesthood holder hearing me tonight, as his faith increases in the sure reward of eternal life through the eternal priesthood, that he will have the power to see in the daughters of God their true worth and in the promise of a posterity a reason to be pure and to stay clean.

### **The spirit of charity**

In the same way, faith in the oath and covenant will lead us to develop the feelings of charity essential to an eternal family. One of the promises we make as we accept the priesthood is to care for others.

I have seen the miracle of that growth in charity in the hearts of priesthood holders. So have many of you. And so have many outside the Church. I was in the office of President Gordon B. Hinckley when he was asked to take a phone call. He spoke briefly on the phone and then returned to our conversation. But he took a moment to explain. He said that the call was from the president of the United States, who was flying over Utah in Air

Force One on his way to Washington. The president of the United States had called to thank President Hinckley for what priesthood holders had done in the aftermath of a hurricane. The president of the United States had said that it was a miracle that we were able to get so many people, so quickly, working together so well. He praised our people by saying that we knew how to do things.

Perhaps the president of the United States was impressed with what he thought were our great organizational skills. That was part of the miracle. But the greater reason for the miracle was that hundreds and perhaps thousands of priesthood holders had such faith in the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It was not how they were organized that made the difference: faith in the oath and covenant of the priesthood impelled them to go long distances, stay long hours, and endure hardship as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in caring for those in great need.

They were, in that process of giving priesthood service, developing the power and the spirit of charity necessary to become great husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers in families here and in families forever. Those instances of priesthood service have occurred in our outreach to people, as brothers and sisters in God's family across the earth, time and time again.

### **Go forward in faith in keeping covenants**

My prayer is that you will decide tonight, and then every day, to go forward in faith in keeping your covenants with God and so claim the promise He has made to you with an oath. You can do it in simple things. When you meet with your quorum, you can decide to see them as brothers in the family of God. There will be someone in your quorum or priesthood group who is in need. He may not show it. You may not be able to see it with your eyes. But God knows and invites you to be His servant in helping him.

You can be like the priesthood holder who every time I saw him in our priesthood service together would ask, "How's Grandma?" He had never met my mother-in-law, as far as I know. But he somehow found out about her illness and her great age. I cannot tell you how much it meant to me to see the hand of God reaching out to me and my wife in consolation and comfort through a priesthood holder. You can have that same effect every time you gather with priesthood holders if you always think of your covenant to succor and help those whose hands hang down and who carry heavy burdens. As you do, you will be developing the very qualities which will qualify you to be a member of a family forever.

### **Study the word of God**

There is another thing you can do. You can study the word of God, not for yourself alone but to be an emissary of the Lord Jesus Christ to all the world. When you increase your power to teach the gospel, you are qualifying to help Heavenly Father in gathering His children. As you do that, another blessing will come. Should the need ever come in family life in this world, or in the world to come, to draw back lost sheep, you will have received more power than you may now recognize.

The Lord describes that wonderful blessing in Alma 13:6: "And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest."

You may have confidence in your service with this promise of success:

"Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

“And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.”<sup>7</sup>

I testify that God the Father lives. You have made covenants with Him. He offers you an oath, a promise of eternal life, which He cannot break. I testify to you that the priesthood is the power by which God through His Son, Jesus Christ, created the worlds. I testify that God wants you to succeed and to come home again to live with Him in families forever. I testify to you that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ. In it are the keys of the priesthood. It is that priesthood with which God has honored you. I promise you that He knows your capacities and that they are sufficient that you may with full faith have the hope of eternal life for you and for your families forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:35–43.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:61–62.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:63.
6. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 259–60.
7. Alma 13:12–13.

#### President Monson

What inspired messages we’ve heard this evening. I can endorse everything that’s been said.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Larry W. Gibbons of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

Tonight I am aware that you, my brethren, both here in the Conference Center and in thousands of other locations, represent the largest gathering of the priesthood ever to assemble. We are a part of the greatest brotherhood in all the world. How fortunate and blessed we are to be holders of the priesthood of God.

We have been instructed and uplifted as we have listened to inspired messages. I pray that I might have an interest in your faith and prayers as I share with you those thoughts and feelings that have been in my mind lately as I have prepared to address you.

#### Worthiness to perform priesthood duties

As bearers of the priesthood, we have been placed on earth in troubled times. We

live in a complex world with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Political machinations ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of society seem forever downtrodden, deprived of opportunity, and left with a feeling of failure.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys, we can mend men, we can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

Ours is the task to be fitting examples. We are strengthened by the truth that the greatest force in the world today is the power of God as it works through man. If we are on the Lord’s errand, brethren, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Never forget that truth. That divine help, of course,



is predicated upon our worthiness. Each must ask: Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? Am I a worthy servant of the Lord?

We are surrounded by so much that is designed to divert our attention from those things which are virtuous and good and to tempt us with that which would cause us to be unworthy to exercise the priesthood we bear. I speak not just to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood but to those of all ages. Temptations come in various forms throughout our lives.

Brethren, are we qualified at all times to perform the sacred duties associated with the priesthood we bear? Young men—you who are priests—are you clean in body and spirit as you sit at the sacrament table on Sunday and bless the emblems of the sacrament? Young men who are teachers, are you worthy to prepare the sacrament? Deacons, as you pass the sacrament to the members of the Church, do you do so knowing that you are spiritually qualified to do so? Does each of you fully understand the importance of *all* the sacred duties you perform?

### **Be examples of righteousness**

My young friends, be strong. The philosophies of men surround us. The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that facade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. You know what is right and what is wrong, and no disguise, however appealing, can change that. The character of transgression remains the same. If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, *you* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone. Have the moral courage to be a light for others to follow. There is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so.

Brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, do you strive diligently each day to live as you should? Are you kind and loving to your wife and your children? Are you honest in your dealings with those around you—at all times and in all circumstances?

If any of you has slipped along the way, there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord.

Many of you will remember President N. Eldon Tanner, who served as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church. He provided an undeviating example of righteousness throughout a career in industry, during service in the government in Canada, and consistently in his private life. He gave us this inspired counsel:

“Nothing will bring greater joy and success than to live according to the teachings of the gospel. Be an example; be an influence for good. . . .

“Every one of us has been fore-ordained for some work as [God’s] chosen servant on whom he has seen fit to confer the priesthood and power to act in his name. Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Tendency to imitate the example of others**

My brethren, I reiterate that, as holders of the priesthood of God, it is our duty to live our lives in such a way that we may be examples of righteousness for others to follow. As I have pondered how we might best provide such examples, I have thought of an experience I had some years ago while attending a stake conference. During the general session, I observed a young boy sitting with his family on the



front row of the stake center. I was seated on the stand. As the meeting progressed, I began to notice that if I crossed one leg over the other, the young boy would do the same thing. If I reversed the motion and crossed the other leg, he would follow suit. I would put my hands in my lap, and he would do the same. I rested my chin in my hand, and he also did so. Whatever I did, he would imitate my actions.

This continued until the time approached for me to address the congregation. I decided to put him to the test. I looked squarely at him, certain I had his attention, and then I wiggled my ears. He made a vain attempt to do the same, but I had him! He just couldn't quite get his ears to wiggle. He turned to his father, who was sitting next to him, and whispered something to him. He pointed to his ears and then to me. As his father looked in my direction, obviously to see my ears wiggle, I sat solemnly with my arms folded, not moving a muscle. The father glanced back skeptically at his son, who looked slightly defeated. He finally gave me a sheepish grin and shrugged his shoulders.

I have thought about that experience over the years as I've contemplated how, particularly when we're young, we tend to imitate the example of our parents, our leaders, our peers. The prophet Brigham Young said: "We should never permit ourselves to do anything that we are not willing to see our children do. We should set them an example that we wish them to imitate."<sup>2</sup>

### **The influence of good men**

To you who are fathers of boys or who are leaders of boys, I say, strive to be the kind of example the boys need. The father, of course, should be the prime example, and the boy who is blessed with a worthy father is fortunate indeed. Even an exemplary family, however, with diligent and faithful father and mother, can use all the supportive help they can get from good men who genuinely care. There is

also the boy who has no father or whose father is not currently providing the type of example needed. For that boy, the Lord has provided a network of helpers within the Church—bishops, advisers, teachers, Scoutmasters, home teachers. When the Lord's program is in effect and properly working, no young man in the Church should be without the influence of good men in his life.

The effectiveness of an inspired bishop, adviser, or teacher has very little to do with the outward trappings of power or an abundance of this world's goods. The leaders who have the most influence are usually those who set hearts afire with devotion to the truth, who make obedience to duty seem the essence of manhood, who transform some ordinary routine occurrence so that it becomes a vista where we see the person we aspire to be.

### **The Savior is our primary example**

Not to be overlooked—and in fact our primary example—is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His birth was foretold by prophets; angels heralded the announcement of His earthly ministry. He "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."<sup>3</sup>

Baptized of John in the river known as Jordan, He commenced His official ministry to men. To the sophistry of Satan, Jesus turned His back. To the duty designated by His Father, He turned His face, pledged His heart, and gave His life. And what a sinless, selfless, noble, and divine life it was. Jesus labored. Jesus loved. Jesus served. Jesus testified. What finer example could we strive to emulate? Let us begin now, this very night, to do so. Cast off forever will be the old self and with it defeat, despair, doubt, and disbelief. To a newness of life we come—a life of faith, hope, courage, and joy. No task looms too large; no responsibility weighs too heavily; no duty is a burden. All things become possible.

### **A missionary's faithful example**

Many years ago I spoke of one who took his example from the Savior, one who stood firm and true, strong and worthy through the storms of life. He courageously magnified his priesthood callings. He provides an example to each of us. His name was Thomas Michael Wilson, the son of Willie and Julia Wilson of Lafayette, Alabama.

When he was but a teenager and he and his family were not yet members of the Church, he was stricken with cancer, followed by painful radiation therapy and then blessed remission. This illness caused his family to realize that not only is life precious but that it can also be short. They began to look to religion to help them through this time of tribulation. Subsequently, they were introduced to the Church, and eventually all but the father were baptized. After accepting the gospel, young Brother Wilson yearned for the opportunity of being a missionary, even though he was older than most young men when they begin their missionary service. At the age of 23, he received a mission call to serve in the Utah Salt Lake City Mission.

Elder Wilson's missionary companions described his faith as unquestioning, undeviating, and unyielding. He was an example to all. However, after 11 months of missionary service, illness returned. Bone cancer now required the amputation of his arm and shoulder. Yet he persisted in his missionary labors.

Elder Wilson's courage and consuming desire to remain on his mission so touched his nonmember father that he investigated the teachings of the Church and also became a member.

I learned that an investigator whom Elder Wilson had taught was baptized but then wanted to be confirmed by Elder Wilson, whom she respected so much. She, with a few others, journeyed to Elder Wilson's bedside in the hospital. There, with his remaining hand resting upon her

head, Elder Wilson confirmed her a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Wilson continued month after month his precious but painful service as a missionary. Blessings were given; prayers were offered. Because of his example of dedication, his fellow missionaries lived closer to God.

Elder Wilson's physical condition deteriorated. The end drew near, and he was to return home. He asked to serve but one additional month, and his request was granted. He put his faith in God, and He whom Thomas Michael Wilson silently trusted opened the windows of heaven and abundantly blessed him. His parents, Willie and Julia Wilson, and his brother Tony came to Salt Lake City to help their son and brother home to Alabama. However, there was yet a prayed-for, yearned-for blessing to be bestowed. The family invited me to come with them to the Jordan River Temple, where those sacred ordinances which bind families for eternity, as well as for time, were performed.

I said good-bye to the Wilson family. I can see Elder Wilson yet as he thanked me for being with him and his loved ones. He said, "It doesn't matter what happens to us in this life as long as we have the gospel of Jesus Christ and live it. It doesn't matter whether I teach the gospel on this or the other side of the veil, so long as I can teach it." What courage. What confidence. What love. The Wilson family made the long trek home to Lafayette, where Elder Thomas Michael Wilson slipped from here to eternity. He was buried there with his missionary tag in place.

My brethren, as we now leave this general priesthood meeting, let us all determine to prepare for our time of opportunity and to honor the priesthood we bear through the service we render, the lives we bless, and the souls we are privileged to help save. You "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,"<sup>4</sup> and you can make a difference. To

these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

3. Luke 2:40.

4. 1 Peter 2:9.

#### NOTES

1. N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74.
2. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, June 21, 1871, 235.

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The choir sang “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free.”

Elder Larry W. Gibbons offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 178th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 6, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth were the organists. The choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

#### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” and will now favor us with “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Anthony D. Perkins of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder Anthony D. Perkins offered the invocation.

The choir sang “He Sent His Son.”

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#### **President Monson**

The choir has sung “He Sent His Son.”

We will now be pleased to hear from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson, newly sustained member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

How blessed we are by the beautiful music of the Tabernacle Choir.

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I rejoice to stand with you today,

to have the great privilege of calling myself a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to be counted as one among you.

## Calling to serve in First Presidency

I recall my initial reaction when I received this sacred call from the Lord to serve as the newest member of the First Presidency of this Church—I felt joyfully overwhelmed. Since then I have learned new dimensions of the words *humility*, *gratitude*, and *faith*.

I can assure you that no one was more surprised by my call than my children and grandchildren.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we do not seek, nor do we decline, callings that come from God through inspired priesthood channels. I pray that God will grant me strength and an understanding heart to magnify this sacred calling according to His will and purpose.

We all miss President Gordon B. Hinckley. His impact on this great work will continue to bless us.

I feel so privileged to work closely with President Monson. I have known him for many years. He is a man of amazing gifts and talents. He is the prophet of God. His faith and loving heart extend to every nation, tongue, and people.

I am grateful to serve with President Eyring, whom I love and respect as a great leader and teacher in the kingdom of God.

When the Quorum of the Twelve met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple to sustain President Monson as the 16th President of the Church, I marveled at the extraordinary abilities, wisdom, and spirituality of those who surrounded me. It made me recognize more clearly my own inadequacies. I love these fine men of great faith. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise my hand to sustain and pledge my support to them. I do love and sustain Elder Christofferson, the newest member of the Twelve.

When the Lord called Frederick G. Williams to be a counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith, He commanded him to “be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift

up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”<sup>1</sup> I believe this counsel applies to all who accept callings to serve in the kingdom of God—and certainly to me in this season of my life.

## A prophet of God and our President

I would like to say a few words about President Thomas S. Monson. Some years ago, President Monson came to a regional conference in Hamburg, Germany, and it was my honor to accompany him. President Monson has a remarkable memory, and we talked about many of the Saints in Germany—I was amazed that he remembered so many so well.

President Monson asked me about Brother Michael Panitsch, a former stake president and then a patriarch, who had been one of the stalwart pioneers of the Church in Germany. I told him that Brother Panitsch was seriously ill, that he was bedridden and unable to attend our meetings.

President Monson asked if we could pay him a visit.

I knew that shortly before his trip to Hamburg, President Monson had undergone foot surgery and that he could not walk without pain. I explained that Brother Panitsch lived on the fifth floor of a building with no elevators. We would have to climb the stairs to see him.

But President Monson insisted. And so we went.

I remember how difficult it was for President Monson to climb those stairs. He could take only a few at a time before needing to stop and rest. He never uttered a word of complaint, and he would not turn back. Because the building had high ceilings, the stairs seemed to go on forever, but President Monson cheerfully persevered until we arrived at the apartment of Brother Panitsch on the fifth floor.

Once there, we had a wonderful visit. President Monson thanked him for his life of dedicated service and cheered him

with a smile. Before we left, he gave him a wonderful priesthood blessing.

No one but Brother Panitsch, the immediate family, and myself ever saw that act of courage and compassion.

President Monson could have chosen to rest between our long and frequent meetings. He could have asked to see some of the beautiful sights of Hamburg. I have often thought of how remarkable it was that of all the sights in that city, the one he wanted to see more than any other was a feeble and ailing member of the Church who had faithfully and humbly served the Lord.

President Monson came to Hamburg to teach and bless the people of a country, and that is what he did. But at the same time, he focused on the one, name by name. His vision is so broad and far-reaching to grasp the complexities of a worldwide Church, yet he is also so compassionate to focus on the one.

When the Apostle Peter spoke of Jesus, who had been his friend and teacher, he offered this simple description: “[He] went about doing good.”<sup>2</sup>

I feel the same can be said of the man we sustain today as the prophet of God.

### **The faith of our fathers**

I marvel at the different backgrounds of members of the Church. You come from all walks of life—all cultures, languages, political circumstances, and religious traditions.

This multiplicity of life experiences has caused me to reflect on the message of one of our hymns, “Faith of Our Fathers.” In the refrain, these words are repeated: “Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!”<sup>3</sup>

The faith of our fathers—I love that phrase.

For many members of the Church, these words bring to mind valiant pioneers who abandoned the comfort of their homes and traveled by wagon and on foot until they reached the valley of the Great

Salt Lake. I love and honor the faith and courage of those early pioneers of the Church. My own ancestors were living an ocean away at the time. None were among those who lived in Nauvoo or Winter Quarters, and none made the journey across the plains. But as a member of the Church, I claim with gratitude and pride this pioneer legacy as my own.

With the same joy, I claim the legacies of today’s modern-day Church pioneers who live in every nation and whose own stories of perseverance, faith, and sacrifice add glorious new verses to the great chorus of the latter-day anthem of the kingdom of God.

When my own family contemplates the phrase “faith of our fathers,” often it is the Lutheran faith that comes to mind. For generations our ancestors belonged to that denomination. In fact, my son recently discovered that one of our family lines connects back to Martin Luther himself.

We honor and respect sincere souls from all religions, no matter where or when they lived, who have loved God, even without having the fullness of the gospel. We lift our voices in gratitude for their selflessness and courage. We embrace them as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father.

We believe that it is a fundamental human right to worship “Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Many faiths and traditions of our fathers**

As the restored Church of Jesus Christ blossoms throughout the globe—now with more than 13 million members—“the faith of our fathers” has an expanded meaning. For some, it could refer to their family’s heritage in one of the hundreds of Christian faiths; for others, it could refer to Middle-Eastern, Asian, or African faiths and traditions.

I have spent most of my life in areas of the world where members of our Church are a small minority. During that time I have learned that often when people learn of the restored gospel, they are impressed by it—many even want to join the Church. But they are reluctant to disappoint their ancestors; they feel they should be true to the faith of their fathers.

I remember when I was a young man, one Sunday I noticed a new family in our meetinghouse—a young mother with two daughters. It wasn't long before the three were baptized and became members of the Church.

I know the story of their conversion intimately because the oldest daughter's name was Harriet, and later she would become my wife.

Harriet's mother, Carmen, had recently lost her husband, and during a period of introspection, she became interested in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After studying the doctrines, Carmen and her daughters knew the Church was true and made plans for baptism.

When Carmen told her mother about this decision, however, her mother was devastated. "How can you be so unfaithful to the faith of your fathers?" she asked.

Carmen's mother was not the only one who objected. Carmen's strong-willed sister, Lisa, was every bit as troubled by the news. Perhaps *troubled* is too soft a word. She was very angry.

Lisa said that she would find those young missionaries and tell them just how wrong they were. She marched to the chapel and found the missionaries, and, you guessed it, Lisa was baptized too.

Many years later, Carmen's mother also received a testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to the earth. One day she said to her daughters and grandchildren, "I want to be in the same heaven as you." While in her mid-70s, she too entered the waters of baptism and became a member of the Church.

## The faith of our Father

What, then, is the faith of our fathers? Is it the religion of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents?

But what of the faith of the ancient ones before them? What of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Are they not our fathers? Are we not of the house of Israel? What of Noah and Enoch and our first parents, Adam and Eve?

What of the Savior and those disciples who followed Him?

The faith of our Father in Heaven has been consistent since the beginning of time, even from before the foundation of this world. John the Revelator described a great war in heaven.<sup>5</sup> The issue was moral agency, as it is today. All who have ever lived on this earth were among those who fought against Satan and stood with the Son and the Father. Therefore, do we not owe our allegiance to God, our Heavenly Father?

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, "we believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."<sup>6</sup> And "we believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>7</sup> We believe in the great plan of happiness, the plan of redemption, the plan of salvation, whereby God's children may experience mortality and return to the presence of the Father—a merciful plan established from before the foundation of this earth.

This is the plan and the faith of our Father!

I testify that the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the faith of our Heavenly Father. It is His truth, revealed to His servants the prophets from the days of Father Adam until our own time. The Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith to restore the faith of our Father on this earth, never to be taken away again. God desires that all of His children receive it, irrespective of their background, culture, or tradition.



True religion should not originate from what pleases men or the traditions of ancestors, but rather from what pleases God, our Eternal Father.

Continuing revelation is a fundamental feature of this faith. Joseph Smith's first prayer is a powerful testimony of this. Revelation is a constant compass that keeps us always true to the will and the faith of our Heavenly Father.

Our Heavenly Father loves His children. He hears the prayers of the humble and sincere of every nation, tongue, and people. He grants light to those who seek and honor Him and are willing to obey His commandments. We joyously proclaim that the faith of our Father is on the earth today.

We invite everyone on this beautiful planet to taste of His doctrine and see if it is not sweet and good and precious. We ask those of sincere heart to learn of this

doctrine and ask their Father in Heaven if it is not true. And by doing so, all can discover, embrace, and walk in the true faith of their Father, which faith will make them whole.<sup>8</sup>

That is our message to the world.

I bear solemn witness of the reality of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; the Holy Ghost; and living prophets who hold the keys, which have come in unbroken succession from Joseph Smith to Thomas S. Monson today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
2. Acts 10:38.
3. *Hymns*, no. 84.
4. Articles of Faith 1:11.
5. See Revelation 12:7–9.
6. Articles of Faith 1:1.
7. Articles of Faith 1:3.
8. See Matthew 9:22.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### The call and service of an Apostle

Fifteen years ago I stood for the first time at the pulpit in the Tabernacle as a newly sustained Seventy. I was 48 years old. I had thick, dark brown hair. I thought I understood what it meant to feel inadequate. At the end of my five-minute remarks, my shirt was dripping with perspiration. The whole thing was something of an ordeal. However, today, in retrospect, it seems a comparatively pleasant experience.

When President Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Elder David A. Bednar were first sustained as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a witness of the divine origin of their calls came to me during the session. I was also given in that moment an understanding of the surpassing sacredness of the call and service of an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not have the words to express that understand-

ing because it was communicated Spirit to spirit without words. To think of it now reduces me to a depth of humility I have never before experienced, and I plead with my Heavenly Father to sustain me as He ever has that I might measure up to something that is far beyond my native capacity and be able to focus outwardly, losing myself in your service. I trust in Him, and I know that His grace is sufficient, and so I here unreservedly commit all that I have and am to God and His Beloved Son. I also commit myself, my loyalty, my service, and my love to the First Presidency and to my Brethren of the Twelve.

### Appreciation for blessings

My patriarchal blessing, received at age 13 from a beloved grandfather, includes this statement: “[Your Heavenly Father] sent you forth in this last and glorious dispensation that you might be born

under the new and everlasting covenant by goodly, righteous parents.” With deepest appreciation I acknowledge that this has been the great foundational blessing of my life. I pay tribute to my parents and with love acknowledge my debt to them and to their parents and generations beyond. Not long after my call to the Seventy, I had occasion to be standing at the grave of one of those ancestors who had died years before I was born. As I contemplated the sacrifices entailed upon him and his family by their acceptance of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, a sense of gratitude flooded my heart and a resolve welled up in me to honor his sacrifice and that of those who came after by being faithful to God and the gospel covenants, as they were.

In acknowledging blessings, I include my dear brothers and their spouses who, as it happens, are present today. My wife and I have four sons and a daughter, each married to a wonderful spouse or, in the case of our youngest son, soon to be married to a lovely young woman. We love them and our grandchildren and appreciate how they bless our lives by their loyalty to the Savior and His gospel. At the pinnacle is my wife, Kathy, the maker of our home, the light of my life, a steady and wise companion, filled with spiritual intuition, good humor, goodwill, and charity. I love her beyond expression and hope to show it more convincingly in the days and years ahead.

It was my blessing to serve a full-time mission as a young man in Argentina under the tutelage of two exceptional mission presidents, Ronald V. Stone and Richard G. Scott, and their respective wives, Patricia and Jeanene. I thank God for their lasting influence in me. Following my graduation from law school, Kathy and I and our children made our homes successively in the states of Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and now Utah. Three precious years were spent in Mexico. In all of these places, we have been blessed with dear friends in and out of the Church

who have loved and taught and befriended us and our children and who continue to do so. I take this opportunity to publicly express gratitude to all of them.

My love and regard for my Brethren of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric is boundless. I rejoice that my continuing service will keep me close to them and that there will be frequent opportunities to serve together. The unfolding revelations of our time that have set the Seventy in place in the Church constitute one of the most profound and perhaps underappreciated miracles in the history of the Lord’s latter-day work. The Seventy are key to the success of the work now and in the years ahead, and I feel honored beyond measure that my name was ever included among theirs. God bless you, my Brethren.

### **Being born again**

I wish to bear you my witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the power of His infinite, atoning sacrifice. In doing so, I will call upon an experience from my years in Tennessee. One evening there I received a call at home from a gentleman I did not know. He introduced himself as a recently retired minister of another faith and asked to meet with me privately the following Sunday. When we met, my guest stated frankly he had come out of concern for the welfare of my soul. He pulled out of his portfolio a fairly long list of scripture citations from the New Testament and said he wanted to review these verses with me and see if he could help me be saved. I was a bit surprised at his directness, but I could tell that he was sincere, and I was touched by his genuine interest in me.

We conversed for more than an hour, and he was open to hear me explain something of my faith as well as to read with me some teachings from the Book of Mormon with which he was not familiar. We found there was much we believed in common and some things we did not. We felt a bond of friendship and prayed together



before he left. What remains with me is our discussion about being born again. It is spiritual rebirth through Jesus Christ that is the context of my witness of Him.

It was Jesus who stated that entry into the kingdom of God requires that one be born again—born of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:3–5). His teaching about a physical and a spiritual baptism helps us understand that both our own action and the intervention of divine power are needed for this transformative rebirth—for the change from natural man to saint (see Mosiah 3:19). Paul described being born again with this simple expression: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### Scriptural examples of spiritual rebirth

Consider two examples from the Book of Mormon. About a century before the birth of Christ, King Benjamin taught his people of the Savior’s advent and Atonement. The Spirit of the Lord wrought such a mighty change in the people that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Because of their faith in Christ, they said, “We are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments . . . *all the remainder of our days*” (Mosiah 5:5; italics added). The king responded, “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name” (Mosiah 5:7; see also D&C 76:24).

The case of Alma is also instructive. As he and his companions went about seeking to destroy the Church of Christ, they were rebuked by an angel. There followed for Alma three days and nights that he described as being “racked with eternal torment. . . . Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell” (Alma

36:12–13). Finally, after “repenting nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28), as he put it, there came to his mind the sweet message of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Alma pled, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death” (Alma 36:18). Forgiveness came to him, and he stood and publicly confessed:

“I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

“And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

“And thus they become new creatures” (Mosiah 27:24–26).

### The process of being born again

As we reflect on these examples and other scriptures, it becomes clear that spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by whose grace we are changed. More specifically, it is faith in Christ as the Atoning One, the Redeemer, who can cleanse from sin and make holy (see Mosiah 4:2–3).

When this true faith takes root in a person, it inevitably leads to repentance. Amulek taught that the Savior’s sacrifice would “bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men *that they may have faith unto repentance*” (Alma 34:15; italics added).

To be complete, however, repentance requires a covenant of obedience. This is the covenant expressed by Benjamin’s people “to do [God’s] will, and to be obedient to his commandments” (Mosiah 5:5). This is the covenant witnessed by

baptism in water (see Mosiah 18:10), sometimes referred to in the scriptures as the “baptism of repentance” or “baptism unto repentance,” inasmuch as it is the culminating step, the capstone of our repentance (see, for example, Acts 19:4; Alma 7:14; 9:27; D&C 107:20).

Then, as promised, the Lord baptizes us “with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20). Nephi phrased it this way: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).<sup>1</sup> Having thus relied “upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19), we are “quickened in the inner man” (Moses 6:65) and, if not yet fully born again, then certainly well into the path of spiritual rebirth.

Now, the Lord cautions us to take heed since “there is a possibility that man may fall from grace” (D&C 20:32), even those who are sanctified (see verses 32–34). As Nephi counseled: “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin’s people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical.<sup>2</sup> For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw

upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy.

### Testimony

I know Jesus Christ as the living, resurrected Son of God.

“[I] know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

“And [I] know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength” (D&C 20:30–31; see also Moroni 10:32–33).

I rejoice that for the balance of my life I shall be able continually to offer Christ, to offer the good news of Christ in all the world. I bear witness of the reality and love of God, our Heavenly Father, to whom Jesus gave all glory. I love and bear witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through his personal association with the Lord, his translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, and the sealing of his testimony with his martyr’s blood, Joseph has become the preeminent revealer of Jesus Christ in His true character as divine Redeemer. Jesus has had no greater witness nor more devoted friend than Joseph Smith. I declare my testimony of the calling of President Thomas S. Monson as prophet and President of the Church of Jesus Christ in this time and pledge my loyalty to him and his counselors in their sacred roles. I pray God’s blessings upon us all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. God taught these things to Adam at the very beginning. He told Adam: “Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by

water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin . . . ; for by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified” (Moses 6:59–60). In other words, the baptism of repentance by water leads to the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit brings the atoning grace of Christ, symbolized by His blood, both to justify (or pardon) our sins and to sanctify (or cleanse) us from the effects of sin, making us spotless and holy before God.

The scriptural record reports that “Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. . . . Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons [and daughters]” (Moses 6:64–66, 68).

2. See Ezra Taft Benson, “A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 2–5.

## Elder Sheldon F. Child

### The best investment

When I was a young boy, one of our neighbors had a herd of dairy cows. One of his cows died, leaving a newborn calf, which he gave to me. I took care of the calf, fed it, and raised it. The day my dad took it to the stockyards to be sold was a day of mixed emotions for me: I had grown attached to my calf, and yet I was looking forward to receiving the rewards of my labor. My only request was that the money I received from selling the calf be in silver dollars. I remember Dad coming home that night and dropping 20 silver dollars into my hands. Money was hard to come by, and I thought I had all the money in the world. I counted, admired, and polished each coin carefully. When Sunday came, I reluctantly put two shiny coins into my pocket to pay my tithing. As hard as it was to surrender my precious silver dollars to the bishop, I still remember now how good I felt being obedient to the Lord.

On the way home from church, my mother told me how proud she was of me. Then she said, “Your grandfather always told us children that if we would faithfully pay an honest tithing, the Lord would

bless us and it would be the best investment that we could ever make.”

My grandfather understood that “there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”<sup>1</sup> Tithing is a commandment from God, and when we obey His law, He is bound to bless us. Even as a seven-year-old boy, that was something I could understand. President Thomas S. Monson, in speaking about God’s laws, stated: “Violate them and we suffer lasting consequences. Obey them and we reap everlasting joy.”<sup>2</sup>

### Promise for obeying law of tithing

You’ll remember that when Israel was chastened for robbing God, the people asked, “Wherein have we robbed thee?” The answer came, “In tithes and offerings.” And then the Israelites were promised that if they would obey His law of tithing, they would be entitled to receive His blessings. The Lord said, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . .

and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord asked Israel to prove Him, to test Him, to have faith in Him so that He would be able to keep His promise to them. That same commandment and that same promise are in effect today. When we keep the law of the tithe, the Lord’s promise is sure: blessings will come to us both temporally and spiritually, according to the wisdom and timing of the Lord.

My wife, Joan, and I have had the privilege of living in various parts of the world among wonderful people who rely daily on the Lord for their most basic temporal needs. Those who take the leap of faith to pay their tithing testify that the windows of heaven are opened to them. I remember a faithful father in the Philippines telling of paying his meager tithing to the bishop one Sunday and then leading his children home from church, knowing full well that there was no food for them. As they were walking along, a huge breadfruit dropped from a tree right in front of them. He immediately looked up and thanked God for opening the windows of heaven and sending him a breadfruit to feed his children.

We are living in challenging economic times. However, if we look back over the past years, we find there have been, and will continue to be, times of relative prosperity and times of financial uncertainty. But regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, if we first pay our obligation to the Lord and then use wisdom and good judgment, the Lord will help us manage the resources He has given us.

### **Temporal and spiritual blessings**

President Heber J. Grant stated, “I want to say to you, if you will be honest with the Lord, paying your tithing and keeping His commandments, He will not

only bless you with the light and inspiration of His Holy Spirit, but you will be blessed in dollars and cents; you will be enabled to pay your debts, and the Lord will pour out temporal blessings upon you in great abundance.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1936, at the height of the Great Depression in the United States, when people were struggling to make ends meet, Elder John A. Widtsoe admonished the Saints to pay their tithing because of the spiritual blessings they would receive. He said:

“Obedience to the law of tithing . . . brings a deep, inward joy . . . that can be won in no other way. . . . The principles of truth become clearer. . . . Prayer becomes easier. . . . The spiritual sense is sharpened [and] . . . man becomes more like his Father in Heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

A mother in West Africa shared her testimony about tithing. She was a trader in a marketplace. Every day she would come home, count out her tithing, and put it in a special place. Then on Sunday she would faithfully take it to her bishop. She shared with us how her business had grown and how her family had been blessed with health and strength and enough food to eat. Then with tears in her eyes she said, “But the greatest blessings of all are that my children love the Lord and we are a forever family.”

This humble mother understood that one of the great blessings of being a full-tithe payer is the privilege of entering the house of the Lord and participating in the sacred ordinances that enable families to be together forever.

As we faithfully pay our tithes, the Lord will indeed open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. I want each of you to know, and especially my children and grandchildren, that I know, as my grandfather did, that if you always pay an honest tithing, the Lord will bless you. It will be the best investment you will ever make. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
2. *Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson* (1973), 126.
3. Malachi 3:8, 10.
4. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 16.
5. John A. Widtsoe, in “Tithing Testimonies of Our Leaders,” *Deseret News*, May 16, 1936, Church Section, 5.

**President Monson**

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “How Firm a Foundation.” Sister Susan W. Tanner, who was released yesterday as Young Women general president, will then address us. Following her remarks, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Susan W. Tanner

**Delighting in the things of the Lord**

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi speaks often of delight. He delights “in the things of the Lord,” “in the scriptures,” and “in the great and eternal plan” of our Father in Heaven (see 2 Nephi 4:15–16; 11:2–8). Notably, Nephi often remembers his sources of delight in the midst of affliction, serving to lift and focus his spirit on eternal blessings.

We too should delight in the things of the Lord, for it will “lift” our hearts and give us cause to “rejoice” (2 Nephi 11:8). Let me mention a few of the things I delight in.

**The Savior, the gospel, priesthood keys**

I delight in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Like Nephi, “I glory in my Jesus” (2 Nephi 33:6), in His ministering and saving roles upon the earth. He provides light and hope and has given us the Holy Ghost for further guidance and comfort along the pathway we should go. It is only through Him that we can return to our Father. “Salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ” (Mosiah 3:17).

I delight in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, built upon the foundation of

apostles and prophets with whom I have had the blessed opportunity to serve. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s prophet on the earth today. I delight that he is truly a Christlike minister to the one, reaching out in warmth and love to each individual.

I delight in priesthood keys and temples that dot the earth, making available to each of us eternal ordinances and covenants. Some of my most celestial days recently have been my own children’s temple marriages, with my father performing that holy ordinance.

**Strength of youth, divine identity**

I delight in the strength of youth as I see them throng the temples to do baptisms for the dead. I love their worthy adherence to the standards leading to the temple and their preparation to be faithful missionaries and righteous mothers and fathers.

I delight that I am a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves me. I learned of my divine identity in my earliest years at my mother’s side. Just recently I saw my then three-year-old granddaughter learning her identity from her mother. Eliza had gone to bed distraught. She could be comforted only as her mother again told

Eliza's favorite true story about the special night when Heavenly Father distinctly and clearly whispered to her mommy's heart that Eliza was a special spirit with a noble mission ahead.

### **Role of nurturer**

I take great delight in my role as a nurturer, which allows me to express my deepest identity as a woman. I never fail to be struck by the way that women, young women, and even little girls seem to have an instinctive interest and ability in nurturing. It is not only a mother's primary responsibility but also part of our "individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). To nurture is to teach, to foster development, to promote growth, to feed, and to nourish. Who would not shout for joy at being given such a blessed role?

The scriptures use the word *nurture* only twice and in both cases speak of the responsibility of parents to raise their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4; Enos 1:1).

President Hinckley also admonished both men and women to be nurturers. He said, "How much more beautiful would be the . . . society in which we live if every father . . . and . . . mother regarded [their] children . . . as gifts from the God of heaven . . . and brought them up with true affection in the wisdom and admonition of the Lord" ("These, Our Little Ones," *Ensign*, Dec. 2007, 9).

### **Families, chastity**

I delight in families. Recently I delighted in the birth of a new grandchild into a family that understands that parents have the solemn responsibility to rear their children in love and righteousness. The older siblings had a natural curiosity about their little sister's entrance into this world. Their first lessons about this holy subject were taught by loving parents in

a sacred family setting, in the celestial climate that accompanies a new soul's birth into mortality, and in the context of our Father's great eternal plan. By contrast, the next day upon returning home from kindergarten, our granddaughter reported that she had learned that day in class "a big new term called sexual abuse." I felt concerned that at this early age children already have to be aware, for safety reasons, of the negative facets of the subject they had so beautifully talked of the night before. I delighted as never before in a nurturing family founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jacob taught that the Lord delights "in the chastity of women" (Jacob 2:28). I delight in the chastity and purity of all women and men. How it must grieve the Lord to see virtue violated and modesty mocked on every side in this wicked world. The Lord has provided for His children great joy through intimate, loving relationships, as my grandchildren were learning. I delight in the clarity of the proclamation to the world on the family, which warns that "individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."

### **Faith, mercies, and miracles**

I delight in the examples of those in the scriptures who walk by faith on their earthly journey. Each time I walk with Abraham and Isaac on the road to Mount Moriah, I weep, knowing that Abraham does not know that there will be an angel and a ram in the thicket at the end of the journey. We are each in the middle of our earthly path, and we don't know the rest of our own stories. But we, as Abraham, are blessed with miracles.

I delight in the Lord's mercies and miracles (see "Bless Our Fast, We Pray," *Hymns*, no. 138). I know that His tender mercies and His miracles, large and small, are real. They come in His way and on His timetable. Sometimes it is not until we



have reached our extremity. Jesus's disciples on the Sea of Galilee had to toil in rowing against a contrary wind all through the night before Jesus finally came to their aid. He did not come until the "fourth watch," meaning near dawn. Yet He did come. (See Mark 6:45–51.) My testimony is that miracles do come, though sometimes not until the fourth watch.

Right now I am exerting my faith and prayers and watching for miracles in behalf of loved ones who are physically sick, emotionally bereft, and spiritually astray. I delight in the Lord's love for each of His children and in His wisdom to allow us individually tailored earthly experiences.

### **Support of loved ones**

Finally, I delight in, more than I can express, the eternal love and constant

help of my husband and the prayers and support of my children and parents during these years of my service as Young Women general president.

"My soul delighteth in the things of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:16)—His law, His life, His love. To delight in Him is to acknowledge His hand in our lives. Our gospel duty is to do what is right and to love and delight in what is right. When we delight to serve Him, our Father in Heaven delights to bless us. "I, the Lord, . . . delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end" (D&C 76:5). I want to be worthy always of His delight. "I love the Lord. In Him my soul delights" (John Tanner, "I Love the Lord" [Jackman Music Corp., 2000], 2). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **President Boyd K. Packer**

### **Keys of authority**

Shortly after the death of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 14 men, Apostles, who had had conferred upon them the keys of the kingdom, gathered together in the upper room of the temple in order to reorganize the First Presidency of the Church. There was no question about what would be done, no hesitancy. We knew that the senior Apostle was the President of the Church. And in that sacred meeting, Thomas Spencer Monson was sustained by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the President of the Church. He nominated and named his counselors. They likewise were sustained, and they were each ordained and given authority. President Monson was specifically given the authority to exercise all of the priesthood keys of authority. Now, as the scriptures provide, he is the only man on the earth who has the right to exercise all of the keys. But we all hold them as

Apostles. There is one man among us called and ordained, and he becomes the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Already he was and had been sustained for years as a prophet, seer, and revelator.

With President Uchtdorf being called to the First Presidency, there was then a vacancy in the Twelve, and so yesterday we sustained a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder D. Todd Christofferson. He now joins that sacred brotherhood in that sacred circle, and the circle now stands filled. The calling of an Apostle goes back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also sustained a number of Seventies. They have taken their place now. The scriptures provide that it is the responsibility of the Quorum of the Twelve to direct all of the affairs of the Church, and when they need help, they are "to call upon the Seventy . . . instead of any others."<sup>1</sup> And now we have eight quorums of Seventy scattered across the world, more than 300

Seventies, all holding the necessary authority to do whatever the Twelve direct them to do.

### **A pattern of administration**

The Lord Himself set in motion this pattern of administration:

“He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”<sup>2</sup>

Andrew had heard John speak and ran to his brother Simon and said, “We have found the Messias. . . . He brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”<sup>3</sup>

Simon and his brother Andrew were casting nets into the sea; James and John the sons of Zebedee were mending their fishing nets; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew, a publican, or tax collector; Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Canaanite; Judas the brother of James; and Judas Iscariot—they made up the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>4</sup>

He bid them all, “Come, follow me.”<sup>5</sup>

He said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>6</sup>

And He told the Twelve, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”<sup>7</sup>

He gave His Apostles “power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick . . . every where.”<sup>8</sup>

And He said, “[The] Twelve hold the keys to open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth, and after that to send my word to every creature.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus once asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . .

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>10</sup>

When Jesus taught in the synagogue, many disciples said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . .

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

“ . . . Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Authority of the Twelve lost anciently**

After the Crucifixion, the Apostles remembered He had said they should stay in Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> Then came the day of Pentecost, that great event when they received the Holy Ghost.<sup>13</sup> They received “a more sure word of prophecy”<sup>14</sup> and “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>15</sup> And so they were complete.

We know little of their travels and only where and how a few of them died. James was killed in Jerusalem by Herod. Peter and Paul died in Rome. Tradition holds that Philip went to the East. Much more than this we do not know.

They scattered; they taught, testified, and established the Church. And they died for their beliefs, and with their deaths came the dark centuries of apostasy.

The most precious thing lost in the Apostasy was the authority held by the Twelve—the priesthood keys. For the Church to be *His* Church, there must be a Quorum of the Twelve who hold the keys and confer them on others.

### **The Twelve in this dispensation**

In time came the First Vision and the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John.<sup>16</sup>

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve were later told:



“Verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.

“... Behold how great is your calling. Cleanse your hearts and your garments, lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands.”<sup>17</sup>

The restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was young when the First Presidency was organized, followed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, which was made up of ordinary men, and then the Quorums of the Seventy. The average age of that first Quorum of the Twelve was 28.

There has been an unbroken line of authority. The priesthood keys given to the Apostles have always been held by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.

Yesterday Elder D. Todd Christofferson became the 96th Apostle to serve in the Twelve in this dispensation. He will be ordained an Apostle and given all the priesthood keys conferred upon the other 14 prophets, seers, and revelators—Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **“Here we have the living Apostles”**

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Spencer W. Kimball desired to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the *Christus* and of the Twelve Apostles stand. He had visited there some years earlier and wanted all of us to see it, to go there.

To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the *Christus* with His arms turned forward and somewhat outstretched, the hands showing the imprint of the nails, and the wound in His side very clearly visible. Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front to the right and the other Apostles in order.

Most of our group was near the rear of the chapel with the custodian. I stood up front with President Kimball before the statue of Peter with Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Johan Helge Benthin, president of the Copenhagen stake.

In Peter’s hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to those keys and explained what they symbolized. Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Benthin and with unaccustomed firmness pointed his finger at him and said, “I want you to tell everyone in Denmark that I hold the keys! We hold the *real* keys, and we use them every day.”

I will never forget that declaration, that testimony from the prophet. The influence was spiritually powerful; the impression was physical in its impact.

We walked to the back of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing. Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian, “These are the dead Apostles.” Pointing to me, he said, “Here we have the *living* Apostles. Elder Packer is an Apostle. Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder L. Tom Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles.

“You read about the Seventies in the New Testament, and here are two of the living Seventies, Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Elder Robert D. Hales.”

The custodian, who up to that time had shown no emotion, suddenly was in tears.

I felt I had had an experience of a lifetime.

### **Organization of Church leadership**

“We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”<sup>18</sup>

When the Seventy are ordained, although they are not ordained Apostles nor do they hold keys, they have authority, and the Twelve are “to call upon the Seventy,

when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.”<sup>19</sup>

Today there are 308 Seventies in 8 quorums. They represent 44 countries and speak 30 languages.

We do not hear of the priesthood keys being exercised in other Christian churches. It seems odd that we are described by some as being non-Christian when we are the only ones who have the authority and the organization that He established.

### **Backgrounds of the current Twelve**

The present Twelve are very ordinary people. They are not, as the original Twelve were not, spectacular individually, but collectively the Twelve are a power.

We come from a variety of occupations. We are scientists, lawyers, teachers.

Elder Nelson was a pioneer heart surgeon. He performed thousands of surgical operations. He told me he gave every heart surgery patient a lifetime guarantee on his work.

Several in this quorum were military men—a sailor, marines, pilots.

They have held various positions in the Church: home teachers, teachers, missionaries, quorum presidents, bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, and of most importance, husbands and fathers.

They all are students and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What unites us is our love of the Savior and His Father’s children and our witness that He stands at the head of the Church.

Almost to a man, the Twelve come from humble beginnings, as it was when He was here. The living Twelve are welded together in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the call came, each has put down his nets, so to speak, and followed the Lord.

### **Service and sacrifice**

President Kimball is remembered for his statement, “My life is like my shoes—to be worn out in service.”<sup>20</sup> That applies to all members of the Twelve. We also wear ourselves out in service of the Lord, and we do so willingly. It is not an easy life for us or our families.

It is not possible in words to describe the contribution, the service, the sacrifice given by the wives of priesthood leaders all across the world.

Some time ago, my wife and also Sister Ballard underwent consummately painful back surgery. Both are doing well; neither has complained. The nearest my wife came to complaint was, “This is no fun!”

“It is the duty of the Twelve”—under the direction of the First Presidency—“to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, agreeable to the revelation.”<sup>21</sup>

We now have means by which we can teach and testify to leaders and members all over the world electronically. But in order to confer the keys of authority in that unbroken line upon the priesthood leaders, “by the laying on of hands,”<sup>22</sup> wherever they are in the world, one of us must be there every time.

The Lord said, “And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them.”<sup>23</sup>

The scriptures describe the Twelve as “traveling councilors.”<sup>24</sup>

I am no different from the Brethren of the Twelve and the Seventy and the Bishopric with whom I have served for these 47 years when I tell you that the records show I have been in Mexico and Central and South America more than 75 times, in Europe over 50 times, Canada 25 times, the islands of the Pacific 10 times,

Asia 10 times, and Africa 4 times; also China twice; to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the Dominican Republic, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, and many, many other places around the globe. Others have traveled even more than that.

### All may receive revelation

While the Apostles hold all of the priesthood keys, all leaders and members alike may receive personal revelation. Indeed, they are expected to seek it through prayer and to act on it by faith.

“For through him we . . . have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>25</sup>

### A qualifying witness

Now Elder Christofferson may wonder, as I did, why one such as I should be ordained to the holy apostleship.

There are many qualifications that I lack. There is so much in my effort to serve that is wanting. There is only one single thing, one qualification that can explain it. Like Peter and all of those who have since been ordained, I have *that* witness.

I know that God is our Father. He introduced His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph Smith. I declare to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He lives. He was born in the meridian of time. He taught His gospel and was tried. He suffered and was crucified and resurrected on the third day. He, like His Father, has a body of flesh and bone. He made His Atonement. Of Him I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness. This I bear in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:38.
2. Luke 6:12–13.
3. John 1:41–42.
4. See Luke 6:13–16.
5. See Matthew 4:19; 16:24; Mark 6:1; Luke 9:23; see also John 21:19; Doctrine and Covenants 112:14.
6. Matthew 16:19.
7. John 14:12.
8. Luke 9:1–2, 6.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 124:128.
10. Matthew 16:13, 16.
11. John 6:60, 66–68.
12. See Acts 1:4.
13. See Acts 2:1–4.
14. 2 Peter 1:19.
15. 2 Peter 1:21.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 112:32–33.
18. Articles of Faith 1:6.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 107:38.
20. In Gordon B. Hinckley, “He Is at Peace,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, 41.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 107:58; see also Doctrine and Covenants 107:33.
22. Articles of Faith 1:5.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 112:21.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
25. Ephesians 2:18–20.

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The choir sang “If You Could Hie to Kolob.”

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### President Monson

The choir just sang “If You Could Hie to Kolob.” We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “High on the Mountain Top.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Benjamin De Hoyos of the Seventy, and the concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

I think this has been a remarkable session. The messages have been inspiring; the music has been beautiful, the testimonies sincere. I think anyone who has attended this session will never forget it—for the Spirit we've felt.

### Reorganization of the First Presidency

My beloved brothers and sisters, over 44 years ago, in October of 1963, I stood at the pulpit in the Tabernacle, having just been sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On that occasion I mentioned a small sign I had seen on another pulpit. The words on the sign were these: "Who stands at this pulpit, let him be humble." I assure you that I was humbled by my call to the Twelve at that time. However, as I stand at *this* pulpit today, I address you from the absolute depths of humility. I feel very keenly my dependence upon the Lord. I humbly seek the guidance of the Spirit as I share with you the feelings of my heart.

Just two months ago we said farewell to our dear friend and leader Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an outstanding ambassador of truth to the entire world and beloved of all. We miss him. More than 53,000 men, women, and children journeyed to the beautiful Hall of the Prophets in this very building to pay their last respects to this giant of the Lord, who now belongs to the ages.

With the passing of President Hinckley, the First Presidency was dissolved. President Eyring and I, who served as counselors to President Hinckley, returned to our places in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and that quorum became the presiding authority of the Church.

On Saturday, February 2, 2008, funeral services for President Hinckley were held in this magnificent Conference Cen-

ter—a building which will ever stand as a monument to his foresight and vision. During the funeral, beautiful and loving tributes were paid to this man of God.

The following day, all 14 ordained Apostles living on the earth assembled in an upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. We met in a spirit of fasting and prayer. During that solemn and sacred gathering, the Presidency of the Church was reorganized in accordance with well-established precedent, after the pattern which the Lord Himself put in place.

Members of the Church around the world convened yesterday in a solemn assembly. You raised your hands in a sustaining vote to approve the action which was taken in that meeting in the temple to which I have just referred. As your hands were raised toward heaven, my heart was touched. I felt your love and support, as well as your commitment to the Lord.

### Joy of feeling the Lord's promptings

I know without question, my brothers and sisters, that God lives. I testify to you that this is His work. I testify as well that our Savior Jesus Christ is at the head of this Church, which bears His name. I know that the sweetest experience in all this life is to feel His promptings as He directs us in the furtherance of His work. I felt those promptings as a young bishop, guided to the homes where there was spiritual—or perhaps temporal—want. I felt them again as a mission president in Toronto, Canada, working with wonderful missionaries who were a living witness and testimony to the world that this work is divine and that we are led by a prophet. I have felt them throughout my service in the Twelve and in the First Presidency and now as President of the Church. I testify that each one of us can feel the Lord's inspiration as we live worthily and strive to serve Him.

### Gratitude for past and present leaders

I am keenly aware of the 15 men who preceded me as President of the Church. Many of them I have known personally. I have had the blessing and privilege of serving as a counselor to three of them. I am grateful for the abiding legacy left by each one of those 15 men. I have the sure knowledge, as I am confident they had, that God directs His prophet. My earnest prayer is that I might continue to be a worthy instrument in His hands to carry on this great work and to fulfill the tremendous responsibilities which come with the office of President.

I thank the Lord for wonderful counselors. President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf are men of great ability and sound understanding. They are counselors in the true sense of the word. I value their judgment. I believe they have been prepared by the Lord for the positions they now occupy.

I love the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and treasure my association with them. They too are dedicated to the work of the Lord and are spending their lives in His service. I look forward to serving with Elder Christoffer-son, who has now been called to that quorum and who has received your sustaining vote. He too has been prepared for the position to which he has been called.

It has also been a joy to serve with the members of the Quorums of the Seventy and with the Presiding Bishopric. New members of the Seventy have been called and were sustained yesterday, and I look forward to associating with them in the work of the Master.

A sweet spirit of unity exists among the General Authorities. The Lord has declared, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>1</sup> We will continue to be united in one purpose—namely, the furtherance of the work of the Lord.

### Legacy of dedication to the gospel

I feel to express thanks to my Heavenly Father for His countless blessings to me. I can say, as did Nephi of old, that I was born of goodly parents, whose own parents and grandparents were gathered out of the lands of Sweden and Scotland and England by dedicated missionaries. As those missionaries bore humble testimonies, they touched the hearts and the spirits of my forebears. After joining the Church, these noble men, women, and children made their way to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Many were the trials and heartaches they encountered along the way.

In the spring of 1848, my great-great-grandparents, Charles Stewart Miller and Mary McGowan Miller, who had joined the Church in their native Scotland, left their home in Rutherglen, Scotland, and journeyed to St. Louis, Missouri, with a group of Saints, arriving there in 1849. One of their 11 children, Margaret, would become my great-grandmother.

While the family was in St. Louis working to earn enough money to complete their journey to the Salt Lake Valley, a plague of cholera swept through the area, leaving death and heartache in its wake. The Miller family was hard hit. In the space of two weeks, four of the family members succumbed. The first, on June 22, 1849, was 18-year-old William. Five days later Mary McGowan Miller, my great-great-grandmother and the mother of the family, died. Two days afterward, 15-year-old Archibald passed away, and five days after his death, my great-great-grandfather, Charles Stewart Miller, the father of the family, succumbed. The children who survived were left orphans, including my great-grandmother Margaret, who was 13 years old at the time.

Because of so many deaths in the area, there were no caskets available, at any price, in which to bury the deceased family members. The older surviving boys

dismantled the family's oxen pens in order to make caskets for the family members who had passed away.

Little is recorded of the heartache and struggles of the nine remaining Miller children as they continued to work and save for that journey their parents and brothers would never make. We know that they left St. Louis in the spring of 1850 with four oxen and one wagon, arriving finally in the Salt Lake Valley that same year.

Others of my ancestors faced similar hardships. Through it all, however, their testimonies remained steadfast and firm. From all of them I received a legacy of total dedication to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of these faithful souls, I stand before you today.

### **Thanks for family and Church members**

I thank my Father in Heaven for my sweet companion, Frances. This October she and I will celebrate 60 wonderful years of marriage. Although my Church service began at an early age, she has never once complained when I've left home to attend meetings or to fulfill an assignment. For many years my assignments as a member of the Twelve took me away from Salt Lake City often, sometimes for five weeks at a time, leaving her alone to care for our small children and our home. Beginning when I was called as a bishop at the age of 22, we have seldom had the luxury of sitting together during a Church service. I could not have asked for a more loyal, loving, and understanding companion.

I express gratitude to my Heavenly Father for our three children and their companions, for eight wonderful grandchildren, and for four beautiful great-grandchildren.

It's difficult for me to find the words to convey to you, my brothers and sisters, my heartfelt appreciation for the lives you live, for the good you do, for the testimonies you bear. You serve one another

willingly. You are dedicated to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During more than 44 years as a General Authority, I have had the opportunity to travel the world over. One of my greatest joys has been to meet with you, the members, wherever you may be—to feel of your spirit and your love. I look forward to many more such opportunities.

### **Invitation to come back**

Throughout the journey along the pathway of life, there are casualties. Some depart from the road markers which point toward life eternal, only to discover the detour chosen ultimately leads to a dead end. Indifference, carelessness, selfishness, and sin all take their costly toll in human lives.

Change for the better can come to all. Over the years we have issued appeals to the less active, the offended, the critical, the transgressor—to come back. "Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints."<sup>2</sup>

In the private sanctuary of one's own conscience lies that spirit, that determination to cast off the old person and to measure up to the stature of true potential. In this spirit, we again issue that heartfelt invitation: Come back. We reach out to you in the pure love of Christ and express our desire to assist you and to welcome you into full fellowship. To those who are wounded in spirit or who are struggling and fearful, we say, Let us lift you and cheer you and calm your fears. Take literally the Lord's invitation:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>3</sup>



### **Show kindness to all**

It was said of the Savior that He “went about doing good . . . for God was with him.”<sup>4</sup> May we follow that perfect example. In this sometimes precarious journey through mortality, may we also follow that advice from the Apostle Paul which will help to keep us safe and on course:

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”<sup>5</sup>

I would encourage members of the Church wherever they may be to show kindness and respect for all people everywhere. The world in which we live is filled with diversity. We can and should demonstrate respect toward those whose beliefs differ from ours.

May we also demonstrate kindness and love within our own families. Our homes are to be more than sanctuaries; they should also be places where God’s Spirit can dwell, where the storm stops at the door, where love reigns and peace dwells.

### **Mortality is a period of testing**

The world can at times be a frightening place in which to live. The moral fabric of society seems to be unraveling at an alarming speed. None—whether young or old or in between—is exempt from exposure to those things which have the potential to drag us down and destroy us. Our youth, our precious youth, in particular, face temptations we can scarcely comprehend. The adversary and his hosts seem to be working nonstop to cause our downfall.

We are waging a war with sin, my brothers and sisters, but we need not despair. It is a war we can and will win. Our Father in Heaven has given us the tools we need in order to do so. He is at the helm. We have nothing to fear. He is the

God of light. He is the God of hope. I testify that He loves us—each one.

Mortality is a period of testing, a time to prove ourselves worthy to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. In order to be tested, we must sometimes face challenges and difficulties. At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end—no dawn to break the night’s darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”<sup>6</sup> We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We feel abandoned, heart-broken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face.

### **Moving forward together**

With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift my voice in testimony today as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He loves us with a love we cannot fully comprehend, and because He loves us, He gave His life for us. My gratitude to Him is beyond expression.

I invoke His blessings upon you, my beloved brothers and sisters, in your homes, in your work, in your service to one another and to the Lord Himself. Together we shall move forward doing His work.

I pledge my life, my strength—all that I have to offer—in serving Him and in directing the affairs of His Church in accordance with His will and by His inspiration, and I do so in His holy name, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
2. First Presidency statement, in *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, 88.
3. Matthew 11:28–30.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Philippians 4:8.

## 6. Jeremiah 8:22.

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The choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Benjamín De Hoyos offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 178th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 6, 2008. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Uchtdorf made the following remarks as the meeting began.

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 178th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “For the Beauty of the Earth.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder C. Scott Grow of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “For the Beauty of the Earth.”

Elder C. Scott Grow offered the invocation.

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**President Uchtdorf**

The choir will now sing “Called to Serve.” Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Called to Serve.”

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## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

**The prophetic mantle**

President Monson, may I claim a moment of personal privilege? As the first of the Brethren invited to speak following your singular message to the Church this morning, may I say something on behalf of

all your Brethren of the General Authorities and indeed on behalf of all the Church.

Of the many privileges we have had in this historic conference, including participation in a solemn assembly in which we were able to stand and sustain you as



prophet, seer, and revelator, I cannot help but feel that the most important privilege we have all had has been to witness personally the settling of the sacred, prophetic mantle upon your shoulders, almost as it were by the very hands of angels themselves. Those in attendance at last night's general priesthood meeting and all who were present in the worldwide broadcast of this morning's session have been eyewitnesses to this event. For all the participants, I express our gratitude for such a moment. I say that with love to President Monson and especially love to our Father in Heaven for the wonderful opportunity it has been to be "eyewitnesses of his majesty," as the Apostle Peter once said.<sup>1</sup>

### **An open canon of scripture**

In general conference last October, I said there were two principal reasons The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is accused, erroneously, of not being Christian. At that time I addressed one of those doctrinal issues—our scripturally based view of the Godhead. Today I would like to address the other major doctrine which characterizes our faith but which causes concern to some, namely the bold assertion that God continues to speak His word and reveal His truth, revelations which mandate an open canon of scripture.

Some Christians, in large measure because of their genuine love for the Bible, have declared that there can be no more authorized scripture beyond the Bible. In thus pronouncing the canon of revelation closed, our friends in some other faiths shut the door on divine expression that we in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hold dear: the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the ongoing guidance received by God's anointed prophets and apostles. Imputing no ill will to those who take such a position, nevertheless we respectfully but resolutely reject

such an unscriptural characterization of true Christianity.

One of the arguments often used in any defense of a closed canon is the New Testament passage recorded in Revelation 22:18: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of . . . this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." However, there is now overwhelming consensus among virtually all biblical scholars that this verse applies only to the book of Revelation, *not* the whole Bible. Those scholars of our day acknowledge a number of New Testament "books" that were almost certainly written *after* John's revelation on the Isle of Patmos was received. Included in this category are at least the book of Jude, the three Epistles of John, and probably the entire Gospel of John itself.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps there are even more than these.

But there is a simpler answer as to why that passage in the final book of the current New Testament cannot apply to the whole Bible. That is because the whole Bible as we know it—one collection of texts bound in a single volume—did not exist when that verse was written. For centuries after John produced his writing, the individual books of the New Testament were in circulation singly or perhaps in combinations with a few other texts but almost *never* as a complete collection. Of the entire corpus of 5,366 known Greek New Testament manuscripts, only 35 contain the whole New Testament as we now know it, and 34 of those were compiled after A.D. 1000.<sup>3</sup>

### **"My words . . . never cease"**

The fact of the matter is that virtually every prophet of the Old *and* New Testament has added scripture to that received by his predecessors. If the Old Testament words of Moses were sufficient, as some could have mistakenly thought them to be,<sup>4</sup> then why, for example, the subsequent

prophecies of Isaiah or of Jeremiah, who follows him? To say nothing of Ezekiel and Daniel, of Joel, Amos, and all the rest. If one revelation to one prophet in one moment of time is sufficient for *all* time, what justifies these many others? What justifies them was made clear by Jehovah Himself when He said to Moses, “My works are without end, and . . . my words . . . never cease.”<sup>5</sup>

One Protestant scholar has inquired tellingly into the erroneous doctrine of a closed canon. He writes: “On what biblical or historical grounds has the inspiration of God been limited to the written documents that the church now calls its Bible? . . . If the Spirit inspired only the written documents of the first century, does that mean that the same Spirit does not speak today in the church about matters that are of significant concern?”<sup>6</sup> We humbly ask those same questions.

Continuing revelation does not demean or discredit existing revelation. The Old Testament does not lose its value in our eyes when we are introduced to the New Testament, and the New Testament is only enhanced when we read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. In considering the additional scripture accepted by Latter-day Saints, we might ask: Were those early Christians who for decades had access only to the primitive Gospel of Mark (generally considered the first of the New Testament Gospels to be written)—were they offended to receive the more detailed accounts set forth later by Matthew and Luke, to say nothing of the unprecedented passages and revelatory emphasis offered later yet by John? Surely they must have rejoiced that ever more convincing evidence of the divinity of Christ kept coming. And so do we rejoice.

### Additional witnesses for the Bible

Please do *not* misunderstand. We love and revere the Bible, as Elder M. Russell

Ballard taught so clearly from this pulpit just one year ago.<sup>7</sup> The Bible is the word of God. It is always identified first in our canon, our “standard works.” Indeed, it was a divinely ordained encounter with the fifth verse of the first chapter of the book of James that led Joseph Smith to his vision of the Father and the Son, which gave birth to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our time.

But even then, Joseph knew the Bible alone could not be the answer to *all* the religious questions he and others like him had. As he said in his own words, the ministers of his community were contending—sometimes angrily—over their doctrines. “Priest [was] contending against priest, and convert [was contending] against convert . . . in a strife of words and a contest about opinions,” he said.

About the only thing these contending religions had in common was, ironically, a belief in the Bible, but, as Joseph wrote, “the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question [regarding which church was true] by an appeal to the Bible.”<sup>8</sup> Clearly the Bible, so frequently described at that time as “common ground,” was nothing of the kind—unfortunately it was a battleground.

Thus one of the great purposes of continuing revelation through living prophets is to declare to the world through additional witnesses that the Bible is true. “*This is written*,” an ancient prophet said, speaking of the Book of Mormon, “for the intent that ye may believe *that*,” speaking of the Bible.<sup>9</sup> In one of the earliest revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “Behold, I do not bring [the Book of Mormon forth] to destroy [the Bible] but to build it up.”<sup>10</sup>

### God is the ultimate source of knowledge

One other point needs to be made. Since it is clear that there were Christians

long before there was a New Testament or even an accumulation of the sayings of Jesus, it cannot therefore be maintained that the Bible is what makes one a Christian. In the words of esteemed New Testament scholar N. T. Wright, “The risen Jesus, at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, does not say, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to the books you are all going to write,’ but [rather] ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.’”<sup>11</sup>

In other words, “Scripture itself points . . . away from itself and to the fact that final and true authority belongs to God himself.”<sup>12</sup> So the scriptures are *not* the ultimate source of knowledge for Latter-day Saints. They are manifestations of the ultimate source. The ultimate source of knowledge and authority for a Latter-day Saint is the living God. The communication of those gifts comes from God as living, vibrant, divine revelation.<sup>13</sup>

This doctrine lies at the very heart of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of our message to the world. It dramatizes the significance of a solemn assembly yesterday, in which we sustained Thomas S. Monson as a prophet, a seer, and a revelator. We believe in a God who is engaged in our lives, who is not silent, not absent, nor, as Elijah said of the god of the priests of Baal, is He “[on] a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be [awakened].”<sup>14</sup> In this Church, even our young Primary children recite, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”<sup>15</sup>

### God lives, and He speaks

In declaring new scripture and continuing revelation, we pray we will never be arrogant or insensitive. But after a sacred vision in a now sacred grove answered in the affirmative the question “Does God exist?” what Joseph Smith

and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints force us to face is the next interrogative, which necessarily follows: “Does He speak?” We bring the good news that He does and that He has. With a love and affection born of our Christianity, we invite all to inquire into the wonder of what God has said since biblical times and is saying even now.

In a sense Joseph Smith and his prophetic successors in this Church answer the challenge Ralph Waldo Emerson put to the students of the Harvard Divinity School 170 years ago this coming summer. To that group of the Protestant best and brightest, the great sage of Concord pled that they teach “that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.”<sup>16</sup>

I testify that the heavens are open. I testify that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is truly another testament of Jesus Christ. I testify that Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet, a modern apostle with the keys of the kingdom in his hands, a man upon whom I personally have seen the mantle fall. I testify that the presence of such authorized, prophetic voices and ongoing canonized revelations have been at the heart of the Christian message whenever the authorized ministry of Christ has been on the earth. I testify that such a ministry *is* on the earth again, and it is found in this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In our heartfelt devotion to Jesus of Nazareth as the very Son of God, the Savior of the world, we invite all to examine what we have received of Him, to join with us, drinking deeply at the “well of water springing up into everlasting life,”<sup>17</sup> these constantly flowing reminders that God lives, that He loves us, and that He speaks. I express the deepest *personal* thanks that His works never end and His “words . . . never cease.” I bear witness of such divine loving attention and the recording of it, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 2 Peter 1:16.
2. For an introductory discussion on this topic, see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (1991), 46. The issue of canon is discussed on pages 45–56. *Canon* is defined as “an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “canon”).
3. See Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (1981), 54–55.
4. See Deuteronomy 4:2, for example.
5. Moses 1:4.
6. Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, rev. ed. (1995), 255–56.
7. See M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 2007, 77–81; or *Ensign*, May 2007, 80–82.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:6, 12.
9. Mormon 7:9; italics added.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 10:52; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:11.
11. N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (2005), xi.
12. N. T. Wright, *The Last Word*, 24.
13. For a full essay on this subject, see Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 6–9.
14. 1 Kings 18:27.
15. Articles of Faith 1:9.
16. “An Address,” *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1929), 45.
17. John 4:14.

## Elder David A. Bednar

## Meaningful prayer

I invite the Holy Ghost to assist us as we consider a principle that can help our prayers become more meaningful—the gospel principle of asking in faith.

I want to review three examples of asking in faith in meaningful prayer and discuss the lessons we can learn from each one of them. As we speak of prayer, I emphasize the word *meaningful*. Simply saying prayers is quite a different thing from engaging in meaningful prayer. I expect that all of us already know that prayer is essential for our spiritual development and protection. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. And even though we recognize the importance of prayer, all of us can improve the consistency and efficacy of our personal and family prayers.

## Ask in faith and act

The classic example of asking in faith is Joseph Smith and the First Vision. As young Joseph was seeking to know the

truth about religion, he read the following verses in the first chapter of James:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:5–6).

Please notice the requirement to ask in faith, which I understand to mean the necessity to not only express but to do, the dual obligation to both plead and to perform, the requirement to communicate and to act.

Pondering this biblical text led Joseph to retire to a grove of trees near his home to pray and to seek spiritual knowledge. Note the questions that guided Joseph’s thinking and supplicating.

“In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects

was right, that I might know which to join” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

Joseph’s questions focused not just on what he needed to know but also on what was to be *done*! His prayer was not simply, “Which church is right?” His question was, “Which church should I join?” Joseph went to the grove to ask in faith, and he was determined to act.

### Faith leads to righteous action

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to righteous action. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “faith [is] the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 1). Action alone is not faith in the Savior, but acting in accordance with correct principles is a central component of faith. Thus, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

The Prophet Joseph further explained that “faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth” (*Lectures on Faith*, 3). Thus, faith in Christ leads to righteous action, which increases our spiritual capacity and power. Understanding that faith is a principle of action and of power inspires us to exercise our moral agency in compliance with gospel truth, invites the redeeming and strengthening *powers* of the Savior’s Atonement into our lives, and enlarges the *power* within us whereby we are agents unto ourselves (see D&C 58:28).

I long have been impressed with the truth that meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work. Blessings require some effort on our part before we can obtain them, and prayer, as “a form of work, . . . is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 753). We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say “amen,” by act-

ing upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father.

### Missionary work and prayers of faith

Asking in faith requires honesty, effort, commitment, and persistence. Let me provide an illustration of what I mean and extend to you an invitation.

We properly pray for the safety and success of the full-time missionaries throughout the world. And a common element in many of our prayers is a request that the missionaries will be led to individuals and families who are prepared to receive the message of the Restoration. But ultimately it is my responsibility and your responsibility to find people for the missionaries to teach. Missionaries are full-time teachers; you and I are full-time finders. And you and I as lifelong missionaries should not be praying for the full-time missionaries to do our work!

If you and I would truly pray and ask in faith, as did Joseph Smith—if we would pray with the expectation to act and not just to express—then the work of proclaiming the gospel would move forward in a remarkable way. Such a prayer of faith might include some of the following elements:

- Thanking Heavenly Father for the doctrines and ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which bring hope and happiness into our lives.
- Asking for courage and boldness to open our mouths and share the gospel with our family and friends.
- Entreating Heavenly Father to help us identify individuals and families who will be receptive to our invitation to be taught by the missionaries in our homes.
- Pledging to do our part this day and this week and petitioning for help to overcome anxiety, fear, and hesitation.
- Seeking for the gift of discernment—for eyes to see and ears to hear missionary opportunities as they occur.
- Praying fervently for the strength to act as we know we should.

Gratitude would be expressed, and other blessings might be requested in such a prayer, which would be closed in the name of the Savior. And then the consecrated work of that prayer would continue and increase.

This same pattern of holy communication and consecrated work can be applied in our prayers for the poor and the needy, for the sick and the afflicted, for family members and friends who are struggling, and for those who are not attending Church meetings.

I testify that prayer becomes meaningful as we ask in faith and act. I invite all of us to pray in faith about our divinely given mandate to proclaim the gospel. As we do so, I promise doors will open and we will be blessed to recognize and act upon the opportunities that will be provided.

### **After the trial of our faith**

My second example emphasizes the importance of persevering through the trial of our faith. A few years ago a family traveled to Europe from the United States. Shortly after arriving at their destination, a 13-year-old son became quite ill. The mother and father initially thought his upset stomach was caused by fatigue from the long flight, and the family routinely continued on its journey.

As the day continued, the son's condition became worse. Dehydration was increasing. The father gave his son a priesthood blessing, but no improvement was immediately evident.

Several hours passed by, and the mother knelt by her son's side, pleading in prayer to Heavenly Father for the boy's well-being. They were far from home in an unfamiliar country and did not know how to obtain medical assistance.

The mother asked her son if he would like to pray with her. She knew that merely waiting for the anticipated blessing would not be enough; they needed to continue to act. Explaining that the blessing he had

received was still in effect, she suggested again petitioning in prayer, as did the ancient Apostles, "Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). The prayer included a profession of trust in priesthood power and a commitment to persevere in doing whatever might be required for the blessing to be honored—if that blessing at that time was in accordance with God's will. Shortly after they offered this simple prayer, the son's condition improved.

The faithful action of the mother and her son helped to invite the promised priesthood power and in part satisfied the requirement that we "dispute not because [we] see not, for [we] receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith" (Ether 12:6). Just as the prison holding Alma and Amulek did not tumble to the earth "until after their faith," and just as Ammon and his missionary brethren did not witness mighty miracles in their ministries "until after their faith" (see Ether 12:12–15), so the healing of this 13-year-old boy did not occur *until after their faith* and was accomplished "according to their faith in their prayers" (D&C 10:47).

### **"Not my will, but thine, be done"**

My third example highlights the importance of recognizing and accepting the will of God in our lives. Several years ago there was a young father who had been active in the Church as a boy but had chosen a different path during his teenage years. After serving in the military, he married a lovely girl, and soon children blessed their home.

One day without warning their little four-year-old daughter became critically ill and was hospitalized. In desperation and for the first time in many years, the father was found on his knees in prayer, asking that the life of his daughter be spared. Yet her condition worsened. Gradually this father sensed that his little girl would not live, and slowly his prayers changed; he no longer prayed for healing but rather for

understanding. “Let Thy will be done” was now the manner of his pleadings.

Soon his daughter was in a coma, and the father knew her hours on earth were few. Fortified with understanding, trust, and power beyond their own, the young parents prayed again, asking for the opportunity to hold her close once more while she was awake. The daughter’s eyes opened, and her frail arms reached out to her parents for one final embrace. And then she was gone. This father knew their prayers had been answered—a kind, compassionate Father in Heaven had comforted their hearts. God’s will had been done, and they had gained understanding. (Adapted from H. Burke Peterson, “Adversity and Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 18.)

Discerning and accepting the will of God in our lives are fundamental elements of asking in faith in meaningful prayer. However, simply saying the words “Thy will be done” is not enough. Each of us needs God’s help in surrendering our will to Him.

“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 752–53). Humble, earnest, and persistent prayer enables us to recognize and align ourselves with the will of our Heavenly Father. And in this the Savior provided the perfect example as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “saying, Father,

if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. . . . And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:42, 44).

The object of our prayers should not be to present a wish list or a series of requests but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is eager to bestow, according to His will and timing. Every sincere prayer is heard and answered by our Heavenly Father, but the answers we receive may not be what we expect or come to us when we want or in the way we anticipate. This truth is evident in the three examples I have presented today.

### **Moving beyond routine prayers**

Prayer is a privilege and the soul’s sincere desire. We can move beyond routine and “checklist” prayers and engage in meaningful prayer as we appropriately ask in faith and act, as we patiently persevere through the trial of our faith, and as we humbly acknowledge and accept “not my will, but thine, be done.”

I witness the reality and divinity of our Eternal Father, of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. I testify that our Father hears and answers our prayers. May each of us strive with greater resolve to ask in faith and thereby make our prayers truly meaningful. I so pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder W. Craig Zwick**

With each of you, I gratefully sustain God’s will for His people. Thank you, President Monson, for the purity of your heart.

### **Live by your standards**

When young Joseph Smith told the truth about his sacred experience in the grove, he was persecuted and mistreated. The adversary used ridicule as a weapon

against him. “I was an obscure boy, . . . yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph grew in patience, temperance, and faith, notwithstanding the presence of enemies on every front. In Joseph’s own words: “Evil and designing men have combined to destroy the innocent, . . . yet the glorious Gospel in its fullness is



spreading.”<sup>2</sup> “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing.”<sup>3</sup>

Even today there are those who misunderstand our doctrine and challenge the unchanging values by which we are invited to live.

Ethan, a young friend of mine, approached his mother with a weighty question. Like most teenagers, Ethan wants to be independent, self-sufficient, and surrounded by good friends. He is trying to make good choices on his own. He is exceedingly valiant, works hard on his grades, and studies the scriptures daily. Like all young people, Ethan faces tremendous temptations. It comes in the halls of his school, on the Internet, in the movies and music. It can be heard in bad language and seen in provocative clothing. That which is wrong is often made to look right. Anxiety and fear of rejection are common among teenagers. Peer pressure is often overpowering. Ethan was feeling bombarded with opposing values.

This is the question he asked his mother: “Mom, do I need to lower my standards to keep my friends?”

It is a profound question for each of us to consider at all stages of life. Are we lowering our standards to fit into our neighborhoods? Are we altering our values to suit the situation in the workplace or to be popular at school?

Ethan’s loving mother answered him with a resounding no.

I, too, unequivocally answer, “Don’t do it, Ethan. Never forget that you are a son of God. He loves you. Live by your standards. Stand up for what you believe in. Sometimes it is not easy, and you may be standing alone for a while. Look for friends with integrity and character, and then go to them and express appreciation for their examples. You might even find someone who has been feeling as lonely as you. Pray for guidance and protection from the Lord. He will sustain you. He will become a trusted friend, and you will discover that your example will attract

many friends who will take courage from your strength of character.”

### **“We will not yield; we cannot yield”**

Nephi taught us a powerfully simple principle in recounting his father’s dream of the tree of life. He described a strait and narrow path leading to a tree and a great and spacious building. This building was filled with people who were dressed in exceedingly fine and fashionable clothing. They were all in an attitude of mocking and pointing fingers toward those who were partaking of the fruit. They were trying to get people off the path and into the building. From all appearances, the people inside seemed to be having a great time. What an indelible image of temptation. In Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s words, “The laughter of the world is merely loneliness pathetically trying to reassure itself.”<sup>4</sup>

“And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. . . . They did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; *but we heeded them not.*”<sup>5</sup>

There at the end of the verse is Nephi’s powerful principle, an answer to unwanted peer pressure: “But we heeded them not.”

President Boyd K. Packer has recently emphasized this guiding principle: “However out of step we may seem, however much the standards are belittled, however much others yield, we will not yield; we cannot yield.”<sup>6</sup>

Do we recognize temptation when it is so well camouflaged?

Are we willing to fight the unpopular battle?

Paul clearly warned that we should not be “men-pleasers; but [be] the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”<sup>7</sup>

The time has come when we must take an unyielding stand. We must shore up our spiritual underpinnings, listen to



the prophets of God, and follow their counsel.

Said Paul to Timothy: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

It requires courage to make good choices, even when others around us choose differently. As we make righteous choices day by day in little things, the Lord will strengthen us and help us choose the right during more difficult times.

The teachings and values we cherish the most are not embraced by a secular world. To maintain a firm stance for ourselves and our children, the message of the restored gospel must be firmly planted in our hearts and taught in our homes.

### Abinadi’s example of courage

Abinadi, a Nephite prophet, as recorded in just a few powerful pages in Mosiah, teaches us timeless lessons that perfectly meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Abinadi was a man of unwavering courage who stood for truth when it was unpopular to do so. As he courageously called the people to repentance, he knew his own life was in jeopardy. In your mind’s eye, you can see the riveting scene of Abinadi, who has just had the death sentence pronounced upon him. He had an opportunity to save himself by denying his faith and testimony, but instead he fearlessly proclaimed, “I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true.”<sup>9</sup>

We may not have to lose our lives in defense of truth, but we can, just like Abinadi, draw ourselves to full stature and with full heart and energy valiantly proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He

was and is the Son of the Almighty. He lives and He loves us.

As we follow Him, we will be able to make sacrifices and keep our sacred covenants. The Lord has said to us:

“Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . . Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”<sup>10</sup>

We must fortify ourselves. That sure spiritual fortification is found in two words—Jesus Christ. Of Him I humbly testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
2. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:22.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:540.
4. Neal A. Maxwell, “Cleanse Us from All Unrighteousness,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1986, 19.
5. 1 Nephi 8:33; italics added.
6. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 26.
7. Ephesians 6:6.
8. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.
9. Mosiah 17:9.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34, 36.

### President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Elders Robert R. Steuer and Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## Elder Robert R. Steuer

### Obtaining spiritual light

As a young boy I discovered amazing power in a small flashlight. Turning it on at night, I saw a large lighted spot wherever I pointed it. My excitement increased when shining the flashlight inside a dusty barn. A cone of light was projected through the air. But the most interesting discovery came when I pressed the flashlight firmly against the palm of my hand. My entire hand glowed in the dark. The light was actually within me! To observe the physical properties of light can be exciting, but discovering the properties of spiritual light and truth is even more awe inspiring and essential.

We live in marvelous times, yet also an hour when peace has been taken from the earth.<sup>1</sup> For us to prosper in these times, spiritual light must burn within us. How do we obtain this spiritual light and ensure that the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ fill our souls? I would like to suggest three ways: (1) learn true doctrine, (2) gain pure testimony, and (3) live the gospel courageously.

### Learn true doctrine

First, learn true doctrine. Alma discovered that “the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had . . . more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.”<sup>2</sup> President Henry B. Eyring stated: “The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets. Alma knew that words of doctrine had great power. They can open the minds of people to see spiritual things not visible to the natural eye. And they can open the heart to feelings of the love of God and a love for truth.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1832 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a true and powerful doctrine about spiritual light, the Light of Christ:

“Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne.”<sup>4</sup>

President Boyd K. Packer reinforced this truth in saying: “The Light of Christ is also described in the scriptures as ‘the Spirit of Jesus Christ.’ . . . The Spirit of Christ can enlighten the inventor, the scientist, the painter, the sculptor, the composer, the performer, the architect, the author to produce great, even inspired things for the blessing and good of all mankind.”<sup>5</sup>

Recent scientific thinking on the fundamental properties of light is indeed stunning. Today scientists even describe light as a “carrier”<sup>6</sup> or “messenger”<sup>7</sup> or “mediator.”<sup>8</sup> How profound are the doctrines of the Lord!

### Gain pure testimony

Second, gain pure testimony. This testimony is the confirmation by the Holy Ghost that God is our Father and Jesus is the Christ.<sup>9</sup> The light and truth we see in all things urge us to obtain knowledge by study and by faith, which precede the confirmation by the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> We can learn much of God’s handiwork and goodness by our physical senses. But an even deeper testimony is revealed as we spiritually seek the truth “with real intent.”<sup>11</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball said: “The treasures of both secular and spiritual knowledge are hidden ones—but hidden from those who do not properly search and strive to find them. . . . Spiritual knowledge is not available merely for the ask-

ing; even prayers are not enough. It takes persistence and dedication of one's life."<sup>12</sup>

Our testimonies are strengthened as we reverently observe the great universe God has created for us. The Lord declared to Enoch, "All things are created and made to bear record of me."<sup>13</sup> Alma bore a similar testimony to Korihor, the anti-Christ: "All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator."<sup>14</sup>

The wrestle that Enos had before the Lord demonstrates the power of his father's testimony. Enos said, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart."<sup>15</sup> Elder M. Russell Ballard said: "Clear declaration of truth makes a difference in people's lives. That is what changes hearts."<sup>16</sup>

My wife and I attended a sacrament meeting near Recife, Brazil. A young boy, possibly 9 or 10 years of age, wearing his new blue suit on a very hot day, went to the pulpit and in a very relaxed way looked at the congregation. He said, "Our family has been studying about moral agency." He then read: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil."<sup>17</sup> The boy then said, "Some of my older friends are choosing to smoke and use drugs, but we all will have to accept the consequences of our actions." He finished with his testimony, saying, "I can see that this is true." This testimony from one so young was powerful and touched our hearts deeply.

### **Live the gospel courageously**

Third, we must live courageously in accordance with the light and testimony

that we have received. We are promised, "He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."<sup>18</sup> It takes real effort and sacrifice to live the gospel courageously. For some years temple worship for the Saints who live near Manaus, Brazil, has meant traveling two days in a crowded riverboat on the Amazon River, followed by two days' travel in buses through the hot tropics to the Recife Temple. Arriving worn out and tired, they would shower, dress appropriately, and immediately begin their temple worship. After several days of service to the Lord, they would make the long, difficult journey home. The words "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"<sup>19</sup> were beautifully reflected by their sacrificing actions.

To be at peace in these wonderful yet challenging times, we must learn true doctrine, gain pure testimony, and live the truths of the gospel courageously. As we live in harmony with the light and truth taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets, we will see more clearly our eternal destiny. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:35.
2. Alma 31:5.
3. Henry B. Eyring, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 73.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:12–13.
5. Boyd K. Packer, "The Light of Christ," *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 8, 10.
6. See 2 Nephi 33:1; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:54.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:9.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:27–28.
9. See M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 41–43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 40–41.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8.
11. Moroni 10:4.

12. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 389–90.
13. Moses 6:63.
14. Alma 30:44.
15. Enos 1:3.
16. M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 41.
17. 2 Nephi 2:27.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
19. Joshua 24:15.

## Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

### One among the crowd

In the book of Luke we read of a woman who for 12 long years had suffered from a bleeding condition. She had exhausted her means in search of a medical solution but had found none. In a crowd of people, the woman approached the Savior from behind and touched the hem of His garment. Jesus wanted to know who had touched Him because He felt that power had gone out of Him. The Apostles could not understand the question and asked, “Master, the multitude throng[s] thee and press[es] thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?”<sup>1</sup> The woman then with great fear and trembling confessed that it was she who had approached Him and had been immediately healed. The Savior sent her away in peace, telling her that her faith had made her whole.

There is much to learn and ponder in this interesting little story.

I picture the crowd itself. It must have been fairly large, as people were pressing in on Jesus. It might even have been a noisy crowd, as people pushed and shoved trying to get a better look at Him. I wonder why they were there. Most, I think, came out of curiosity. Wherever He went, news of His arrival and stories of His miracles preceded Him. Perhaps they expected to see something out of the ordinary, an event not to be missed. Though not mentioned, there were likely Pharisees in the crowd, who always seemed to be close by, watching for op-

portunity to entrap, embarrass, or find something with which they could condemn Jesus. Could it be possible that some in the crowd even came to mock?

Among the crowd was a woman. I see a humble woman, perhaps even a timid woman, approaching the Savior from behind and then with embarrassment confessing that she had touched the hem of His garment. She was a woman exhausted and impoverished by her difficulties. She was desperate for help. Outwardly there was little to distinguish her from any other person in the crowd. No one tried to stop her from moving toward Jesus. Certainly the Apostles neither noticed her nor made any attempt to stop her. But there was something that set her apart from all others in the crowd that day. Though buried among the thronging mass, she resolutely and quietly pressed forward with a single purpose in mind: to come to the Savior, having faith that He had the power to heal her, that He cared about her and would respond to her need. In this one thing she set herself apart from the crowd. The crowd came to see, but the woman came to be healed.

### Examples from the Book of Mormon

There are other interesting accounts in the scriptures of one faithful person among a crowd. Alma was among the wicked priests of King Noah. These were men described as being lifted up in the pride of their hearts, lazy and idolatrous, who spoke lying and vain words to the

people.<sup>2</sup> They had perverted the ways of the Lord because they had not applied their hearts to understanding.<sup>3</sup> When Abinadi delivered his message of repentance, they mocked him and finally put him to death. This was indeed an evil crowd. Yet as the scriptures point out, “there was one among them”<sup>4</sup> who believed. Alma alone took to heart what Abinadi had taught. With courage he stepped away from the crowd to follow the Lord. The influence of this one man among the crowd on the course of Nephite history is immeasurable.

One of the most well-known crowds in the Book of Mormon is the one that occupies the great and spacious building in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. The building was filled with people, old and young, male and female, who were mocking and pointing their fingers toward those who were partaking of the fruit of the tree.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, some who had tasted of the fruit listened to the crowd and “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>6</sup> There were others, however, who partook of the fruit and paid no heed to the crowd.<sup>7</sup> These were the ones who enjoyed the full blessings of the tree of life.

In reality these stories are not about crowds but individuals among those crowds. They are really about you and me. All of us are among the crowds of this world. Almost all of us are like the woman who, despite the crowd, comes to the Savior. We all have faith that just a touch will bring healing to our aching souls and relief to our innermost needs.<sup>8</sup> New members of the Church in many lands are often like Alma. They hear the words of life when no one else in their family or circle of friends does. Yet they still have the courage to accept the gospel and chart a course through the crowds. I think each one of us understands what it means to partake of the fulfilling fruit of the tree of life within sight and sound of those who mock and what it means to exert every courageous effort to pay them no heed.

## **Withstanding the crowds of the world**

Struggling through the crowds of the world can be lonely and hard. Their pull and tug on the individual who wishes to step away to something better can be very strong and very difficult to overcome.

Who better than the Savior can reach, support, and ultimately rescue the one among the crowd? He understands what it is to persevere among a disrespectful crowd and still remain true. The worldly crowds do not recognize Him, saying that “he hath no form nor comeliness” and that “there is no beauty that we should desire him.”<sup>9</sup> King Benjamin says that the world “shall consider him a man.”<sup>10</sup> Isaiah further describes Christ’s place among the crowds of the world with these words:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”<sup>11</sup>

Nephi writes that “the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught.”<sup>12</sup>

Yet ultimately this Firstborn Son of God, who is so often misjudged and misunderstood, will emerge from being one among the crowd as the Anointed One, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. This emergence is humbly predicted in the Savior’s own statement to certain chief priests and elders that “the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”<sup>13</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that each one of us can pass safely through the crowds of this world. In all of life’s circumstances let us quietly and resolutely press forward to the Savior, having faith that He cares about us and has the power to heal and save us. Let us heed His words of life and partake fully, continually, and courageously of the fruit that comes therefrom. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Luke 8:45.
2. See Mosiah 11:5–11.
3. See Mosiah 12:25–27.
4. Mosiah 17:2.
5. See 1 Nephi 8:27.
6. 1 Nephi 8:28.
7. See 1 Nephi 8:33.
8. See Luke 4:18.
9. Isaiah 53:2.
10. Mosiah 3:9.
11. Isaiah 53:3–4.

12. 1 Nephi 19:9.
13. Matthew 21:42.

**President Uchtdorf**

Thank you, brethren.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Lance B. Wickman and Craig C. Christensen of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

**Elder Lance B. Wickman****Return to Vietnam**

Three weeks ago I stepped into Yesterday. In that moment I rediscovered Today. And it is about Today that I wish to speak.

A Church assignment had carried me across the vast reaches of the Pacific to the land of Vietnam. For me, this was more than a flight over an ocean. It was a step back in time. More than 40 years ago, I had served on the battlefields of that land as an infantry officer. Etched in my mind over those intervening decades were memories of that place, its people, and my comrades in arms with whom I had served. Jacob once wrote, “Our lives passed away like . . . unto us a dream” (Jacob 7:26). So it had been for me. And now I was returning from my hall of memories to that place of memory after a near half century. My Church business concluded, I determined to once again visit those fields of desperate struggle. Accompanied by my dear wife, I made the pilgrimage.

I am not quite sure what I expected to find after so many years. What I did find was most unexpected. Instead of a war-ravaged people, I found a youthful, vibrant population. Instead of a countryside pockmarked by shell fire, I found peaceful, verdant fields. Even the jungle growth was new. I guess that I had half expected

to find Yesterday, but what I found was Today and the promise of a bright Tomorrow. I was reminded that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

**Story of Sergeant Arthur Morris**

As I once again set foot upon the field and walked once more a jungle path, in my mind I heard again the stutter of the machine gun, the whistle of shrapnel, and the clatter of small arms. I saw again the bronzed, youthful faces of friends who “gave the last full measure of devotion” (Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address). And I thought of one in particular and one day—a single day, April 3, 1966, Palm Sunday, the Easter season—42 years ago almost to this very day.

Our infantry battalion had been in Vietnam for several months. I was a lieutenant, the leader of a rifle platoon. We were involved almost constantly in combat operations. That day dawned with our battalion deep in hostile territory. Very early we sent out a reconnaissance patrol of about 10 men. One of them was Sergeant Arthur Morris. Several of the men were wounded in a firefight, including Sergeant Morris, who received a slight flesh wound. Eventually the men of the patrol limped back to our lines.

We radioed for a medical evacuation helicopter. Loading the wounded men on the chopper, I urged Sergeant Morris also to get aboard. He demurred. Again I urged him. Again he demurred. Once again I admonished him. Once again he refused. Finally I said, "Sergeant Morris, get on that chopper."

He looked at me, his eyes earnest, pleading. "Please, sir," he said, and then these words that will forever haunt me: "*They can't kill a tough old bird like me.*"

The entire scene is etched in my mind like a battle tableau: the jungle clearing; the impatient, throbbing rotor blade of the helicopter; the pilot looking at me expectantly; and my friend begging to stay with his men. I relented. I waved away the chopper with its lifeline to Tomorrow. Before the sun had set that very day, my dear friend Sergeant Arthur Cyrus Morris lay dead upon the ground, felled by hostile fire. And echoing in my mind over and over again, I hear his exclamation, "They can't kill, they can't kill, they can't kill . . ."

Of course, in one sense he was dreadfully wrong. Mortality is so fragile. Only one heartbeat, the drawing of a single breath, separates this world from the next. One moment my friend was a vital, living person; the next, his immortal spirit had fled, leaving the mortal tabernacle a lump of lifeless clay. Death is a curtain through which each must pass, and like Sergeant Arthur Morris, none of us knows when that passage will occur. Of all the challenges we face, perhaps the greatest is a *misguided sense that mortality goes on forever* and its corollary, that we can postpone until tomorrow the seeking and offering of forgiveness, which, as the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches, are among mortality's central purposes.

### **"The day of this life"**

This profound truth is taught by Amulek in the Book of Mormon:

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold

*the day of this life* is the day for men to perform their labors.

" . . . Therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; . . .

" . . . For that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:32–34; italics added).

What a pungent expression Amulek uses—"the day of this life"! The Apostle James put it this way: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). And the person we are when we depart this life is the person we will be as we enter the next. Thankfully, we do have Today.

If Sergeant Morris was dreadfully wrong, he was also magnificently right! We really are immortal in the sense that Christ's Atonement conquers death, both physical and spiritual. And *provided* we have so lived *Today* that we have claim on the Atonement's cleansing grace, we will live forever with God. This life is not so much a time for getting and accumulating as it is a time for giving and becoming. Mortality is the battlefield upon which justice and mercy meet. But they need not meet as adversaries, for they are reconciled in the Atonement of Jesus Christ for all who wisely use Today.

### **Seeking and tendering forgiveness**

It remains only for you and me to both *seek* and *tender* that forgiveness—to both repent and to extend charity to others—which enables us to pass through the door the Savior holds open, thus to cross the threshold from this life into exaltation. *Today* is the day to forgive others their trespasses, secure in the knowledge that the Lord will thus forgive ours. As Luke significantly recorded, "*Be ye therefore merciful*" (Luke 6:36; italics added). Perfection may elude us here, but we can be



merciful. And in the end, repenting and forgiving are among God's chief requirements of us.

My pilgrimage back in time completed, I looked around upon those peaceful fields of Today and saw in their fertility the promise of Tomorrow. I thought of my friend Sergeant Arthur Cyrus Morris. I

thought of that fateful Palm Sunday of Yesterday. And I was profoundly grateful for the Redeemer of Easter morning, who grants us life, whose descent below all things makes possible our rising above all things—Tomorrow, if we but seize Today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Craig C. Christensen

### Living and written scriptures

My dear brothers and sisters, it has been a sacred privilege to join with you in sustaining President Thomas S. Monson, his counselors in the First Presidency, and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that prophets “speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

“And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, . . . and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:3–4).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have the benefit and blessing of living scripture as declared by those sustained as prophets, as well as canonized scripture found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The prophet Nephi wrote, “My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children” (2 Nephi 4:15). Written scripture, especially the Book of Mormon, brings us to believe in God and “be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:11).

### The Book of Mormon as a witness

Several months ago a friend and I had the opportunity of presenting a set of scriptures to an associate who is not a

member of the Church. Knowing that this might be a life-changing event for him—and for us—we took the time to have his name embossed on each volume. As we presented these sacred records to him, we could tell he was deeply moved by the significance and sincerity of our offering. For several minutes he examined each book without speaking, rubbing his hand on the cover and turning some of the pages.

Recognizing the importance of the moment, we helped him turn to the title page of the Book of Mormon and began to explain that the Book of Mormon was another testament, or witness, of Jesus Christ. He then asked a question that all missionary-minded members are anxious to hear: “Why do we need additional witnesses of Jesus Christ other than the Bible?” Rather than responding quickly, we asked him why he thought this might be important. His answer seemed even more inspired than his question. He suggested that since there appeared to be so many variations of the Bible and its teachings, we needed some kind of clarifying voice, something that would help us understand the Bible better. His observation opened the door for us to share our feelings and testimonies regarding both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

We began by expressing our devotion and deep conviction to the doctrines and teachings of the Bible, especially the New Testament. Being able to read many of the Savior's words as He taught the gospel



during His earthly ministry strengthens us, helps us come to know Him, and teaches us that we can become more like Him. We then declared that, like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is additional evidence that God loves all of His children and has provided a way for us to return and live with Him once again. We spent the next hour or so reviewing many aspects of the Book of Mormon, including its history and divine origin. Allow me to share a few of the things we discussed.

### **A book with a promise**

We first explained that the Book of Mormon is a book with a promise. Although its history is compelling by itself, it is a book of scriptural significance that should be received and read under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All who study and ponder its teachings are given a promise found in the last chapter of Moroni (see Moroni 10:3–4) as well as in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, where we read: “We invite all men [and women] everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost.” We then spent several minutes teaching about prayer and how the Holy Ghost can speak to our hearts and confirm that the Book of Mormon is true.

### **A book with a purpose**

Next we stated that the Book of Mormon is a book with a purpose. From the title page we read that the Book of Mormon was “written by way of commandment” and “by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation” to “come forth by the gift and power of God” to the convincing of each of us “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” In a personal expression of

this purpose, Nephi, as one of the authors of the Book of Mormon, wrote, “The fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved” (1 Nephi 6:4).

### **A book that teaches the great plan of happiness**

Additionally, we explained that the Book of Mormon is a book that teaches “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8; see also verses 5, 13, 31; 2 Nephi 9). In profound yet understandable terms, the Book of Mormon teaches the purpose of life, from whence we came, and what happens when we die. We learn of faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, of repentance, of the importance of baptism by immersion, and of the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. By studying and feasting upon the doctrines of the Book of Mormon, we gain “a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men,” with a desire to “endure to the end” that we may “have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

### **A book that testifies that Jesus is the Christ**

Most importantly, we declared that the Book of Mormon is a book that testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Great prophets throughout the Book of Mormon have borne solemn witness that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the earth (see Mosiah 3:8), the Redeemer of mankind (see Helaman 5:9–12), the Only Begotten of the Father (see 1 Nephi 11:18–21; Jacob 4:11). These Book of Mormon prophets knew Him, as Abraham and Moses did, and received and taught His everlasting gospel. As we read and study their words, we gain a deeper understanding of the Savior’s matchless love, His perfect life and example, and the blessings of His great atoning sacrifice.

### **A book that authenticates the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith**

We then testified that the Book of Mormon is tangible evidence that Joseph Smith was chosen by the hand of the Lord to restore the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth in these latter days. As stated in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, “Those who gain [a] divine witness from the Holy Spirit [of the divinity of the Book of Mormon] will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth.”

Ever since Samuel Smith set out to preach the gospel with a few first-edition copies, the Book of Mormon has blessed the lives of millions around the world. I pray that we will continue to use the Book

of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ to share the gospel message with family and friends. If we do this, as was the case with our dear friend, many will respond with great interest to know more about the life and mission of the Savior and His great plan of happiness for each of us.

I express my solemn witness that the Book of Mormon is true. It is a book that has brought about a mighty change in my life. I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His gospel has been restored to the earth. President Thomas S. Monson is His prophet and living oracle at this time. The spirit I feel as I daily read, ponder, and pray about the Book of Mormon strengthens my understanding and testimony of these things and reaffirms to me that they are true. I humbly share this testimony and my personal witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder M. Russell Ballard**

### **Daughters of God**

Brothers and sisters, recently my wife, Barbara, had back surgery and could not lift, twist, or bend. Consequently, I have done more lifting, twisting, and bending than ever before—and it has made me more appreciative of what women, and especially you mothers, do every day in our homes.

While women live in homes under many different circumstances—married, single, widowed, or divorced, some with children and some without—all are beloved of God, and He has a plan for His righteous daughters to receive the highest blessings of eternity.

This afternoon I want to focus my remarks primarily on mothers, particularly on young mothers.

### **The role of motherhood**

As a young father I learned the demanding role of motherhood. I served as a counselor and then as bishop for a period of 10 years. During that time we were blessed with six of our seven children. Barbara was often worn out by the time I got home Sunday evening. She tried to explain what it was like to sit on the back row in sacrament meeting with our young family. Then the day came that I was released. After sitting on the stand for 10 years, I was now sitting with my family on the back row.

The ward’s singing mothers’ chorus was providing the music, and I found myself sitting alone with our six children. I have never been so busy in my whole life. I had the hand puppets going on both hands, and that wasn’t working too well. The Cheerios got away from me, and that was

embarrassing. The coloring books didn't seem to entertain as well as they should.

As I struggled with the children through the meeting, I looked up at Barbara, and she was watching me and smiling. I learned for myself to more fully appreciate what all of you dear mothers do so well and so faithfully!

A generation later, as a grandfather, I have watched the sacrifices my daughters have made in rearing their children. And now, still another generation later, I am watching with awe the pressures on my granddaughters as they guide their children in this busy and demanding world.

After observing and empathizing with three generations of mothers and thinking of my own dear mother, I surely know that there is no role in life more essential and more eternal than that of motherhood.

### **The priority to nurture children**

There is *no* one perfect way to be a good mother. Each situation is unique. Each mother has different challenges, different skills and abilities, and certainly different children. The choice is different and unique for each mother and each family. Many are able to be “full-time moms,” at least during the most formative years of their children’s lives, and many others would like to be. Some may have to work part- or full-time; some may work at home; some may divide their lives into periods of home and family and work. What matters is that a mother loves her children deeply and, in keeping with the devotion she has for God and her husband, prioritizes them above all else.

I am impressed by countless mothers who have learned how important it is to focus on the things that can only be done in a particular season of life. If a child lives with parents for 18 or 19 years, that span is only one-fourth of a parent’s life. And the most formative time of all, the early years in a child’s life, represents less than one-tenth of a parent’s normal life. It is crucial to focus on our children for

the short time we have them with us and to seek, with the help of the Lord, to teach them all we can before they leave our homes. This eternally important work falls to mothers and fathers as equal partners. I am grateful that today many fathers are more involved in the lives of their children. But I believe that the instincts and the intense nurturing involvement of mothers with their children will always be a major key to their well-being. In the words of the proclamation on the family, “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

We need to remember that the full commitment of motherhood and of putting children first can be difficult. Through my own four-generation experience in our family, and through discussions with mothers of young children throughout the Church, I know something of a mother’s emotions that accompany her commitment to be at home with young children. There are moments of great joy and incredible fulfillment, but there are also moments of a sense of inadequacy, monotony, and frustration. Mothers may feel they receive little or no appreciation for the choice they have made. Sometimes even husbands seem to have no idea of the demands upon their wives.

As a Church, we have enormous respect and gratitude to you mothers of young children. We want you to be happy and successful in your families and to have the validation and support you need and deserve. So today, let me ask and briefly answer four questions. While my answers may seem extremely simple, if the simple things are being tended to, a mother’s life can be most rewarding.

### **Finding joy in motherhood**

The first question: What can *you* do, as a young mother, to reduce the pressure and enjoy your family more?

First, recognize that the joy of motherhood comes in moments. There will be hard times and frustrating times. But amid the challenges, there are shining moments of joy and satisfaction.

Author Anna Quindlen reminds us not to rush past the fleeting moments. She said:

“The biggest mistake I made [as a parent] is the one that most of us make. . . . I did not live in the moment enough. This is particularly clear now that the moment is gone, captured only in photographs. There is one picture of [my three children] sitting in the grass on a quilt in the shadow of the swing set on a summer day, ages six, four, and one. And I wish I could remember what we ate, and what we talked about, and how they sounded, and how they looked when they slept that night. I wish I had not been in such a hurry to get on to the next thing: dinner, bath, book, bed. I wish I had treasured the doing a little more and the getting it done a little less” (*Loud and Clear* [2004], 10–11).

Second, don’t overschedule yourselves or your children. We live in a world that is filled with options. If we are not careful, we will find every minute jammed with social events, classes, exercise time, book clubs, scrapbooking, Church callings, music, sports, the Internet, and our favorite TV shows. One mother told me of a time that her children had 29 scheduled commitments every week: music lessons, Scouts, dance, Little League, day camps, soccer, art, and so forth. She felt like a taxi driver. Finally she called a family meeting and announced, “Something has to go; we have no time to ourselves and no time for each other.” Families need unstructured time when relationships can deepen and real parenting can take place. Take time to listen, to laugh, and to play together.

Third, even as you try to cut out the extra commitments, sisters, find some time for yourself to cultivate your gifts and interests. Pick one or two things that

you would like to learn or do that will enrich your life, and make time for them. Water cannot be drawn from an empty well, and if you are not setting aside a little time for what replenishes you, you will have less and less to give to others, even to your children. Avoid any kind of substance abuse, mistakenly thinking that it will help you accomplish more. And don’t allow yourself to be caught up in the time-wasting, mind-numbing things like television soap operas or surfing the Internet. Turn to the Lord in faith, and you will know what to do and how to do it.

Fourth, pray, study, and teach the gospel. Pray deeply about your children and about your role as a mother. Parents can offer a unique and wonderful kind of prayer because they are praying to the Eternal Parent of us all. There is great power in a prayer that essentially says, “We are steward-parents over Thy children, Father; please help us to raise them as Thou wouldst want them raised.”

### **What husbands can do**

The second question: What more can a husband do to support his wife, the mother of their children?

First, show extra appreciation and give more validation for what your wife does every day. Notice things and say thank you—often. Schedule some evenings together, just the two of you.

Second, have a regular time to talk with your wife about each child’s needs and what you can do to help.

Third, give your wife a “day away” now and then. Just take over the household and give your wife a break from her daily responsibilities. Taking over for a while will greatly enhance your appreciation of what your wife does. You may do a lot of lifting, twisting, and bending!

Fourth, come home from work and take an active role with your family. Don’t put work, friends, or sports ahead of listening to, playing with, and teaching your children.

### **Ways children can help**

The third question: What can children, even young children, do? Now, you children, please listen to me because there are some simple things you can do to help your mother.

You can pick up your toys when you are finished playing with them, and when you get a little older, you can make your bed, help with the dishes, and do other chores—without being asked.

You can say thank you more often when you finish a nice meal, when a story is read to you at bedtime, or when clean clothes are put in your drawers.

Most of all, you can put your arms around your mother often and tell her you love her.

### **Leaders, be considerate of young mothers**

The last question: What can the Church do?

There are many things the Church offers to mothers and families, but for my purpose today may I suggest that the bishopric and the ward council members be especially watchful and considerate of the time and resource demands on young mothers and their families. Know them and be wise in what you ask them to do at this time in their lives. Alma's counsel to his son Helaman applies to us today: "Behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6).

I hope all of you dear sisters, married or single, never wonder if you have worth in the sight of the Lord and to the leaders of the Church. We love you. We respect you and appreciate your influence in preserving the family and assisting with the growth and the spiritual vitality of the Church. Let us remember that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World").

The scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and apostles help all family members to prepare together now to be together through all eternity. I pray that God will continually bless the women of the Church to find joy and happiness in their sacred roles as daughters of God.

Now, in closing, I want to add my witness of President Monson's prophetic call. I have known him since he was 22 and I was 21. That's 58 years. I have watched the hand of the Lord prepare him for this day to preside over the Church as the prophet and President. And I add my testimony, along with all of the other testimonies that have been borne through this conference, of his special calling as President of the Church and add my testimony, along with all of the others, that Jesus is the Christ and this is His Church. We are doing His work, to which I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Uchtdorf**

Thank you, brethren.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, and the priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "God Bless Our Prophet Dear." After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Thomas S. Monson

I've been attending conference for a long time, but I think I've never felt quite as richly blessed as during this session. We've had rapid-fire messages from a lot of speakers, but every one touched on a very important subject. We've had a smorgasbord today of faith, of love, and of counsel. Let's incorporate these things in our lives.

Brother Ballard, several years ago my dear wife went to the hospital. She left a note behind for the children: "Dear children, do not let Daddy touch the microwave"—followed by a comma, "or the stove, or the dishwasher, or the dryer." I'm embarrassed to add any more to that list.

### Legacy of missionary work

I think it was Brother Uchtdorf who said, "You told the audience today about your heritage on your mother's side. What about your father's side?" So I conclude with just a word or two about my father's side.

My father's father came from Sweden, and his wife from England. They met on the ship coming over. He waited for her to grow up, and then he proposed marriage. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple, and he wrote in his journal, "Today is the happiest day of my life. My sweetheart and I were married for time and eternity in the holy temple."

Three days later, on April 23, 1898, he wrote, "Took the train at the Rio Grande Western Depot enroute eventually to Scandinavia, where I have been called as a missionary." Off he went to Sweden, leaving his bride of three days.

His journal, written in pencil, came to me from an uncle who somehow chose me to receive his father's journal. The most frequent entry in the journal was, "My feet are wet." But the most beautiful entry said: "Today we went to the Jansson home. We met Sister Jansson. She

had a lovely dinner for us. She is a good cook." And then he said, "The children all sang or played a harmonica or did a little dance, and then she paid her tithing. Five krona for the Lord and one for my companion, Elder Ipson, and one for me." And then there were listed the names of the children.

When I read that in the journal, there was my wife's father's name as one who was in that household, one who probably sang a song, one who became the father of only one daughter, the girl whom I married.

The first day I saw Frances, I knew I'd found the right one. The Lord brought us together later, and I asked her to go out with me. I went to her home to call on her. She introduced me, and her father said, "'Monson'—that's a Swedish name, isn't it?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Good."

Then he went into another room and brought out a picture of two missionaries with their top hats and their copies of the Book of Mormon.

"Are you related to this Monson," he said, "Elias Monson?"

I said, "Yes, he's my grandfather's brother. He too was a missionary in Sweden."

Her father wept. He wept easily. He said, "He and his companion were the missionaries who taught the gospel to my mother and my father and all of my brothers and sisters and to me." He kissed me on the cheek. And then her mother cried, and she kissed me on the other cheek. And then I looked around for Frances. She said, "I'll go get my coat."

### Sister Monson's accident

My sweet Frances had a terrible fall a few years ago. She went to the hospital. She lay in a coma for about 18 days. I sat

by her side. She never moved a muscle. The children cried, the grandchildren cried, and I wept. Not a movement.

And then one day she opened her eyes. I set a speed record in getting to her side. I gave her a kiss and a hug, and I said, "You're back. I love you." And she said, "I love you too, Tom, but we're in serious trouble." I thought, What do you know about trouble, Frances? She said, "I forgot to mail in our fourth-quarter income tax payment."

I said to her, "Frances, if you had said that before you extended a kiss to me and told me you love me, I might have left you here."

Brethren, let's treat our wives with dignity and with respect. They're our eternal companions. Sisters, honor your husbands. They need to hear a good word. They need a friendly smile. They need a warm expression of true love.

### **Abundantly blessed**

Leaving my own family for a moment, my brothers and sisters, this has been a wonderful conference. We have been edified by wise and inspired messages. Our testimonies have been strengthened. I believe we are all the more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not only have we been blessed by the fine talks which have been given; we have also been uplifted by the beautiful music which has been provided. We are abundantly blessed in the Church by those who share their musical talents with us. Every choir and chorus has performed so well during the past two days.

I express my great love for all those who have participated and to all of you who have listened. I have felt your prayers in my behalf and have been sustained and blessed during the two months since our beloved President Hinckley left us. Once again, I appreciate your sustaining vote.

I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days and for what that has meant in my life. Each of us has been influenced and shaped as we have followed the Savior and have adhered to the principles of His gospel.

### **Counsel to members**

To you who are parents, I say, show love to your children. You know you love them, but make certain they know it as well. They are so precious. Let them know. Call upon our Heavenly Father for help as you care for their needs each day and as you deal with the challenges which inevitably come with parenthood. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them.

We commend our wonderful young people who stand up to the iniquity in the world and who live the commandments to the best of their ability.

To you who are able to attend the temple, I would counsel you to go often. Doing so will help to strengthen marriages and families.

Let us be kind to one another, be aware of each other's needs, and try to help in that regard.

My dear brothers and sisters, I love you, and I pray for you. Please pray for me. And together we will reap the blessings our Heavenly Father has in store for each one of us. This is my prayer, my plea as I add my testimony. This work is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "God Bless Our Prophet Dear."

Elder Bruce C. Hafen offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes provided music for

the priesthood session. J. Nyles Salmond, Lynn Hopkins, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**Elder F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-eighth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 4 and 5, 2008**



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of the  
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# Report of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 2008, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, 2008. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 4, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday morning, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Saturday afternoon session, and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, and Jay E. Jensen

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zeballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, Kent D. Watson, and Robert S. Wood

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My brothers and sisters, as we begin this first general session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we extend a special welcome to members and friends throughout the world as you participate with us in the proceedings of this conference.

We acknowledge with appreciation the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies who are in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities

as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “High on the Mountain Top” and will now favor us with “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Shayne M. Bowen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.” Elder Shayne M. Bowen offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you. It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir will sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Sister Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy will then speak to us.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### **Temple dedications and cultural events**

My dear brothers and sisters, the past six months since last we met seem to have flown by. Much has transpired as the work of the Lord has moved forward uninterrupted.

It has been my privilege, accompanied by my counselors and by other General Authorities, to dedicate three new

temples: in Curitiba, Brazil; in Panama City, Panama; and in Twin Falls, Idaho—bringing to 128 the number of temples in operation throughout the world.

The evening before each of the temple dedications took place, magnificent cultural events were held. In Curitiba, Brazil, 4,330 members from the temple district, supported by a choir of 1,700

voices, presented a most inspirational program through song, dance, and video. The enormous soccer stadium where the event took place was filled with spectators. The wind had been blowing, and rain threatened. I offered a silent prayer asking Heavenly Father to look with mercy upon those who had prepared so diligently for our entertainment and whose costumes and presentations would be damaged if a heavy rain or wind enveloped them. He honored that prayer, and it wasn't until the end of the show and later on that evening that rain fell in abundance.

A history of the Church in Brazil was portrayed in song and dance. A particularly moving scene was the portrayal of Elders James E. Faust and William Grant Bangerter, who served as missionaries in Curitiba in 1940. As their photos were displayed on large screens, a tremendous cheer went up from the audience. All in all, it was a glorious event.

In Panama City, Panama, the evening before the dedication of the temple there, we watched some 900 of our youth who were gathered from across Panama. They were dressed in colorful folkloric costumes as they danced and presented messages of family, fellowship, and faith. We learned that they had been practicing for a year. They came from points as distant as the San Blas Islands and the Changuinola region in northeast Panama. The trip to the capital city for the San Blas youth exacted three days of travel over land and sea. The event was magnificent and inspiring.

In preparation for our most recent temple dedication, in Twin Falls, Idaho, local Church members constructed a huge stage at the Filer, Idaho, fairgrounds and filled the dirt arena with sod and other decorations, including a large waterfall to represent Shoshone Falls, a popular landmark located two miles from the new temple. The evening of the performance, 3,200 young men and young women entered the arena waving blue and white ribbons, turning the arena into a representation of a

great river of flowing water. Titled "Living Water," from John 4:10, 14, the celebration brought together youth from 14 stakes in the new temple district. They depicted through song and dance both their dependence for their spiritual lives on the living water from the Savior and their dependence for their physical lives on the mountain streams and rivers in their area. Those of us privileged to witness this event were uplifted and edified.

I am an advocate for such events. They enable our youth to participate in something they truly find unforgettable. The friendships they form and the memories they make will be theirs forever.

Next month the Mexico City Mexico Temple will be rededicated following extensive renovations. In the coming months, the construction of other temples will be completed, and open houses and dedications will take place.

### **Announcement of new temples**

This morning I am pleased to announce five new temples for which sites have been acquired and which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Córdoba, Argentina; the greater Kansas City area; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Rome, Italy.

### **Expanding missionary work**

Brothers and sisters, our missionary force, serving throughout the world, continues to seek out those who are searching for the truths which are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church is steadily growing; it has since its organization over 178 years ago.

It has been my privilege during the past six months to meet with leaders of countries and with representatives of governments. Those with whom I've met feel kindly toward the Church and our members, and they have been cooperative and

accommodating. There remain, however, areas of the world where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely. As did President Spencer W. Kimball over 32 years ago, I urge you to pray for the opening of those areas, that we might share with them the joy of the gospel. As we prayed then in response to President Kimball's pleadings, we saw miracles unfold as country after country, formerly closed to the Church, was opened. Such will transpire again as we pray with faith.

### **Conference messages will inspire**

Now, my brothers and sisters, we have come here to be instructed and inspired. Some of you are new in the Church. We welcome you. Some of you are struggling

with problems, with challenges, with disappointments, with losses. We love you and pray for you. Many messages will be shared during the next two days. I can assure you that those men and women who will speak to you have prayed about what they should say. They have been inspired and impressed as they have sought heaven's help and direction.

Our Heavenly Father is mindful of each one of us and our needs. May we be filled with His Spirit as we partake of the proceedings of this, the 178th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. This is my sincere prayer, and I offer it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

---

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

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## **Elder L. Tom Perry**

### **Faith that the best is yet to come**

Those of us who have been around a while—and Elder Wirthlin and I have been around for a long time—have recognized certain patterns in life's test. There are cycles of good and bad times, ups and downs, periods of joy and sadness, and times of plenty as well as scarcity. When our lives turn in an unanticipated and undesirable direction, sometimes we experience stress and anxiety. One of the challenges of this mortal experience is to not allow the stresses and strains of life to get the better of us—to endure the varied seasons of life while remaining positive, even optimistic. Perhaps when difficulties and challenges strike, we should have these hopeful words of Robert Browning etched in our minds: "The best is yet to be" ("Rabbi Ben Ezra," in Charles W. Eliot, ed., *The Harvard Classics*, 50 vols. [1909–10], 42:1103). We can't predict all the struggles and storms in life, not even the ones just around the next corner, but

as persons of faith and hope, we know beyond the shadow of any doubt that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true and the best is yet to come.

### **Simplifying overly complex lives**

I remember a particular period of my life when I was under unusual stress. There were troubles with my employment, and at the same time my wife was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. This was one of those times when it felt like the adversary had mounted a frontal assault against me and my family. On days when the stresses and anxieties of our tumultuous life were about to get the best of us, my wife and I found a way to relieve them.

We drove to a place just a few miles from our home to get away for a few moments of relief from our troubles, talk, and give emotional comfort to each other. Our place was Walden Pond. It was a beautiful little pond surrounded by forests of trees.

When my wife was feeling strong enough, we'd go for a walk around the pond. Other days, when she did not feel up to the exertion of walking, we'd just sit in the car and talk. Walden Pond was our special place to pause, reflect, and heal. Perhaps it was partly due to its history—its connection to the efforts of Henry David Thoreau to separate himself from worldliness for a period of years—that Walden Pond offered us so much hope for simplicity and provided such a renewing escape from our overly complex lives.

### **Thoreau's simplified life at Walden Pond**

It was in March of 1845 that Thoreau decided to move out on the banks of Walden Pond and spend two years trying to figure out what life was all about. He settled on a piece of property owned by his good friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. He purchased an old shanty from a railroad worker and tore it down. From the lumber from the shanty and the lumber from the woods, he constructed his own cabin. He kept meticulous financial records, and he concluded that for a home and freedom he spent a mere \$28.12. He planted a garden, where he sowed peas, potatoes, corn, beans, and turnips to help sustain his simple life. He planted two and a half acres of beans with the intent of using the small profit to cover his needs. Small profit indeed: \$8.71.

Thoreau lived quite independent of time. He had neither a clock nor a calendar in his little cabin. He spent his time writing and studying the beauties and wonder of nature that surrounded him, including local plants, birds, and animals. He did not live the life of a hermit—he visited the town of Concord most days, and he invited others to come into his cabin for enlightening conversations.

When the two years ended, he left his cabin behind without regret. He considered the time he had spent there a proper amount of time to accomplish his purpose—to experience the spiritual benefits

of a simplified lifestyle. He also felt he had other life experiences ahead of him. It was time to move on and explore other opportunities.

### **Four basic needs of life**

From his experiences at Walden Pond, Thoreau determined that there were only four things a man really needed: food, clothing, shelter, and fuel. I would like to expand on each of these four basic needs of life, as well as the spiritual benefits of a simplified lifestyle.

#### *The Lord's law of health*

*The first requirement is food.* As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we possess sacred knowledge from revealed truth about the relationship between the body and the spirit. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15 states, "The spirit and the body are the soul of man." To bless us both physically and spiritually, the Lord also revealed to us a law of health, telling us which foods and substances are good for the body and which are not. With these instructions comes the promise found in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (verses 18–21).

There is no better counsel concerning the Word of Wisdom than that found in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*. It states:

"The Lord has commanded you to take good care of your body. To do this,

observe the Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants 89. Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. When you do all these things, you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“Any drug, chemical, or dangerous practice that is used to produce a sensation or ‘high’ can destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. These include hard drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications that are abused, and household chemicals” ([2001], 36–37).

We do not want to harm our mortal bodies, for they are a gift from God, and part of our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness is the reuniting of our immortal bodies with our spirits.

### *Simple, modest clothing*

*Another basic necessity is our clothing.* A simplified life that brings spiritual blessings requires the wearing of simple and modest clothing. Our dress and grooming send a message to others about who we are, and they also affect the way we act around others. When we are modestly dressed, we also invite the Spirit of the Lord to be a shield and a protection to us.

Worldly trends in women’s fashion are always inviting extremes. With their latest styles, many fashion designers appear to be trying to make two or three dresses out of the amount of fabric necessary for one. Mostly, they are taking too much off the top and too much off the bottom of women’s clothing, and occasionally they scrimp in the middle too. Men’s fashions are also adopting extreme styles. In my day they would be called sloppy and inappropriate. I believe very casual dress is almost always followed by very casual manners.

Many of you are trying too hard to be unique in your dress and grooming to attract what the Lord would consider the

wrong kind of attention. In the Book of Mormon story of the tree of life, it was the people whose “manner of dress was exceedingly fine” who mocked those who partook of the fruit of the tree. It is sobering to realize that the fashion-conscious mockers in the great and spacious building were responsible for embarrassing many, and those who were ashamed “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:27–28).

President N. Eldon Tanner once cautioned us with these words: “Modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one’s fellowmen, and the Creator of us all. Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency, and propriety. Consistent with these principles and guided by the Holy Spirit, let parents, teachers, and youth discuss the particulars of dress, grooming, and personal appearance, and with free agency accept responsibility and choose the right” (“Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, June 1971, 3).

### *Housing that is within our income*

*Now let us turn to Thoreau’s third requirement—that of shelter.* Newspapers are filled with reports of the current housing crisis. We have been encouraged at almost every general conference of the Church I can remember not to live beyond our means. Our income should determine the kind of housing we can afford, not the neighbor’s big home across the street.

President Heber J. Grant once said, “From my earliest recollections, from the days of Brigham Young until now, I have listened to men standing in the pulpit . . . urging the people not to run into debt; and I believe that the great majority of all our troubles today is caused through the failure to carry out that counsel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 3).

One of the better ways to simplify our lives is to follow the counsel we have so often received to live within our income, stay out of debt, and save for a rainy day.

We should practice and increase our habits of thrift, industry, economy, and frugality. Members of a well-managed family do not pay interest; they earn it.

### *Spiritual fuel*

*Thoreau's final necessity was fuel.* We have been hearing a lot about fuel and energy—about their high cost and limited supply, our unsafe and unpredictable dependence on their suppliers, and the need for new and sustainable sources of energy. I leave the discussion of these complicated issues to leaders of government and industry. The fuel I want to discuss is spiritual fuel.

The Lord has given us a beautiful plan about how we can return to Him, but the completion of our mortal journey requires spiritual fuel. We want to emulate the five wise virgins, who had stored sufficient fuel to accompany the bridegroom when he came (see Matthew 25:6–10). What is required to maintain a sufficient store of spiritual fuel? We must acquire knowledge of God's eternal plan and our role in it, and then, by living righteously, surrendering our will to the will of the Lord, we receive the promised blessings.

As Elder William R. Bradford taught at this pulpit: "In righteousness there is

great simplicity. In every case that confronts us in life, there is either a right way or a wrong way to proceed. If we choose the right way, we are sustained in our actions by the principles of righteousness, in the which there is power from the heavens. If we choose the wrong way and act on that choice, there is no such heavenly promise or power, and we are alone and are destined to fail" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 109; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 85).

### **Seek to simplify our lives**

Just before Thoreau died, he was asked if he had made peace with God. He replied, "I was not aware we had ever quarreled" (in Mardy Grothe, comp., *Viva la Repartee* [2005], 181).

In our search to obtain relief from the stresses of life, may we earnestly seek ways to simplify our lives. May we comply with the inspired counsel and direction the Lord has given us in the great plan of happiness. May we be worthy to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost and follow the guidance of the Spirit as we navigate this mortal journey. May we prepare ourselves to accomplish the ultimate purpose of this mortal test—to return and live with our Heavenly Father—is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Silvia H. Allred

### **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations**

The Lord taught that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> Baptism is, therefore, essential for our salvation.

Before the resurrected Savior ascended to heaven, He instructed His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the Restoration, He repeated His mandate: "Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people."<sup>3</sup>

The Lord's Church has the responsibility to preach the gospel in the world. This is the foundation of missionary work, and the duty of our missionaries is to "invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through



faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”<sup>4</sup>

I would like to speak and testify of the significant impact and the blessings of missionary work in the lives of converts, future generations, and missionaries and of how we can participate in missionary work.

### **Conversion story**

When I was 14 years old, on a beautiful August morning, Elder Prina and Elder Perkins knocked at our door. They began teaching our family about the true nature of God. In the visits that followed, they taught us how to pray. They also taught us about the Restoration and the plan of salvation. After the third or fourth visit, most of my family stopped listening to the missionaries, except for my 17-year-old sister, Dina, and me. We both felt the witness of the Holy Ghost in our hearts and received the spiritual confirmation that the message was true.

We bought a copy of the Book of Mormon and began reading it. Every day after school, we would race home to get to the book first. While the first one home was reading, the other one impatiently waited until mealtime, ate in a hurry, and then took her turn reading until bedtime. Such was the excitement we felt. We began attending church, and soon we asked to be baptized. Our father readily gave his permission, but our mother was hesitant, and it took one more month to persuade her to sign the permission slip. On the day of our baptism, she and the rest of our siblings went to church for the first time. She felt the Spirit. After hearing our testimonies, she went to the missionaries and asked them to start teaching her again. A few weeks later, Mother and our younger sister and brothers were baptized. My life changed forever, and the gospel of Jesus Christ became the compelling force in my life.

### **Blessings of missionary service**

Words fail to express the deep feelings of gratitude for the Lord and the missionaries He sent to our home. The Lord blessed me with the knowledge of the restored gospel, and I felt an urgency to share this knowledge with others. I wanted to be a missionary.

Within months, my sister Dina and I were called as local missionaries in San Salvador. This calling gave us the opportunity to go door to door to share the glad news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and bring many people to the waters of baptism. In due time, we both served full-time missions in the Central America Mission.

My mission had a great impact on my life. I learned to rely more on the Lord, to seek the guidance of the Spirit, and to feel an overwhelming love for God’s children. My knowledge of the scriptures and my understanding of the doctrines increased. So did my desire to be obedient and to keep the commandments with exactness. My testimony of the Savior and His infinite Atonement was strengthened. My missionary experiences became part of who and what I am. Missionary work became my passion. It has impacted my life and that of my family more than anything else.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland describes the impact his mission has had in his life with these words: “My mission means everything to me 47 years after the fact. There may have been one day in those 47 years that I have not thought of my mission; I’m just not sure what day that would have been.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Far-reaching impact of missionaries’ work**

A couple of years ago my grandson Christian was turning eight and planning his baptismal service with great anticipation. He asked his mother if I could be one of the speakers and share my conversion



story. When I asked him why he wanted me to do that, he replied, “Grandma, that is so important. Do you realize that if you hadn’t accepted the gospel, I wouldn’t be getting baptized? I wouldn’t even be who I am.”

I don’t know if missionaries realize the far-reaching impact of their work. In my own family, the blessings of the gospel have now touched four generations. Didn’t President Gordon B. Hinckley say that “when we save a girl, we save generations”?<sup>6</sup> I got married in the temple and have eight children. They are all faithful members of the Church, endowed in the temple. Six of them are now married and have their own children. At present there are 34 of us. And that is not all. Both my husband and I served missions, and our two sons and three of our six daughters have also served missions. Collectively we have helped hundreds embrace the gospel in many countries. Some of those converts and their children have also served missions.

Missionary work is the lifeblood of the Church. There is no greater work, no more important work. It blesses the lives of all those who participate in it. It will continue blessing future generations.

### **How to assist in missionary work**

You might be asking yourself: How can I assist in missionary work? In what ways can I participate? There are two fundamental truths to keep in mind as you embark on the work. First, have a clear understanding that God loves all His children and desires their salvation. In Doctrine and Covenants 18:13 we read, “And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth.” Second, our message of Christ and His restored gospel is the most important gift you have to give.

As outlined in *Preach My Gospel*, missionary work is a four-fold endeavor: finding investigators, teaching and baptizing, fellowshiping new members, and

fellowshipping and teaching less-active members.<sup>7</sup> Every member of the Church—children, youth, and adults—can assist in any or all of these efforts.

Begin by being a good neighbor and a good friend. Set an example of righteousness and kindness. Let your smile radiate love, peace, and happiness. Live a gospel-centered life.

Then, be more specific in your missionary efforts. Let me suggest some ideas. You might find two or three that work for you:

- If you have children at home, help prepare them for missionary service.
- Prepare yourself for missionary service.
- Invite family and friends to listen to the missionaries or to attend Church meetings and activities.
- Accompany the missionaries to investigators’ homes, or invite the missionaries to teach nonmembers in your home.
- Invite people to a family home evening in your home.
- Invite people to a family history center, or help them do family history research.
- Give referrals to the missionaries. Members can be the greatest and best source of referrals.
- Share your beliefs and testimony with nonmember friends and family.
- Seek for opportunities to reach out to others.
- Extend friendship to investigators and new converts.
- Give your best efforts to finding those who are seeking the truth.
- If you have family members or friends on missions, send them letters of love and encouragement, and pray for them.

You will experience joy in the fruits of your labor. A greater enthusiasm for missionary work will strengthen your entire ward or branch. The whole Church will feel the effects of your labor.

## We can all participate

When our daughter Margie was in the second grade, she invited her best friend to go with her to Primary. Both were assigned parts for the sacrament meeting presentation. Her friend's father had rejected the missionaries in the past, but when Margie showed up in his house with a handful of Church pamphlets, he listened carefully to her simple explanations and testimony of Joseph Smith and the First Vision. He not only allowed his daughter to continue going to Primary but also gave her permission to receive the lessons from the missionaries and be baptized. He and his wife attended the baptismal service.

We can all participate in missionary work. This is the Lord's work, and He will help us do it. His gospel has to go to every

nation, and we can be instruments in His hands to bless the lives of others by sharing with them His truth. We will be greatly blessed in the process.

We are the children of a loving Heavenly Father. He sent His Son to open the way so we can live with Him forever. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. John 3:5.
2. Matthew 28:19–20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:14.
4. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 1.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Atonement" (seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2007), 1.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 10.
7. See *Preach My Gospel*, 219.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### You know enough

I rejoice with you in being members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As President Monson shared the wonderful news of five new temples, I thought how across the world, on every continent, in large cities and in small villages, we are a great family of believers. Together, we have begun our march toward eternal life. It is the journey of journeys. We go forward, taking upon us "the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end."<sup>1</sup>

While there are many experiences like the one we are having today, full of spiritual power and confirmation, there are also days when we feel inadequate and unprepared, when doubt and confusion enter our spirits, when we have difficulty finding our spiritual footing. Part of our victory as disciples of Christ is what we do when these feelings come.

Nearly 40 years ago as I contemplated the challenge of a mission, I felt very in-

adequate and unprepared. I remember praying, "Heavenly Father, how can I serve a mission when I know so little?" I believed in the Church, but I felt my spiritual knowledge was very limited. As I prayed, the feeling came: "You don't know everything, but you know enough!" That reassurance gave me the courage to take the next step into the mission field.

### Conversion comes line upon line

Our spiritual journey is the process of a lifetime. We do not know everything in the beginning or even along the way. Our conversion comes step by step, line upon line. We first build a foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We treasure the principles and ordinances of repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. We include a continuing commitment to prayer, a willingness to be obedient, and an ongoing witness of the Book of Mormon. (The Book of Mormon is powerful spiritual nourishment.)

We then remain steady and patient as we progress through mortality. At times the Lord's answer will be, "You don't know everything, but you know enough"—enough to keep the commandments and to do what is right. Remember Nephi's words: "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things."<sup>2</sup>

### **Prepare spiritual home storage**

I once visited a mission in southern Europe. I arrived on the day a new missionary was preparing to return home at his own insistence. He had his ticket to leave the next day.

We sat together in the mission president's home. The missionary told me about his challenging childhood, of learning disorders, of moving from one family to another. He spoke sincerely of his inability to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. Then he added, "Brother Andersen, I don't even know if God loves me." As he said those words, I felt a sure and forceful feeling come into my spirit: "He does know I love him. He knows it."

I let him continue for a few more minutes, and then I said, "Elder, I'm sympathetic to much of what you've said, but I must correct you on one thing: you do know God loves you. You know He does."

As I said those words to him, the same Spirit that had spoken to me spoke to him. He bowed his head and began to cry. He apologized. "Brother Andersen," he said, "I do know God loves me; I do know it." He didn't know everything, but he knew enough. He knew God loved him. That priceless piece of spiritual knowledge was sufficient for his doubt to be replaced with faith. He found the strength to stay on his mission.

Brothers and sisters, we each have moments of spiritual power, moments of inspiration and revelation. We must sink them deep into the chambers of our souls. As we do, we prepare our spiritual home storage for moments of personal difficulty.

Jesus said, "Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you."<sup>3</sup>

### **Faith is a decision, not just a feeling**

Several years ago a friend of mine had a young daughter die in a tragic accident. Hopes and dreams were shattered. My friend felt unbearable sorrow. He began to question what he had been taught and what he had taught as a missionary. The mother of my friend wrote me a letter and asked if I would give him a blessing. As I laid my hands upon his head, I felt to tell him something that I had not thought about in exactly the same way before. The impression that came to me was: Faith is not only a feeling; it is a decision. He would need to choose faith.

My friend did not know everything, but he knew enough. He chose the road of faith and obedience. He got on his knees. His spiritual balance returned.

It has been several years since that event. A short time ago I received a letter from his son who is now serving a mission. It was full of conviction and testimony. As I read his beautiful letter, I saw how a father's choice of faith in a very difficult time had deeply blessed the next generation.

### **Choose the road of faith**

Challenges, difficulties, questions, doubts—these are part of our mortality. But we are not alone. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have enormous spiritual reservoirs of light and truth available to us. Fear and faith cannot coexist in our hearts at the same time. In our days of difficulty, we choose the road of faith. Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe."<sup>4</sup>

Through the years we take these important spiritual steps over and over again. We begin to see that "he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."<sup>5</sup> Our

questions and doubts are resolved or become less concerning to us. Our faith becomes simple and pure. We come to know what we already knew.

### **Hadley knew enough**

Jesus said, “Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>6</sup>

Hadley Peay is now seven years old. Hadley was born with a very serious hearing impairment requiring extensive surgery to bring even limited hearing. Her parents followed with tireless training to help her learn to speak. Hadley and her family have cheerfully adapted to the challenge of her deafness.

Once, when Hadley was four, she was standing in the checkout line at the grocery store with her mother. She looked behind her and saw a little boy sitting in a wheelchair. She noticed that the boy did not have legs.

Although Hadley had learned to speak, she had difficulty controlling the volume of her voice. In her louder voice, she asked her mother why the little boy did not have legs.

Her mother quietly and simply explained to Hadley that “Heavenly Father makes all of His children different.” “OK,” Hadley replied.

Then, unexpectedly, Hadley turned to the little boy and said, “Did you know that when Heavenly Father made me, my ears did not work? That makes me special. He made you with no legs, and that

makes you special. When Jesus comes, I will be able to hear and you will get your legs. Jesus will make everything all right.”

“Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Hadley knew enough.

Jesus is the Christ. He is resurrected. He is our Savior and Redeemer. All will be made well when He comes again. This is His holy work. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, His priesthood was restored upon the earth, and His prophet today is President Thomas S. Monson. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Moroni 6:3.
2. 1 Nephi 11:17.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
4. Mark 5:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
6. Matthew 18:3.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Do What Is Right.”

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## **Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis**

### **Story of father’s baptism**

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. I feel a profound joy and honor in speaking to you today. I pray that God may guide my words and that His Spirit may be with us so that “he that preacheth

and he that receiveth, [may] understand one another, and both [may be] edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

I consider June 2, 1940, to be a very important day in the history of my family. On this day my father was baptized into this Church.

Writing to his father, Elder Jack McDonald, one of the missionaries who baptized my father, described the day with these words:

“Last Sunday was an especially beautiful day. We missionaries went out to a secluded spot on the river’s edge, out in the country, and there Elder Jones and I [Elder McDonald] made our first baptism. Antony Aidukaitis entered into the icy waters and became a member of the Church. . . . Everything was perfect. The sky so blue, the countryside so still, so green, so lovely that none of us could help feeling the presence of some great influence.

“[As we walked] with our new member, he said that he just couldn’t explain how wonderful this day had been for him, how he actually felt like a new man. . . . That was our first baptism—no credit to me or anybody. He converted himself.”

This event changed the history of my life. I am not sure my father was able to foresee the wisdom of his act, but I love him for what he did that day. He passed away more than 30 years ago, but I will honor and bless his name forever.

### **Father’s courage to be baptized**

My father was the son of Lithuanians, but he was born in Scotland. He moved to Brazil when he was still young. His ability to speak English facilitated his conversion, since he could read the Book of Mormon in English and there was not yet a reliable translation into Portuguese. This language barrier prevented my mother from joining the Church until a few years later, but when she did, she became a powerful example of dedication to others and love of God in our family. She is now 92 years old, and she is here today. It gives me great joy to say that I love her for her great faithfulness. I will also honor and bless her name forever.

I admire the courage my father had to be baptized into the Church in spite of the circumstances he faced at the time. It was

not easy for him. His wife did not get baptized with him. The vices of drinking alcohol and smoking were strong temptations for him. He was poor. His mother was against his joining the Church, and she told him that if he were baptized, she would no longer consider him her son. With fewer than 300 members in Brazil, the Church did not have a single chapel there. I am truly astonished by my father’s determination and courage.

### **Promises regarding the Book of Mormon**

How could my father make such a decision in the face of so many unfavorable circumstances? The answer is simple: it was because my father read the Book of Mormon. When he read it, he came to know of the truthfulness of the message of the Restoration. The Book of Mormon is a proof that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. *Preach My Gospel* teaches that “the Book of Mormon, combined with the Spirit, is [the] most powerful resource in conversion” ([2004], 104).

President Gordon B. Hinckley declared:

“Those who have read [the Book of Mormon] prayerfully, be they rich or poor, learned or unlearned, have grown under its power. . . .

“. . . Without reservation I promise you that if you will prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, regardless of how many times you previously have read it, there will come into your hearts . . . the Spirit of the Lord. There will come a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to his commandments, and there will come a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (“The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, June 1988, 6).

These promises came true for my father and for my family. In accordance with what we have been taught, we read the scriptures as a family every day. We have done so for many years. We have read the Book of Mormon several times

in our home, and we will continue to do so. As promised, the Spirit of the Lord has come into the heart of our family, and we have felt a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.

### **Knowledge from the Book of Mormon**

When you know that the Book of Mormon is true, you know that Joseph Smith was called by God to restore the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. You know that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. You know that there is only one faith and one valid baptism. You know that a prophet of God lives on the earth today and that he has all the keys of the priesthood and the right to exercise them, as Peter did anciently. You know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the only name whereby you can receive salvation. You know that God the Father lives and that He loves us. You know that His plan of salvation is perfect, and you have the desire to perform ordinances, live the commandments, and endure to the end.

I feel sad when someone who has been given the Book of Mormon and had these things explained to him still refuses to read it. I feel sad that some people allow themselves to be influenced by others, refuse to investigate the book, and set it aside as something without worth, never participating in the spiritual banquet it offers. To me, this is incomprehensible. It is as if a son or a daughter, separated from a loving father, refused to read a letter from him without even opening the envelope. Those who make such a choice are like spoiled children who refuse to even taste the meal tenderly prepared for them by their loving mother.

### **How to learn truth**

God reveals His truth when people follow Moroni's exhortation in Moroni

10:3–5. *Preach My Gospel* summarizes Moroni's instructions as follows:

- One, "read the Book of Mormon and ponder its message concerning Jesus Christ."
- Two, "pray to God with faith in Jesus Christ to receive a testimony that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration."
- Three, "pray sincerely and have real intent, which means that they intend to act on the answer they receive from God" (111).

To those who may argue that we cannot know these things, I testify that we can, when we are humble enough to do as God has instructed us through His prophets on this earth. To believe otherwise would be to accept the absurd notion that God also does not know where truth can be found or does not have the power to show it to us. Just because someone has not acted on the promise of this book does not mean that others have not done so.

### **Invitation and testimony**

Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because my father read and acted on the promise of the Book of Mormon. Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because he did not recoil from the answer he received, even while facing great challenges. Why do I love and honor the name of my father? Because he blessed my life, even before I was born, by having the courage to do what God expected him to do.

I invite all who hear me today to read the Book of Mormon and to apply the promise it contains. Those who do will know that the book is true.

I bear my testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Because of this, I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that he did not write the Book of Mormon but translated it by the power of God. I know that Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God on the earth



today, the only man on the earth who holds all the keys of the priesthood and has the right to exercise them. I know that

Jesus Christ is our Savior and that He lives. I know that God lives and loves us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### The great promise of the sacrament

We live in the perilous times prophesied by the Apostle Paul (see 2 Timothy 3:1). Those who try to walk the straight and narrow path see inviting detours on every hand. We can be distracted, degraded, downhearted, or depressed. How can we have the Spirit of the Lord to guide our choices and keep us on the path?

In modern revelation the Lord gave the answer in this commandment:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:9–10).

This is a commandment with a promise. By participating weekly and appropriately in the ordinance of the sacrament, we qualify for the promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). That Spirit is the foundation of our testimony. It testifies of the Father and the Son, brings all things to our remembrance, and leads us into truth. It is the compass to guide us on our path. This gift of the Holy Ghost, President Wilford Woodruff taught, “is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon man” (*Deseret Weekly*, Apr. 6, 1889, 451).

### The significance of sacrament meeting

The ordinance of the sacrament makes sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church. It is the only Sabbath meeting the entire family can attend together. Its content in addition to

the sacrament should always be planned and presented to focus our attention on the Atonement and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My first memories of sacrament meeting are set in the small Utah town where I was ordained a deacon and participated in passing the sacrament. Measured against those memories, the sacrament meetings I now attend in many different wards are greatly improved. Typically the sacrament is administered, passed, and received by the members in an atmosphere of quiet reverence. The conducting of the meeting, including the necessary business, is brief and dignified, and the talks are spiritual in content and delivery. The music is appropriate, and so are the prayers. This is the standard, and it represents great progress since the experiences of my youth.

There are occasional exceptions. I sense that some in the rising generation and even some adults have not yet come to understand the significance of this meeting and the importance of individual reverence and worship in it. The things I feel impressed to teach here are addressed to those who are not yet understanding and practicing these important principles and not yet enjoying the promised spiritual blessings of always having His guiding Spirit to be with them.

### Preparation to partake of the sacrament

I begin with how members of the Church should prepare themselves to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. In a worldwide leadership training meeting five years ago, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught priesthood leaders of the Church

how to plan and conduct sacrament meetings. “We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way,” Elder Nelson said. “We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit to our sacrament meeting. It is the highlight of our Sabbath-day observance” (“Worshiping at Sacrament Meeting,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 26).

We are seated well before the meeting begins. “During that quiet interval, prelude music is subdued. This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of prayerful meditation as leaders and members prepare spiritually for the sacrament” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 27).

When the Savior appeared to the Nephites following His Resurrection, He taught them that they should stop the practice of sacrifice by the shedding of blood. Instead, “ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). That commandment, repeated in the modern revelation directing us to partake of the sacrament each week, tells us how we should prepare. As Elder Nelson taught, “Each member of the Church bears responsibility for the spiritual enrichment that can come from a sacrament meeting” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 28).

In his writings on the doctrines of salvation, President Joseph Fielding Smith teaches that we partake of the sacrament as our part of commemorating the Savior’s death and sufferings for the redemption of the world. This ordinance was introduced so that we can renew our covenants to serve Him, to obey Him, and to always remember Him. President Smith adds, “We cannot retain the Spirit of the Lord if we do not consistently comply with this commandment” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:341).

### **Dress, reverence, music, contemplation**

How we dress is an important indicator of our attitude and preparation for

any activity in which we will engage. If we are going swimming or hiking or playing on the beach, our clothing, including our footwear, will indicate this. The same should be true of how we dress when we are to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. It is like going to the temple. Our manner of dress indicates the degree to which we understand and honor the ordinance in which we will participate.

During sacrament meeting—and especially during the sacrament service—we should concentrate on worship and refrain from all other activities, especially from behavior that could interfere with the worship of others. Even a person who slips into quiet slumber does not interfere with others. Sacrament meeting is not a time for reading books or magazines. Young people, it is not a time for whispered conversations on cell phones or for texting persons at other locations. When we partake of the sacrament, we make a sacred covenant that we will always remember the Savior. How sad to see persons obviously violating that covenant in the very meeting where they are making it.

The music of sacrament meeting is a vital part of our worship. The scriptures teach that the song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord (see D&C 25:12). The First Presidency has declared that “some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns” (*Hymns*, ix). How wonderful when every person in attendance joins in the worship of singing—especially in the hymn that helps us prepare to partake of the sacrament. All sacrament meeting music requires careful planning, always remembering that this music is for worship, not for performance.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “This is an occasion when *the gospel should be presented*, when we should be called upon to exercise faith, and to reflect on the mission of our Redeemer, and to spend time in the consideration of the saving principles of the gospel, and not for other purposes. Amusement, laughter,



light-mindedness, are all out of place in the sacrament meetings of the Latter-day Saints. We should assemble in the spirit of prayer, of meekness, with devotion in our hearts” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:342).

When we do this—when we join in the solemnity that should always accompany the ordinance of the sacrament and the worship of this meeting—we are qualified for the companionship and revelation of the Spirit. This is the way we get direction for our lives and peace along the way.

### **The Lord’s teachings about the sacrament**

The resurrected Lord emphasized the importance of the sacrament when He visited the American continent and instituted this ordinance among the faithful Nephites. He blessed the emblems of the sacrament and gave them to His disciples and the multitude (see 3 Nephi 18:1–10), commanding:

“And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

“ . . . And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.

“But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall” (3 Nephi 18:11–13).

The sacrament is the ordinance that replaced the blood sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Mosaic law, and with it came the Savior’s promise: “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

### **Counsel on officiating in the sacrament**

Now I speak particularly to the priesthood holders who officiate in the sacrament. This ordinance should always be performed with reverence and dignity. Priests who offer the prayers in behalf of the congregation should speak the words slowly and distinctly, expressing the terms of the covenants and promised blessings. This is a very sacred act.

The teachers who prepare and the deacons who pass the emblems of the sacrament also perform a very sacred act. I love President Thomas S. Monson’s account of how, as a 12-year-old deacon, he was asked by the bishop to take the sacrament to a bedfast brother who longed for this blessing. “His gratitude overwhelmed me,” President Monson said. “The Spirit of the Lord came over me. I stood on sacred ground” (*Inspiring Experiences That Build Faith* [1994], 188). All who officiate in this sacred ordinance stand on sacred ground.

Young men who officiate in the ordinance of the sacrament should be worthy. The Lord has said, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 38:42). The scriptural warning about partaking of the sacrament unworthily (see 1 Corinthians 11:29; 3 Nephi 18:29) surely applies also to those who officiate in that ordinance. In administering discipline to Church members who have committed serious sins, a bishop can temporarily withdraw the privilege of *partaking* of the sacrament. That same authority is surely available to withdraw the privilege of *officiating* in that sacred ordinance.

What I said earlier about the importance of appropriate dress for those who receive the ordinance of the sacrament obviously applies with special force to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood who officiate in any part of that sacred ordinance. All should be well groomed and modestly dressed. There should be nothing about their personal appearance

or actions that would call special attention to themselves or distract anyone present from full attention to the worship and covenant making that are the purpose of this sacred service.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland gave a valuable teaching on this subject in general conference 13 years ago. Since most of our current deacons were not even born when these words were last spoken here, I repeat them for their benefit and that of their parents and teachers:

“May I suggest that wherever possible a white shirt be worn by the deacons, teachers, and priests who handle the sacrament. For sacred ordinances in the Church we often use ceremonial clothing, and a white shirt could be seen as a gentle reminder of the white clothing you wore in the baptismal font and an anticipation of the white shirt you will soon wear into the temple and on your missions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68).

Finally, the sacrament is administered only when authorized by the one holding the keys to this priesthood ordinance. This is why the sacrament is not generally served in the home or at family reunions, even where there are sufficient priesthood holders available. Those who officiate at the sacrament table, prepare the sacrament, or pass it to the congregation should be designated by one who holds or exercises the keys of this ordinance. I refer to the bishopric or to the presidencies of the teachers or deacons quorums. “[My] house is a house of order,” the Lord declared (D&C 132:8).

### **Always have His Spirit to be with us**

How can we have the Spirit of the Lord to guide our choices so that we will

remain “unspotted from the world” (D&C 59:9) and on the safe path through mortality? We need to qualify for the cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We do this by keeping His commandment to come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and in that wonderful weekly meeting partake of the emblems of the sacrament and make the covenants that qualify us for the precious promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77). That we may always do so is my humble prayer, which I offer in the name of Him whose Atonement makes it all possible, even Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Do What Is Right.”

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren and Sister Allred, for your inspiring words. We likewise express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

It will now be our pleasure to hear the choir sing “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father,” after which President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Uchtdorf’s remarks, the choir will sing “I Need Thee Every Hour.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

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The choir sang “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### The infinite power of hope

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, what a glorious day for us to witness the announcement of five new temples by our beloved prophet. What a beautiful day for all of us.

Toward the end of World War II, my father was drafted into the German army and sent to the western front, leaving my mother alone to care for our family. Though I was only three years old, I can still remember this time of fear and hunger. We lived in Czechoslovakia, and with every passing day the war came nearer and the danger grew greater.

Finally, during the cold winter of 1944, my mother decided to flee to Germany, where her parents were living. She bundled us up and somehow managed to get us on one of the last refugee trains heading west. Traveling during that time was dangerous. Everywhere we went, the sound of explosions, the stressed faces, and ever-present hunger reminded us that we were in a war zone.

Along the way the train stopped occasionally to get supplies. One night during one of these stops, my mother hurried out of the train to search for some food for her four children. When she returned, to her great horror, the train and her children were gone!

She was weighed down with worry; desperate prayers filled her heart. She frantically searched the large and dark train station, urgently crisscrossing the numerous tracks while hoping against hope that the train had not already departed.

Perhaps I will never know all that went through my mother's heart and mind on that black night as she searched through a grim railroad station for her lost children. That she was terrified, I have no doubt. I am certain it crossed her mind that if she did not find this train, she might never see her children again. I know with

certainty: her faith overcame her fear, and her hope overcame her despair. She was not a woman who would sit and bemoan tragedy. She moved. She put her faith and hope into action.

And so she ran from track to track and from train to train until she finally found our train. It had been moved to a remote area of the station. There, at last, she found her children again.

I have often thought about that night and what my mother must have endured. If I could go back in time and sit by her side, I would ask her how she managed to go on in the face of her fears. I would ask about faith and hope and how she overcame despair.

While that is impossible, perhaps today I could sit by your side and by the side of any who might feel discouraged, worried, or lonely. Today I would like to speak with you about the infinite power of hope.

### The importance of hope

Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven surfaces we might encounter at the time. The scriptures are clear and certain about the importance of hope. The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures were written to the end that we "might have hope."<sup>1</sup>

Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness.<sup>2</sup> Its absence—when this desire of our heart is delayed—can make "the heart sick."<sup>3</sup>

Hope is a gift of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> It is a hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the power of His Resurrection, we shall be raised unto life eternal and this because of our faith in the Savior.<sup>5</sup> This kind of hope is both a principle of promise as well as a commandment,<sup>6</sup> and, as with all commandments, we have the responsibility to make it an active part of

our lives and overcome the temptation to lose hope. Hope in our Heavenly Father's merciful plan of happiness leads to peace,<sup>7</sup> mercy,<sup>8</sup> rejoicing,<sup>9</sup> and gladness.<sup>10</sup> The hope of salvation is like a protective helmet;<sup>11</sup> it is the foundation of our faith<sup>12</sup> and an anchor to our souls.<sup>13</sup>

Moroni in his solitude—even after having witnessed the complete destruction of his people—believed in hope. In the twilight of the Nephite nation, Moroni wrote that without hope we cannot receive an inheritance in the kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup>

### **Why, then, is there despair?**

The scriptures say that there must be “an opposition in all things.”<sup>15</sup> So it is with faith, hope, and charity. Doubt, despair, and failure to care for our fellowmen lead us into temptation, which can cause us to forfeit choice and precious blessings.

The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair drains from us all that is vibrant and joyful and leaves behind the empty remnants of what life was meant to be. Despair kills ambition, advances sickness, pollutes the soul, and deadens the heart. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward.

Hope, on the other hand, is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances. It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father, who has prepared a way for those who seek for eternal truth in a world of relativism, confusion, and of fear.

### **What, then, is hope?**

The complexities of language offer several variations and intensities of the word *hope*. For example, a toddler may hope for a toy phone; an adolescent may hope for a phone call from a special friend; and an adult may simply hope that the phone will stop ringing altogether.

I wish to speak today of the hope that transcends the trivial and centers on the Hope of Israel,<sup>16</sup> the great hope of mankind, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Hope is not knowledge,<sup>17</sup> but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God's laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future.<sup>18</sup> It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance.

In the language of the gospel, this hope is sure, unwavering, and active. The prophets of old speak of a “firm hope”<sup>19</sup> and a “lively hope.”<sup>20</sup> It is a hope glorifying God through good works. With hope come joy and happiness.<sup>21</sup> With hope, we can “have patience, and bear [our] afflictions.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Things we hope for, things we hope in**

The things we hope *for* are often future events. If only we could look beyond the horizon of mortality into what awaits us beyond this life. Is it possible to imagine a more glorious future than the one prepared for us by our Heavenly Father? Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we need not fear, for we will live forever, never to taste of death again.<sup>23</sup> Because of His infinite Atonement, we can be cleansed of sin and stand pure and holy before the judgment bar.<sup>24</sup> The Savior is the Author of our Salvation.<sup>25</sup>

And what kind of existence can we hope for? Those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and live in faith will reside forever in peace. Think of the worth of this eternal gift. Surrounded by those we love, we will know the meaning of ultimate joy as we progress in knowledge and in happiness. No matter how bleak the chapter of our lives may look today, because of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we may hope and be assured that

the ending of the book of our lives will exceed our grandest expectations. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>26</sup>

The things we hope *in* sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope *in* can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light.

We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. Because God has been faithful and kept His promises in the past, we can hope with confidence that God will keep His promises to us in the present and in the future. In times of distress, we can hold tightly to the hope that things will “work together for [our] good”<sup>27</sup> as we follow the counsel of God’s prophets. This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair.

### Hope leads to good works

We learn to cultivate hope the same way we learn to walk, one step at a time. As we study the scriptures, speak with our Heavenly Father daily, and commit to keep the commandments of God, like the Word of Wisdom and paying a full tithing, we attain hope.<sup>28</sup> We grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,”<sup>29</sup> as we more perfectly live the gospel.

There may be times when we must make a courageous decision to hope even when everything around us contradicts this hope. Like Father Abraham, we will

“against hope [believe] in hope.”<sup>30</sup> Or, as one writer expressed, “in the depth of winter, [we find] within [us] an invincible summer.”<sup>31</sup>

Faith, hope, and charity complement each other, and as one increases, the others grow as well. Hope comes of faith,<sup>32</sup> for without faith, there *is* no hope.<sup>33</sup> In like manner faith comes of hope, for faith is “the substance of things hoped for.”<sup>34</sup>

Hope is critical to both faith and charity. When disobedience, disappointment, and procrastination erode faith, hope is there to uphold our faith. When frustration and impatience challenge charity, hope braces our resolve and urges us to care for our fellowmen even without expectation of reward. The brighter our hope, the greater our faith. The stronger our hope, the purer our charity.

The things we hope *for* lead us to faith, while the things we hope *in* lead us to charity. The three qualities—faith, hope, and charity<sup>35</sup>—working together, grounded on the truth and light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, lead us to abound in good works.<sup>36</sup>

### Hope from personal experience

Each time a hope is fulfilled, it creates confidence and leads to greater hope. I can think of many instances in my life where I learned firsthand the power of hope. I well remember the days in my childhood encompassed by the horrors and despair of a world war, the lack of educational opportunities, life-threatening health issues during youth, and the challenging and discouraging economic experiences as a refugee. The example of our mother, even in the worst of times, to move forward and put faith and hope into action, not just worrying or wishful thinking, sustained our family and me and gave confidence that present circumstances would give way to future blessings.

I know from these experiences that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints that strengthen faith, offer a bright hope, and lead us to charity.

Hope sustains us through despair.

Hope teaches that there is reason to rejoice even when all seems dark around us.

With Jeremiah I proclaim, “Blessed is the man . . . whose hope the Lord is.”<sup>37</sup>

With Joel I testify, “The Lord [is] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”<sup>38</sup>

With Nephi I declare: “Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”<sup>39</sup>

This is the quality of hope we must cherish and develop. Such a mature hope comes in and through our Savior Jesus Christ, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as [the Savior] is pure.”<sup>40</sup>

### Never surrender to despair

The Lord has given us a reassuring message of hope: “Fear not, little flock.”<sup>41</sup> God waits with “open arms to receive”<sup>42</sup> those who give away their sins and continue in faith, hope, and charity.

And to all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in. Never allow despair to overcome your spirit.

Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart.

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Romans 15:4.
2. See Psalm 146:5.

3. Proverbs 13:12.

4. See Moroni 8:26.

5. See Moroni 7:41.

6. See Colossians 1:21–23.

7. See Romans 15:13.

8. See Psalm 33:22.

9. See Romans 12:12.

10. See Proverbs 10:28.

11. See 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

12. See Hebrews 11:1; Moroni 7:40.

13. See Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4.

14. See Ether 12:32; see also Romans 8:24.

15. 2 Nephi 2:11.

16. See Jeremiah 17:13.

17. See Romans 8:24.

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

19. Alma 34:41.

20. 1 Peter 1:3.

21. See Psalm 146:5.

22. Alma 34:41.

23. See Alma 11:45.

24. See 2 Nephi 2:6–10.

25. See Hebrews 5:9.

26. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

27. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.

28. See Romans 15:13.

29. Romans 15:13.

30. Romans 4:18.

31. Albert Camus, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 17th ed. (2002), 790.

32. See Ether 12:4.

33. See Moroni 7:42.

34. Hebrews 11:1.

35. See Moroni 10:20.

36. See Alma 7:24.

37. Jeremiah 17:7.

38. Joel 3:16.

39. 2 Nephi 31:20.

40. 1 John 3:3.

41. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.

42. See Mormon 6:17.

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The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Craig A. Cardon offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah. Colleen Paddock directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

### President Henry B. Eyring

We welcome you to the second general session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Eyring, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah, under the direction of Colleen Paddock, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "I Am a Child of God." The invocation will then be offered by Elder James M. Dunn of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

Elder James M. Dunn offered the invocation.

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### President Eyring

President Monson has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. The choir will then sing "The Light Divine." Following the singing, Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Henry B. Eyring

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,

Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Earl C. Tingey as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and Elders Earl C. Tingey and Sheldon F. Child as members of the First Quorum



of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

It is also proposed that we release Elders Gerald N. Lund and Robert R. Steuer as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that Elders Jorge A. Rojas and T. La Mar Sleight be released as Area Seventies. Those desiring to join in an expression of gratitude to these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Jay E. Jensen as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All

in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

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The choir sang "The Light Divine."

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## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### **Come what may, and love it**

When I was young I loved playing sports, and I have many fond memories of those days. But not all of them are pleasant. I remember one day after my football team lost a tough game, I came home feeling discouraged. My mother was there. She listened to my sad story. She taught her children to trust in themselves and each other, not blame others for their misfortunes, and give their best effort in everything they attempted.

When we fell down, she expected us to pick ourselves up and get going again. So the advice my mother gave to me then wasn't altogether unexpected. It has stayed with me all my life.

"Joseph," she said, "come what may, and love it."

I have often reflected on that counsel.

I think she may have meant that every life has peaks and shadows and times when it seems that the birds don't sing and bells don't ring. Yet in spite of discouragement and adversity, those who are happiest seem to have a way of learning from

difficult times, becoming stronger, wiser, and happier as a result.

There may be some who think General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true. While every man and woman on this stand today has experienced an abundant measure of joy, each also has drunk deeply from the cup of disappointment, sorrow, and loss. The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness.

For me, the Lord has opened the windows of heaven and showered blessings upon my family beyond my ability to express. Yet like everyone else, I have had times in my life when it seemed that the heaviness of my heart might be greater than I could bear. During those times I think back to those tender days of my youth when great sorrows came at the losing end of a football game.

How little I knew then of what awaited me in later years. But whenever my steps led through seasons of sadness and sorrow, my mother's words often came back to me: "Come what may, and love it."



How can we love days that are filled with sorrow? We can't—at least not in the moment. I don't think my mother was suggesting that we suppress discouragement or deny the reality of pain. I don't think she was suggesting that we smother unpleasant truths beneath a cloak of pretended happiness. But I do believe that the way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be the times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead to times of greatest happiness.

Over the years I have learned a few things that have helped me through times of testing and trial. I would like to share them with you.

### **Learn to laugh**

The first thing we can do is learn to laugh. Have you ever seen an angry driver who, when someone else makes a mistake, reacts as though that person has insulted his honor, his family, his dog, and his ancestors all the way back to Adam? Or have you had an encounter with an overhanging cupboard door left open at the wrong place and the wrong time which has been cursed, condemned, and avenged by a sore-headed victim?

There is an antidote for times such as these: learn to laugh.

I remember loading up our children in a station wagon and driving to Los Angeles. There were at least nine of us in the car, and we would invariably get lost. Instead of getting angry, we laughed. Every time we made a wrong turn, we laughed harder.

Getting lost was not an unusual occurrence for us. Once while heading south to Cedar City, Utah, we took a wrong turn and didn't realize it until two hours later when we saw the "Welcome to Nevada" signs. We didn't get angry. We laughed, and as a result, anger and resentment

rarely resulted. Our laughter created cherished memories for us.

I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn't move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now, I realize that our daughter could have felt humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

### **Seek for the eternal**

The second thing we can do is seek for the eternal. You may feel singled out when adversity enters your life. You shake your head and wonder, "Why me?"

But the dial on the wheel of sorrow eventually points to each of us. At one time or another, everyone must experience sorrow. No one is exempt.

I love the scriptures because they show examples of great and noble men and women such as Abraham, Sarah, Enoch, Moses, Joseph, Emma, and Brigham. Each of them experienced adversity and sorrow that tried, fortified, and refined their characters.

Learning to endure times of disappointment, suffering, and sorrow is part of our on-the-job training. These experiences, while often difficult to bear at the time, are precisely the kinds of experiences that stretch our understanding, build our character, and increase our compassion for others.

Because Jesus Christ suffered greatly, He understands our suffering. He understands our grief. We experience hard things so that we too may have increased compassion and understanding for others.

Remember the sublime words of the Savior to the Prophet Joseph Smith when he suffered with his companions in the smothering darkness of Liberty Jail:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”<sup>1</sup>

With that eternal perspective, Joseph took comfort from these words, and so can we. Sometimes the very moments that seem to overcome us with suffering are those that will ultimately suffer us to overcome.

### **The principle of compensation**

The third thing we can do is understand the principle of compensation. The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way. While it may not come at the time we desire, the faithful will know that every tear today will eventually be returned a hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude.

One of the blessings of the gospel is the knowledge that when the curtain of death signals the end of our mortal lives, life will continue on the other side of the veil. There we will be given new opportunities. Not even death can take from us

the eternal blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.

Because Heavenly Father is merciful, a principle of compensation prevails. I have seen this in my own life. My grandson Joseph has autism. It has been heartbreaking for his mother and father to come to grips with the implications of this affliction.

They knew that Joseph would probably never be like other children. They understood what that would mean not only for Joseph but for the family as well. But what a joy he has been to us. Autistic children often have a difficult time showing emotion, but every time I'm with him, Joseph gives me a big hug. While there have been challenges, he has filled our lives with joy.

Joseph's parents have encouraged him to participate in sports. When he first started playing baseball, he was in the outfield. But I don't think he grasped the need to run after loose balls. He thought of a much more efficient way to play the game. When a ball was hit in his direction, Joseph watched it go by and then pulled another baseball out of his pocket and threw that one to the pitcher.

Any reservations that his family may have had in raising Joseph, any sacrifices they have made have been compensated tenfold. Because of this choice spirit, his mother and father have learned much about children with disabilities. They have witnessed firsthand the generosity and compassion of family, neighbors, and friends. They have rejoiced together as Joseph has progressed. They have marveled at his goodness.

### **Trust in the Father and the Son**

The fourth thing we can do is put our trust in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>2</sup> The Lord Jesus

Christ is our partner, helper, and advocate. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to be successful. If we do our part, He will step in.

He who descended below all things will come to our aid. He will comfort and uphold us. He will strengthen us in our weakness and fortify us in our distress. He will make weak things become strong.<sup>3</sup>

One of our daughters, after giving birth to a baby, became seriously ill. We prayed for her, administered to her, and supported her as best we could. We hoped she would receive a blessing of healing, but days turned into months, and months turned into years. At one point I told her that this affliction might be something she would have to struggle with the rest of her life.

One morning I remember pulling out a small card and threading it through my typewriter. Among the words that I typed for her were these: “The simple secret is this: put your trust in the Lord, do your best, then leave the rest to Him.”

She did put her trust in God. But her affliction did not disappear. For years she suffered, but in due course the Lord blessed her, and eventually she returned to health.

Knowing this daughter, I believe that even if she had never found relief, yet she would have trusted in her Heavenly Father and “[left] the rest to Him.”

### **Adversity can be a blessing**

Although my mother has long since passed to her eternal reward, her words are always with me. I still remember her advice to me given on that day long ago when my team lost a football game:

“Come what may, and love it.”

I know why there must be opposition in all things. Adversity, if handled correctly, can be a blessing in our lives. We can learn to love it.

As we look for humor, seek for the eternal perspective, understand the principle of compensation, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, we can endure hardship and trial. We can say, as did my mother, “Come what may, and love it.” Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
2. John 3:16.
3. See Ether 12:27.

## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

### **The ministry of angels**

When Adam and Eve willingly stepped into mortality, they knew this telestial world would contain thorns and thistles and troubles of every kind. Perhaps their most challenging realization, however, was not the hardship and danger they would endure but the fact that they would now be distanced from God, separated from Him with whom they had walked and talked, who had given them face-to-face counsel. After this conscious choice, as the record of creation says, “they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.”<sup>1</sup>

Amidst all else that must have troubled them, surely this must have troubled them the most.

But God knew the challenges they would face, and He certainly knew how lonely and troubled they would sometimes feel. So He watched over His mortal family constantly, heard their prayers always, and sent prophets (and later apostles) to teach, counsel, and guide them. But in times of special need, He sent angels, divine messengers, to bless His children and reassure them that heaven was always very close and that His help was always very near. Indeed, shortly after Adam and Eve

found themselves in the lone and dreary world, an angel appeared unto them,<sup>2</sup> who taught them the meaning of their sacrifice and the atoning role of the promised Redeemer who was to come.

When the time for this Savior's advent was at hand, an angel was sent to announce to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Son of God.<sup>3</sup> Then a host of angels was commissioned to sing on the night the baby Jesus was born.<sup>4</sup> Shortly thereafter an angel would announce to Joseph that the newborn baby was in danger and that this little family must flee to Egypt for safety.<sup>5</sup> When it was safe to return, an angel conveyed that information to the family and the three returned to the land of their heritage.<sup>6</sup>

### Angels as God's emissaries

From the beginning down through the dispensations, God has used angels as His emissaries in conveying love and concern for His children. Time in this setting does not allow even a cursory examination of the scriptures or our own latter-day history, which are so filled with accounts of angels ministering to those on earth, but it is rich doctrine and rich history indeed.

Usually such beings are *not* seen. Sometimes they are. But seen or unseen, they are *always* near. Sometimes their assignments are very grand and have significance for the whole world. Sometimes the messages are more private. Occasionally the angelic purpose is to warn. But most often it is to comfort, to provide some form of merciful attention, guidance in difficult times. When in Lehi's dream he found himself in a frightening place, "a dark and dreary waste," as he described it, he was met by an angel, "a man . . . dressed in a white robe; . . . he spake unto me," Lehi said, "and bade me follow him."<sup>7</sup> Lehi did follow him to safety and ultimately to the path of salvation.

### Angels are still sent to help us

In the course of life all of us spend time in "dark and dreary" places, wildernesses, circumstances of sorrow or fear or discouragement. Our present day is filled with global distress over financial crises, energy problems, terrorist attacks, and natural calamities. These translate into individual and family concerns not only about homes in which to live and food available to eat but also about the ultimate safety and well-being of our children and the latter-day prophecies about our planet.

More serious than these—and sometimes related to them—are matters of ethical, moral, and spiritual decay seen in populations large and small, at home and abroad. But I testify that angels are *still* sent to help *us*, even as they were sent to help Adam and Eve, to help the prophets, and indeed to help the Savior of the world Himself. Matthew records in his gospel that after Satan had tempted Christ in the wilderness, "angels came and ministered unto him."<sup>8</sup> Even the Son of God, a God Himself, had need for heavenly comfort during His sojourn in mortality. And so such ministrations will be to the righteous until the end of time. As Mormon said to his son Moroni, who would one day *be* an angel:

"Has the day of miracles ceased?

"Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

"Behold I say unto you, Nay; for . . . it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men."

"For behold, they are subject unto [Christ], to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness."<sup>9</sup>

I ask everyone within the sound of my voice to take heart, be filled with faith, and remember that the Lord has said He “would fight [our] battles, [our] children’s battles, and [the battles of our] children’s children.”<sup>10</sup> And what do we do to merit such a defense? We are to “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and [then] all things shall work together for [our] good, if [we] walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith [we] have covenanted.”<sup>11</sup> The latter days are *not* a time to fear and tremble. They *are* a time to be believing and remember our covenants.

### Mortal angels

I have spoken here of heavenly help, of angels dispatched to bless us in time of need. But when we speak of those who are instruments in the hand of God, we are reminded that not all angels are from the other side of the veil. Some of them we walk with and talk with—here, now, every day. Some of them reside in our own neighborhoods. Some of them gave birth to us, and in my case, one of them consented to marry me.

#### *Young Clyn Barrus crosses the river*

Indeed, heaven never seems closer than when we see the love of God manifested in the kindness and devotion of people so good and so pure that *angelic* is the only word that comes to mind. Elder James Dunn, from this pulpit just moments ago, used that word in his invocation to describe this Primary choir—and why not? With the spirit, faces, and voices of those children in our mind and before our eyes, may I share with you an account by my friend and BYU colleague, the late Clyn D. Barrus. I do so with the permission of his wife, Marilyn, and their family.

Referring to his childhood on a large Idaho farm, Brother Barrus spoke of his nightly assignment to round up the cows

at milking time. Because the cows pastured in a field bordered by the occasionally treacherous Teton River, the strict rule in the Barrus household was that during the spring flood season, the children were *never* to go after any cows who ventured across the river. They were always to return home and seek mature help.

One Saturday just after his seventh birthday, Brother Barrus’s parents promised the family a night at the movies if the chores were done on time. But when young Clyn arrived at the pasture, the cows he sought had crossed the river, even though it was running at high flood stage. Knowing his rare night at the movies was in jeopardy, he decided to go after the cows himself, even though he had been warned many times never to do so.

As the seven-year-old urged his old horse, Banner, down into the cold, swift stream, the horse’s head barely cleared the water. An adult sitting on the horse would have been safe, but at Brother Barrus’s tender age, the current completely covered him except when the horse lunged forward several times, bringing Clyn’s head above water just enough to gasp for air.

*“Son, I’ve been looking for you”*

Here I turn to Brother Barrus’s own words:

“When Banner finally climbed the other bank, I realized that my life had been in grave danger and that I had done a terrible thing—I had knowingly disobeyed my father. I felt that I could redeem myself only by bringing the cows home safely. Maybe then my father would forgive me. But it was already dusk, and I didn’t know for sure where I was. Despair overwhelmed me. I was wet and cold, lost and afraid.

“I climbed down from old Banner, fell to the ground by his feet, and began to cry. Between thick sobs, I tried to offer

a prayer, repeating over and over to my Father in Heaven, 'I'm sorry. Forgive me! I'm sorry. Forgive me!'

"I prayed for a long time. When I finally looked up, I saw through my tears a figure dressed in white walking toward me. In the dark, I felt certain it must be an angel sent in answer to my prayers. I did not move or make a sound as the figure approached, so overwhelmed was I by what I saw. Would the Lord really send an angel to me, who had been so disobedient?"

"Then a familiar voice said, 'Son, I've been looking for you.' In the darkness I recognized the voice of my father and ran to his outstretched arms. He held me tightly, then said gently, 'I was worried. I'm glad I found you.'

"I tried to tell him how sorry I was, but only disjointed words came out of my trembling lips—'Thank you . . . darkness . . . afraid . . . river . . . alone.' Later that night I learned that when I had not returned from the pasture, my father had come looking for me. When neither I nor the cows were to be found, he knew I had crossed the river and was in danger. Because it was dark and time was of the essence, he removed his clothes down to his long white thermal underwear, tied his shoes around his neck, and swam a treacherous river to rescue a wayward son."<sup>12</sup>

### God never leaves us alone

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of angels, both the heavenly and the mortal kind. In doing so I am testifying that God never leaves us alone, never leaves us unaided in the challenges that we face. "[Nor] will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man [or woman or child] upon the face thereof to be saved."<sup>13</sup> On occasions, global or personal, we may feel that we are distanced from God, shut out from heaven, lost, alone in dark and dreary places. Often enough that distress can be

of our own making, but even then the Father of us all is watching and assisting. And always there are those angels who come and go all around us, seen and unseen, known and unknown, mortal and immortal.

May we all believe more readily in, and have more gratitude for, the Lord's promise as contained in one of President Monson's favorite scriptures: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, . . . my Spirit shall be in your [heart], and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>14</sup>

In the process of praying for those angels to attend us, may we all try to be a little more angelic ourselves—with a kind word, a strong arm, a declaration of faith and "the covenant wherewith [we] have covenanted."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps then *we* can be emissaries sent from God when someone, perhaps a Primary child, is crying, "Darkness . . . afraid . . . river . . . alone." To this end I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moses 5:4.
2. See Moses 5:6–8.
3. See Luke 1:26–38.
4. See Luke 2:8–14.
5. See Matthew 2:13–15.
6. See Matthew 2:19–23.
7. 1 Nephi 8:7, 5–6.
8. Matthew 4:11.
9. Moroni 7:35–37, 30.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 98:37.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
12. See Clyn D. Barrus, "Coming Home," *Friend*, Apr. 1995, 2–4.
13. Moroni 7:36.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.

### President Eyring

The choir and the congregation will now sing, with greater faith because of the wonderful testimony of Elder Holland, "Teach Me to Walk in the Light."

At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Gérald Caussé and Lawrence E. Corbridge of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Teach Me to Walk in the Light.”

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## Elder Gérald Caussé

### The most important knowledge

Parents are often taken aback by the replies their children make to questions from grown-ups. One evening when my wife and I were away, our children's babysitter, intrigued by the prayer she heard them saying, asked them this question: “But what is the difference between your religion and mine?” The reply from our eight-year-old daughter was immediate: “It's almost the same, except that we study a lot more than you do!” Far from wanting to offend her babysitter, my daughter just wanted to underline in her own way the importance that Latter-day Saints attach to the search for knowledge.

Joseph Smith declared, “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6). He added, “The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation . . . ; and every one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned” (*History of the Church*, 5:387). This knowledge is founded on understanding the nature of God and Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation that They have prepared to allow us to return to Their presence. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

### Even a child can understand

The principle of knowledge has often been misinterpreted by men. “The glory

of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). It surpasses all we can ever understand with our intellectual capacities. People who try to find God sometimes think that they have to look for Him in intellectually complicated concepts.

However, our Heavenly Father is always available to us. He adapts to our level of understanding. “If He comes to a little child, He will adapt himself to the language and capacity of a little child” (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:392).

God would indeed be unjust if the gospel were accessible only to an intellectual elite. In His goodness, He has ensured that the truths regarding God are understandable to all of His children, whatever their level of education or intellectual faculty.

In reality, the fact that a principle can be understood even by a child is proof of its power. President John Taylor said, “It is true intelligence for a man to take a subject that is mysterious and great in itself and to unfold and simplify it so that a child can understand it” (*Deseret News*, Sept. 30, 1857, 238). Far from diminishing its impact, purity and simplicity of expression allow the Holy Spirit to witness with greater certainty to the hearts of men.

### Simplicity of the Savior's teachings

During His earthly ministry, Jesus constantly compared the simplicity and authenticity of His teachings to the tortuous logic of the Pharisees and other doctors of the law. They tried time and again



to test Him with sophisticated questions, but His replies were always crystal clear and childlike in their simplicity.

One day Jesus's disciples asked Him the following question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus, having summoned a little child, set him in the midst of them and said:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1, 2–4).

On another occasion Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Luke 10:21).

The Bible has probably been the subject of more interpretations and philosophical debates than any other book. However, a child who reads this book for the first time will have at least as much, if not more, chance to understand the doctrine as the majority of those doctors of the scriptures. The Savior's teachings are adapted to everyone. At eight years of age a child can have sufficient understanding to enter the waters of baptism and make a covenant with God with complete understanding.

What would a child understand from reading the story of the baptism of Jesus? Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him "in a bodily shape like a dove." A voice was heard: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). The child would have a clear vision of what the Godhead is: three distinct persons in complete unity—God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost.

## **Dangers of rejecting simplicity**

Rejection of the principle of simplicity and clarity has been the origin of many apostasies, both collective and individual. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob denounced those in ancient times who "despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it" (Jacob 4:14).

Sometimes we may be tempted to think, "It's too easy," just like Naaman, the Syrian captain who, constrained by his pride, hesitated to obey the counsel of Elisha, which was too simple, in his eyes, to cure his leprosy. His servants led him to see his folly:

"My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:13–14).

His cleansing was not only physical; his spiritual flesh also was cleansed when he accepted this beautiful lesson in humility.

## **Qualities that help us learn by the Spirit**

Little children have a marvelous disposition to learn. They have total trust in their teacher, a pure spirit, and great humility—in other words, the same qualities which open the door to the Holy Spirit. He is the channel through whom we gain knowledge of the things of the Spirit. Paul



wrote to the Corinthians, “Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

And he added, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We know that the carnal or natural man is “an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.” For that, he must become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Moses 3:19).

### **Open hearts to hear, practice God’s word**

In his philosophical short story *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry describes the confusion of a little boy who, on discovering a field of roses, perceives that the flower he has, which he has tended with such love, is not unique but very ordinary. Then he comes to the realization that the thing that makes his rose unique is not its outward appearance but the time and the love he has consecrated to taking care of it. He exclaims:

“Men . . . raise five thousand roses in the same garden—and they do not find in it what they are looking for. . . .

“And yet what they are looking for could be found in one single rose, or in a little water. . . .

“But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart” ([1943], 79).

In the same way, our knowledge of God does not depend on the amount of

information we accumulate. After all, all the knowledge of the gospel that is meaningful for our salvation can be summarized in a few points of doctrine, principles, and essential commandments, which are already there in the missionary lessons we receive before baptism. Knowing God is a matter of opening our hearts to gain a spiritual understanding and a fervent testimony of the truth of these few fundamental points of doctrine. Knowing God is having a testimony of His existence and feeling in one’s heart that He loves us. It is accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and having a fervent desire to follow His example. In serving God and our neighbor, we witness of Christ and allow those around us to get to know Him better.

These principles find concrete application in the teaching which is given in our wards and branches. For you teachers of the Church, the principal goal of your lessons is the conversion of hearts. The quality of a lesson is not measured by the number of new pieces of information that you give to your students. It comes from your capacity to invite the presence of the Spirit and to motivate your students to make commitments. It is by exercising their faith by putting into practice the lessons taught that they will increase their spiritual knowledge.

I pray that we will know how to open our hearts like a little child and take pleasure in hearing and practicing the word of God in all the power of its simplicity. I bear testimony that if we do this, we will gain the knowledge of the “mysteries [of God] and [the] peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge

### Jesus Christ is the Way

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."<sup>1</sup>

He said, "I am Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world."<sup>2</sup>

He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."<sup>3</sup>

He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."<sup>4</sup>

He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>5</sup>

He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>6</sup>

He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus Christ is the Way. He is Light and Life, Bread and Water, the Beginning and the End, the Resurrection and the Life, the Savior of the world, the Truth, and the Way.

There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. He is the Way. Every other way, any other way, whatever other way, is foolishness.

He offers a well of living water. Either we drink and never thirst more, or we don't and foolishly remain thirsty still.

He is the Bread of Life. Either we eat and hunger no more, or we don't and foolishly remain weak and hungry still.

He is the Light of the World. Either we follow Him and see clearly, or we don't

and foolishly remain blind and in darkness still.

He is the Resurrection and the Life. He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."<sup>8</sup> Either we learn of Him and have life more abundantly,<sup>9</sup> or we don't and foolishly remain dead still.

He is the Savior of the world. Either we accept the blessings of His Atonement and are made clean and pure, worthy to have His Spirit, or we don't and foolishly remain alone and filthy still.

He is the Way.

### No other God

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."<sup>10</sup> The plan of the Father was implemented by the Son that we may have the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. The way of the Father is the way of the Son. He said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>11</sup>

Only God can bless us. Only He can sustain us. Only He can cause our hearts to beat and give us breath. Only He can preserve and protect us. Only He can give us strength to bear up the burdens of life. Only He can give us power, knowledge, peace, and joy. Only He can forgive our sins. Only He can heal us. Only He can change us and forge a godly soul. Only He can bring us back into His presence. And He will do all of that and much more if we but remember Him to keep His commandments. What, then, shall we do? We will remember Him to keep His commandments. It is the only intelligent thing to do.

### Jesus baptizes with the Holy Ghost

John the Baptist said that while he baptized with water, Jesus baptized "with the Holy Ghost."<sup>12</sup>

Nothing in this life is of greater worth than the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the source of joy, peace, knowledge, strength, love, and every other good thing. With the Atonement, it is the power by which we may be changed and made strong where we are weak. With the priesthood, it is the power by which marriages and families are sealed together eternally.<sup>13</sup> It is the power by which the Lord makes Himself manifest unto those who believe in Him.<sup>14</sup> Every good thing depends on getting and keeping the power of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Everything depends on that.

To that end, Jesus Christ entered a garden called Gethsemane, where He overcame sin for us. He took upon Himself our sins. He suffered the penalty of our wrongs. He paid the price of our education. I don't know how He did what He did. I only know that He did and that because He did, you and I may be forgiven of our sins that we may be endowed with His power. Everything depends on that. What, then, shall we do? We will "take upon [us] the name of [the] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]; that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]."<sup>15</sup> Everything depends on that.

### **My yoke is easy, and my burden is light**

One of the most popular and attractive philosophies of men is to live life your own way—do your own thing, be yourself, don't let others tell you what to do. But the Lord said, "I am the way."<sup>16</sup> He said, "Follow me."<sup>17</sup> He said, "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."<sup>18</sup>

Don't think you can't. We might think we can't really follow Him because the standard of His life is so astonishingly high as to seem unreachable. We might think it is too hard, too high, too much, beyond our capacity, at least for now. Don't

ever believe that. While the standard of the Lord is the highest, don't ever think it is only reachable by a select few who are most able.

In this singular instance, life's experience misleads us. In life we learn that the highest achievements in any human endeavor are always the most difficult and, therefore, achievable by only a select few who are most able. The higher the standard, the fewer can reach it.

But that is not the case here because, unlike every other experience in this life, this is not a human endeavor. It is, rather, the work of God. It is God's work and it is His glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>19</sup> There is nothing else like it. Not anywhere. Not ever.

No institution, plan, program, or system ever conceived by men has access to the redeeming and transforming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, while the Lord's invitation to follow Him is the highest of all, it is also achievable by everyone, not because we are able, but because He is, and because He can make us able too. "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind [everyone, living and dead] may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>20</sup>

The Lord's way is not hard. Life is hard, not the gospel. "There is an opposition in all things,"<sup>21</sup> everywhere, for everyone. Life is hard for all of us, but life is also simple. We have only two choices.<sup>22</sup> We can either follow the Lord and be endowed with His power and have peace, light, strength, knowledge, confidence, love, and joy, or we can go some other way, any other way, whatever other way, and go it alone—without His support, without His power, without guidance, in darkness, turmoil, doubt, grief, and despair. And I ask, which way is easier?

He said:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>23</sup>

Life is hard, but life is simple. Get on the path and never, ever give up. You never give up. You just keep on going. You don’t quit, and you will make it.

There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. Jesus Christ is the Way. Every other way, any other way, whatever other way is foolishness.

I bear record of Him, even Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of the living God, He is the Bread of Life, He is the Truth, He is the Resurrection and the Life, He is the Savior and the Light of the World. He is the Way, the only Way.

May we have the good sense to follow Him. In His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. John 1:1, 4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 19:1.
3. John 4:14.
4. John 6:35.
5. John 8:12.
6. John 11:25–26.
7. John 14:6.
8. John 6:63.
9. See John 10:10.
10. Articles of Faith 1:1.
11. Exodus 20:3.
12. John 1:33.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 19.
14. See 2 Nephi 26:13.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
16. John 14:6.
17. Mark 8:34.
18. 3 Nephi 27:27.
19. Moses 1:39.
20. Articles of Faith 1:3.
21. 2 Nephi 2:11.
22. See Moroni 7:15–17.
23. Matthew 11:28–30.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### The building up of Zion

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory” (*History of the Church*, 4:609–10).

Zion is both a place and a people. Zion was the name given to the ancient city of Enoch in the days before the Flood.

“And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion” (Moses 7:19). This Zion endured for some 365 years (see Moses 7:68). The scriptural record states, “And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled” (Moses 7:69). Later, Jerusalem and its temple were called Mount Zion, and the scriptures prophesy of a future New Jerusalem where Christ shall reign as “King of Zion,” when “for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:53, 64).

The Lord called Enoch’s people Zion “because they were of one heart and one

mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). Elsewhere He said, “For this is Zion—the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21).

### **Go ye out of Babylon**

The antithesis and antagonist of Zion is Babylon. The city of Babylon was originally Babel, of Tower of Babel fame, and later became the capital of the Babylonian empire. Its principal edifice was the temple of Bel, or Baal, the idol referred to by Old Testament prophets as “The Shame,” given the sexual perversions that were associated with its worship. (See Bible Dictionary, “Assyria and Babylonia,” 615–16; “Baal,” 617–18; “Babylon or Babel,” 618.) Its worldliness, its worship of evil, and the captivity of Judah there following the conquest of 587 B.C. all combine to make Babylon the symbol of decadent societies and spiritual bondage.

It is with this backdrop that the Lord said to the members of His Church, “Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (D&C 133:7). He called for the elders of His Church to be sent forth across the world to accomplish this gathering, commencing an effort that continues in full vigor today:

“And behold, and lo, this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion, that the borders of my people may be enlarged, and that her stakes may be strengthened, and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about” (D&C 133:9).

### **Beacons of righteousness to gather Zion**

And so today the Lord’s people are gathering “out from among the nations” as they gather into the congregations and stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that are scattered throughout the nations. Nephi foresaw that these “dominions” would be small

but that the Lord’s power would descend “upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, . . . who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they [would be] armed with righteousness” (see 1 Nephi 14:12–14). The Lord calls upon us to be beacons of righteousness to guide those who seek the safety and blessings of Zion:

“Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

“And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:5–6).

### **Early efforts to establish Zion**

Under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, early members of the Church attempted to establish the center place of Zion in Missouri, but they did not qualify to build the holy city. The Lord explained one of the reasons for their failure:

“They have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

“And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom” (D&C 105:3–4).

“There were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances” (D&C 101:6).

### **Rising to the standard of Zion**

Rather than judge these early Saints too harshly, however, we should look to ourselves to see if we are doing any better.

Zion is Zion because of the character, attributes, and faithfulness of her citizens. Remember, “the Lord called his people

Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). If we would establish Zion in our homes, branches, wards, and stakes, we must rise to this standard. It will be necessary (1) to become unified in one heart and one mind; (2) to become, individually and collectively, a holy people; and (3) to care for the poor and needy with such effectiveness that we eliminate poverty among us. We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.

### *Become unified in heart and mind*

As we consider the unity required for Zion to flourish, we should ask ourselves if we have overcome jarrings, contentions, envyings, and strifes (see D&C 101:6). Are we individually and as a people free from strife and contention and united “according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom”? (D&C 105:4). Forgiveness of one another is essential to this unity. Jesus said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

We will become of one heart and one mind as we individually place the Savior at the center of our lives and follow those He has commissioned to lead us. We can unite with President Thomas S. Monson in love and concern for one another. In general conference last April, President Monson spoke to those estranged from the Church and to all of us when he said:

“In the private sanctuary of one’s own conscience lies that spirit, that determination to cast off the old person and to measure up to the stature of true potential. In this spirit, we again issue that heartfelt invitation: Come back. We reach out to you in the pure love of Christ and express our desire to assist you and to welcome you into full fellowship. To those who are wounded in spirit or who are struggling and fearful, we say, Let us lift you and

cheer you and calm your fears” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 90).

At the end of July this year, young single adults from several countries in eastern Europe gathered outside Budapest, Hungary, for a conference. Among this group were 20 young men and women from Moldova who had spent days obtaining passports and visas and over 30 hours traveling by bus to get there. The conference program included some 15 workshops. Each person needed to select the two or three that he or she most wanted to attend. Rather than focus exclusively on their own interests, these Moldovan young adults got together and made plans so that at least one of their group would be in each class and take copious notes. Then they would share what they had learned with each other and later with the young adults in Moldova who could not attend. In its simplest form, this exemplifies the unity and love for one another that, multiplied thousands of times in different ways, will “bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).

### *Become a holy people*

Much of the work to be done in establishing Zion consists in our individual efforts to become “the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21). “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom,” said the Lord; “otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5). The law of the celestial kingdom is, of course, the gospel law and covenants, which include our constant remembrance of the Savior and our pledge of obedience, sacrifice, consecration, and fidelity.

The Savior was critical of some of the early Saints for their “lustful . . . desires” (D&C 101:6; see also D&C 88:121). These were people who lived in a non-television, non-film, non-Internet, non-iPod world. In a world now awash in sexualized images and music, are we free from lustful desires and their attendant evils? Far

from pushing the limits of modest dress or indulging in the vicarious immorality of pornography, we are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. To come to Zion, it is not enough for you or me to be somewhat less wicked than others. We are to become not only good but holy men and women. Recalling Elder Neal A. Maxwell's phrase, let us once and for all establish our residence in Zion and give up the summer cottage in Babylon (see Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light* [1990], 47).

*Care for the poor and needy*

Throughout history the Lord has measured societies and individuals by how well they cared for the poor. He has said:

"For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (D&C 104:17–18; see also D&C 56:16–17).

Furthermore, He declares, "In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld" (D&C 70:14; see also D&C 49:20; 78:5–7).

We control the disposition of our means and resources, but we account to God for this stewardship over earthly things. It is gratifying to witness your generosity as you contribute to fast offerings and humanitarian projects. Over the years, the suffering of millions has been alleviated, and countless others have been enabled to help themselves through the generosity of the Saints. Nevertheless, as we pursue the cause of Zion, each of us should prayerfully consider whether we are doing what we should and all that we

should in the Lord's eyes with respect to the poor and the needy.

We might ask ourselves, living as many of us do in societies that worship possessions and pleasures, whether we are remaining aloof from covetousness and the lust to acquire more and more of this world's goods. Materialism is just one more manifestation of the idolatry and pride that characterize Babylon. Perhaps we can learn to be content with what is sufficient for our needs.

The Apostle Paul warned Timothy against people who suppose "that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5).

Said he: "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:7–8).

In much of the world, we are entering upon unsettled economic times. Let us look after one another the very best we can. I remember the story of a Vietnamese family that fled Saigon in 1975 and ended up living in a small mobile home in Provo, Utah. A young man in the refugee family became the home teaching companion to a Brother Johnson who lived nearby with his large family. The boy related the following:

"One day Brother Johnson noticed that our family had no kitchen table. He appeared the next day with an odd-looking but very functional table that fit nicely against the trailer wall across from the kitchen sink and counters. I say odd-looking because two of the table legs matched the tabletop and two did not. Also, several small wooden pegs stuck out along one edge of the worn surface.

"Soon we used this unique table daily for food preparation and for eating some quick meals. We still ate our family meals while we sat on the floor . . . in true Vietnamese fashion.

"One evening I stood inside Brother Johnson's front door as I waited for him



before a home teaching appointment. There in the nearby kitchen—I was surprised to see it—was a table practically identical to the one they had given to my family. The only difference was that where our table had pegs, the Johnsons' table had holes! I then realized that, seeing our need, this charitable man had cut his kitchen table in half and had built two new legs for each half.

"It was obvious that the Johnson family could not fit around this small piece of furniture—they probably didn't fit comfortably around it when it was whole. . . .

"Throughout my life this kind act has been a powerful reminder of true giving" (Son Quang Le, as told to Beth Ellis Le, "Two-of-a-Kind Table," *Ensign*, July 2004, 63).

### Come to Zion

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object" (*History of the Church*, 3:390). In our families and in our stakes and districts, let us seek to build up Zion through unity, godliness, and charity, preparing for that great day when Zion, the New Jerusalem, will arise. In the words of our hymn:

Israel, Israel, God is calling,  
Calling thee from lands of woe.  
Babylon the great is falling;  
God shall all her tow'rs o'erthrow. . . .

Come to Zion, come to Zion,  
And within her walls rejoice. . . .

Come to Zion, come to Zion,  
For your coming Lord is nigh.  
["Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,"  
*Hymns*, no. 7]

I bear witness of Jesus Christ, the King of Zion, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Eyring

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the Primary choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing "I Love to See the Temple."

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Don R. Clarke of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I Love to See the Temple."

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## Elder David A. Bednar

My message in the last general conference focused upon the gospel principle of asking in faith in prayer. Today I want to discuss three additional principles that can help our prayers become more meaningful, and I pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for me and for you.

### Counsel with the Lord in all our doings

Principle #1. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we counsel with the Lord in all our doings (see Alma 37:37).

Simply stated, prayer is communication to Heavenly Father from His sons and daughters on earth. "As soon as we learn



the true relationship in which we stand toward God (namely, God is our Father, and we are his children), then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 752). We are commanded to pray always to the Father in the name of the Son (see 3 Nephi 18:19–20). We are promised that if we pray sincerely for that which is right and good and in accordance with God’s will, we can be blessed, protected, and directed (see 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 19:38).

Revelation is communication from Heavenly Father to His children on earth. As we ask in faith, we can receive revelation upon revelation and knowledge upon knowledge and come to know the mysteries and peaceable things that bring joy and eternal life (see D&C 42:61). The mysteries are those matters that can only be known and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World* [1974], 211).

The revelations of the Father and the Son are conveyed through the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the witness of and messenger for the Father and the Son.

### *Spiritual creation of each day*

The patterns used by God in creating the earth are instructive in helping us understand how to make prayer meaningful. In the third chapter of the book of Moses we learn that all things were created spiritually before they were naturally upon the earth.

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth,

“And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth” (Moses 3:4–5).

We learn from these verses that the spiritual creation preceded the temporal creation. In a similar way, meaningful morning prayer is an important element in the spiritual creation of each day—and precedes the temporal creation or the actual execution of the day. Just as the temporal creation was linked to and a continuation of the spiritual creation, so meaningful morning and evening prayers are linked to and are a continuation of each other.

Consider this example. There may be things in our character, in our behavior, or concerning our spiritual growth about which we need to counsel with Heavenly Father in morning prayer. After expressing appropriate thanks for blessings received, we plead for understanding, direction, and help to do the things we cannot do in our own strength alone. For example, as we pray, we might:

- Reflect on those occasions when we have spoken harshly or inappropriately to those we love the most.
- Recognize that we know better than this, but we do not always act in accordance with what we know.
- Express remorse for our weaknesses and for not putting off the natural man more earnestly.
- Determine to pattern our life after the Savior more completely.
- Plead for greater strength to do and to become better.

Such a prayer is a key part of the spiritual preparation for our day.

During the course of the day, we keep a prayer in our heart for continued assistance and guidance—even as Alma suggested: “Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord” (Alma 37:36).

We notice during this particular day that there are occasions where normally we would have a tendency to speak harshly, and we do not; or we might be inclined to anger, but we are not. We discern heavenly help and strength and humbly recognize answers to our prayer. Even in that

moment of recognition, we offer a silent prayer of gratitude.

At the end of our day, we kneel again and report back to our Father. We review the events of the day and express heartfelt thanks for the blessings and the help we received. We repent and, with the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord, identify ways we can do and become better tomorrow. Thus our evening prayer builds upon and is a continuation of our morning prayer. And our evening prayer also is a preparation for meaningful morning prayer.

### *Prayers linked together*

Morning and evening prayers—and all of the prayers in between—are not unrelated, discrete events; rather, they are linked together each day and across days, weeks, months, and even years. This is in part how we fulfill the scriptural admonition to “pray always” (Luke 21:36; 3 Nephi 18:15, 18; D&C 31:12). Such meaningful prayers are instrumental in obtaining the highest blessings God holds in store for His faithful children.

Prayer becomes meaningful as we remember our relationship to Deity and heed the admonition to:

“Cry unto God for *all* thy support; yea, let *all* thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let *all* thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

“Counsel with the Lord in *all* thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 37:36–37; italics added).

### **Express heartfelt gratitude**

Principle #2. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we express heartfelt gratitude.

### *A lesson on expressing gratitude*

During our service at Brigham Young University–Idaho, Sister Bednar and I frequently hosted General Authorities in our home. Our family learned an important lesson about meaningful prayer as we knelt to pray one evening with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Earlier in the day Sister Bednar and I had been informed about the unexpected death of a dear friend, and our immediate desire was to pray for the surviving spouse and children. As I invited my wife to offer the prayer, the member of the Twelve, unaware of the tragedy, graciously suggested that in the prayer Sister Bednar express only appreciation for blessings received and ask for nothing. His counsel was similar to Alma’s instruction to the members of the ancient Church “to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things” (Mosiah 26:39). Given the unexpected tragedy, requesting blessings for our friends initially seemed to us more urgent than expressing thanks.

Sister Bednar responded in faith to the direction she received. She thanked Heavenly Father for meaningful and memorable experiences with this dear friend. She communicated sincere gratitude for the Holy Ghost as the Comforter and for the gifts of the Spirit that enable us to face adversity and to serve others. Most importantly, she expressed appreciation for the plan of salvation, for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for His Resurrection, and for the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel which make it possible for families to be together forever.

Our family learned from that experience a great lesson about the power of thankfulness in meaningful prayer. Because of and through that prayer, our family was blessed with inspiration about a number of issues that were pressing upon our minds and stirring in our hearts. We learned that our gratefulness for the plan of happiness and for the Savior's mission of salvation provided needed reassurance and strengthened our confidence that all would be well with our dear friends. We also received insights concerning the things about which we should pray and appropriately ask in faith.

*Rejoice in gratitude during prayer*

The most meaningful and spiritual prayers I have experienced contained many expressions of thanks and few, if any, requests. As I am blessed now to pray with apostles and prophets, I find among these modern-day leaders of the Savior's Church the same characteristic that describes Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon: these are men whose hearts swell with thanksgiving to God for the many privileges and blessings which He bestows upon His people (see Alma 48:12). Also, they do not multiply many words, for it is given unto them what they should pray, and they are filled with desire (see 3 Nephi 19:24). The prayers of prophets are childlike in their simplicity and powerful because of their sincerity.

As we strive to make our prayers more meaningful, we should remember that "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21). Let me recommend that periodically you and I offer a prayer in which we only give thanks and express gratitude. Ask for nothing; simply let our souls rejoice and strive to communicate appreciation with all the energy of our hearts.

**Pray for others with real intent**

Principle #3. Prayer becomes more meaningful as we pray for others with real intent and a sincere heart.

Petitioning Heavenly Father for the blessings we desire in our personal lives is good and proper. However, praying earnestly for others, both those whom we love and those who spitefully use us, is also an important element of meaningful prayer. Just as expressing gratitude more often in our prayers enlarges the conduit for revelation, so praying for others with all of the energy of our souls increases our capacity to hear and to heed the voice of the Lord.

*Scriptural examples of praying for others*

We learn a vital lesson from the example of Lehi in the Book of Mormon. Lehi responded in faith to prophetic instruction and warnings concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. He then prayed unto the Lord "with all his heart, *in behalf of his people*" (1 Nephi 1:5; italics added). In answer to this fervent prayer, Lehi was blessed with a glorious vision of God and His Son and of the impending destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:6–9, 13, 18). Consequently, Lehi rejoiced, and his whole heart was filled because of the things which the Lord had shown him (see 1 Nephi 1:15). Please note that the vision came in response to a prayer for others and not as a result of a request for personal edification or guidance.

The Savior is the perfect example of praying for others with real intent. In His great Intercessory Prayer uttered on the night before His Crucifixion, Jesus prayed for His Apostles and all of the Saints.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . .

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; . . .

“. . . That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:9, 20, 26).

*Let others hear us pray for them*

During the Savior’s ministry on the American continent, He directed the people to ponder His teachings and to pray for understanding. He healed the sick, and He prayed for the people using language that could not be written (see 3 Nephi 17:1–16). The impact of His prayer was profound: “No one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father” (3 Nephi 17:17). Imagine what it might have been like to hear the Savior of the world praying for us.

Do our spouses, children, and other family members likewise feel the power of our prayers offered unto the Father for their specific needs and desires? Do those we serve hear us pray for them with faith and sincerity? If those we love and serve have not heard and felt the influence of our earnest prayers in their behalf, then the time to repent is now. As we emulate

the example of the Savior, our prayers truly will become more meaningful.

### **Pray always**

We are commanded to “pray always” (2 Nephi 32:9; D&C 10:5; 90:24)—“vocally as well as in [our] heart[s]; . . . before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private” (D&C 19:28). I testify that prayer becomes more meaningful as we counsel with the Lord in all of our doings, as we express heartfelt gratitude, and as we pray for others with real intent and a sincere heart.

I witness Heavenly Father lives and that He hears and answers every earnest prayer. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Mediator. Revelation is real. The fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth in this dispensation. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Don R. Clarke offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 4, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center provided the music. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brethren, we welcome you to the general priesthood session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in many locations throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Called to Serve." The invocation will then be offered by Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Called to Serve."  
Elder David S. Baxter offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder James J. Hamula of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

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## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **Inestimable value of the priesthood**

My dear brethren, we are gathered across the world in the marvelous brotherhood of the holy priesthood of God. How blessed we are to be among the very few men on earth trusted to be authorized to act in the name of the Savior to bless others through the righteous use of His priesthood.

I wonder, brethren, how many of us seriously ponder the inestimable value of holding the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. When we consider how few men who have lived on earth have received the priesthood and how Jesus Christ has empowered those individuals to act in His name, we should feel deeply humble and profoundly grateful for the priesthood we hold.

The priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. That authority is essential to the fulfillment of His work on earth. The priesthood we hold is a delegated portion of the eternal authority of God. As we are true and faithful, our ordination to the priesthood will be eternal.

However, the conferring of authority alone does not of itself bestow the power

of the office. The extent to which we can exercise the power of the priesthood depends upon personal worthiness, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments. When supported by a secure foundation of gospel knowledge, our capacity to worthily use the priesthood is greatly enhanced.

The perfect role model for use of the holy priesthood is our Savior, Jesus Christ. He ministered with love, compassion, and charity. His life was a matchless example of humility and power. The greatest blessings from the use of the priesthood flow from humble service to others without thought of self. By following His example as a faithful, obedient priesthood bearer, we can access great power. When required, we can exercise the power of healing, of blessing, of consoling, and of counseling, as the quiet promptings of the Spirit are faithfully followed.

### **Worthiness to use the priesthood**

For a few minutes I ask you to consider that you and I are alone in a quiet place where the atmosphere permits direction by the Holy Spirit. Some of you

receive periodic personal worthiness interviews, while others have callings where that seldom occurs. Will you consider that in the next few minutes you and I will have a private priesthood interview?

As we share these moments together, I ask you to ponder your personal worthiness to use the sacred authority you hold. I will also ask you to consider how consistently you use your priesthood to bless others. My intent is not to criticize but to help increase the benefits that flow from your use of the priesthood.

Are your private, personal thoughts conducive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or would they benefit from a thorough housecleaning? Do you nourish your mind with elevating material, or have you succumbed to the enticement of pornographic literature or Web sites? Do you scrupulously avoid the use of stimulants and substances that conflict with the intent of the Word of Wisdom, or have you made some personally rationalized exceptions? Are you most careful to control what enters your mind through your eyes and ears to ensure that it is wholesome and elevating?

If you are divorced, do you provide for the real financial need of the children you have fathered, not just the minimum legal requirement?

If you are married, are you faithful to your wife mentally as well as physically? Are you loyal to your marriage covenants by never engaging in conversation with another woman that you wouldn't want your wife to overhear? Are you kind and supportive of your own wife and children? Do you assist your wife by doing some of the household chores? Do you lead out in family activities such as scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening, or does your wife fill in the gap your lack of attention leaves in the home? Do you tell her you love her?

If any of you feel uncomfortable with any of the answers you have mentally given to the questions I have asked, take

corrective action now. If there are worthiness issues, with all of the tenderness of my heart I encourage you to speak to your bishop or a member of your stake presidency now. You need help. Those matters that trouble you will not heal themselves. Without attention they will likely get worse. It may be difficult for you to speak to your priesthood leader, but I encourage you to do it now for your own good and for the benefit of those who love you.

### **Using the priesthood to bless others**

Brethren, I now speak of how the priesthood should be used to bless the lives of others, especially the daughters of Father in Heaven.

The family proclamation states that a husband and wife should be equal partners. I feel assured that every wife in the Church would welcome that opportunity and support it. Whether it occurs or not depends upon the husband. Many husbands practice equal partnership with their companion to the benefit of both and the blessing of their children. However, many do not. I encourage any man who is reluctant to develop an equal partnership with his wife to obey the counsel inspired by the Lord and do it. Equal partnership yields its greatest benefit when both husband and wife seek the will of the Lord in making important decisions for themselves and for their family.

Be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit in the use of that consummate privilege of acting in the name of the Lord through your priesthood. Be more aware of how you can make greater use of the power of the priesthood in the lives of those you love and serve. I am thinking particularly of individuals such as a widow in need who likely could benefit from the help of an understanding, compassionate priesthood bearer. Many such will never request help. Be aware of the range of challenges that you could help meet in her home, such as the relief of anxieties



through an inspired priesthood blessing or the need for small repairs.

As a bishop, be sensitive and attentive to the sisters who serve in your ward council. They can identify the needs of the women in your ward who are not blessed with priesthood in the home. Through a home visit, the Relief Society can identify needs and recommend solutions to you. For matters beyond the scope of the Relief Society, you can call upon the elders quorum or the high priests group to provide assistance according to the need.

As a bishop, when you counsel with a husband and wife who are in marital difficulty, do you give the same credence to the statements of the woman that you do to the man? As I travel throughout the world, I find that some women are short-changed in that a priesthood leader is more persuaded by a son rather than a daughter of Father in Heaven. That imbalance simply must never occur.

Do single sisters receive the consideration and attention they deserve when they attend family wards? Do they have opportunities to serve in significant callings where they are made to feel welcome and wanted? Do they receive the required priesthood support?

### **Love, cherish, and respect women**

The purpose of priesthood authority is to give, to serve, to lift, to inspire—not to exercise unrighteous control or force. In some cultures, tradition places a man in a role to dominate, control, and regulate all family affairs. That is not the way of the Lord. In some places the wife is almost owned by her husband, as if she were another of his personal possessions. That is a cruel, unproductive, mistaken vision of marriage, encouraged by Lucifer, that every priesthood holder must reject. It is founded on the false premise that a man is somehow superior to a woman. Nothing could be further from the truth. The scriptures confirm that Father in Heaven saved

His greatest, most splendid, supreme creation, woman, to the end. Only after all else was completed was woman created. Only then was the work pronounced complete and good.

Of our wives, mothers, grandmothers, and sisters and other important women in our lives, President Hinckley declared:

“Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth.”<sup>1</sup>

By divine design a woman is fundamentally different from a man in many ways.<sup>2</sup> She is compassionate and seeks the interests of others around her. However, that compassionate nature can become overwhelming for women who identify far more to accomplish than they can possibly do, even with the help of the Lord. Some become discouraged because they do not feel they are doing all they should do. I believe this is a feeling that many worthy, effective, devoted women of the Church experience.

Therefore, as a husband or son, express gratitude for what your wife and mother do for you. Express your love and gratitude often. That will make life far richer, more pleasant and purposeful for many of the daughters of Father in Heaven who seldom hear a complimentary comment and are not thanked for the multitude of things they do. As a husband, when you sense that your wife needs lifting, hold her in your arms and tell her how much you love her. May each of us ever be tender and appreciative of the special women who enrich our lives.

Often the real value of something is not recognized until it is taken from us. To illustrate, consider a man who had lost

the use of the priesthood through transgression. Later it was returned to him as part of the restoration of ordinances he obtained through full repentance. After the restoration, I turned to his wife and said, “Would you like a blessing?” She enthusiastically responded. Then I looked at the husband, now capable of using his priesthood, and said, “Would you like to give your wife a blessing?” Words cannot express the profound emotion of such an experience and the bonds of love, trust, and gratitude it created. You shouldn’t have to lose your priesthood to appreciate it more fully.

I know the immense joy and happiness that come from loving, cherishing, and respecting my precious wife with all my heart and soul. May your use of the priesthood and treatment of the important women in your life bring you the same satisfaction.

### **Be more productive with the priesthood**

As one of the 15 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, I express my own feelings regarding the priesthood as it has

been captured perfectly by this statement of President Howard W. Hunter:

“As special witnesses of our Savior, we have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work he has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

God will hold us accountable for how we treat His precious daughters. Therefore, let us treat them as He would wish to have them treated. I pray that the Lord will guide us to be more inspired, sensitive, and productive with the priesthood we hold, especially with His daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. See Moses 4:17–19; 5:10–11.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.

## **Elder Jay E. Jensen**

### **Arms of safety**

I speak this evening about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its relevance to the administration of the sacrament by the holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, taught so powerfully and so beautifully by Elder Oaks this morning. I will use a short scripture phrase that helps me visualize the Savior’s mercy. It is the phrase “arms of safety” (see Alma 34:16).

### **Secure in His arms**

A family had been taking pictures on a lookout point of the North Rim of the

Grand Canyon. They heard screams and ran to find that a two-year-old girl had fallen through a railing to a ledge about 35 feet below. The little one tried to climb back up, but her movements caused her to slip even farther until she was 5 feet from a dangerous 200-foot drop.

A 19-year-old young man named Ian saw where she was and, using his emergency-response training, knew how to handle the situation. These are his words:

“Immediately, it all came at me, and I just knew what I had to do. I set down my camera and went up the trail a little ways where it wasn’t as steep, climbed over



the rail, scrambled down a bunch of rocks and through brush, and found her.’ Holding her in his arms for an hour, Ian waited until emergency teams could drop down with ropes [to rescue them]” (in Patricia Auxier, “Save Her!” *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 7).

The phrase “holding her in his arms” caught my attention because the scriptures talk about arms—arms of love, arms of mercy, and arms of safety (see 2 Nephi 1:15; Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33; D&C 6:20; 29:1).

The scripture phrase “encircled in the arms of safety” comes from Amulek’s message to the Zoramites about the infinite and eternal Atonement. He taught that the sacrifice of the Son of God made it possible for man to have faith in Christ to lead us to repent. “And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety” (Alma 34:16; see also verses 9–15).

### Teach intangibles with tangibles

To better understand “arms of safety” it is important to remember that the Savior used tangible things, such as coins, seeds, sheep, loaves, fishes, and body parts to teach gospel principles.

Arms are tangible, and we use them to express affection and love. When I come home from the office, I am encircled in the tangible arms of my wife. I have experienced arms of love and safety throughout my service in Latin America by means of the common greeting, *un abrazo*, or hug.

As I have pondered how to effectively teach the Atonement to others, the phrase “arms of safety” has been useful. When we were baptized and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, we received two ordinances that introduce us to the arms of safety. By coming humbly and fully repentant to sacrament meeting and worthily partaking of the sacrament, we may feel those arms again and again.

### Likening a sacrament meeting to our day

The section heading to Doctrine and Covenants 110 gives the context for one of our most relevant verses about enjoying arms of safety. On a Sabbath day during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that he and other priesthood holders had administered the sacrament to the Church.

Following this sacred ordinance, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to pray in private. Following the prayer, the Savior appeared to these two men and said, “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

The sequence of events in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 parallels our day and is likened to us. Sabbath after Sabbath, you young priesthood holders administer the sacrament to the Saints, who come to sacrament meeting prayerfully, hungering for spiritual healing, hoping, pleading to hear in their minds and hearts these words:

“Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has testified that there is a spiritual cleansing or healing associated with the sacrament:

“The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we comply with this covenant, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. We are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us” (“Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 13).

## Implications for Aaronic Priesthood holders

To help members more fully receive that cleansing, or the arms of safety, those who hold keys to authorize and those who administer the sacrament should ensure that general guidelines in Church handbooks concerning the preparation, blessing, and passing of the sacrament are followed. Each priesthood holder should remember that he is acting on behalf of the Lord and be reverent and dignified. Generally speaking, our youth are exemplary. However, in the administration of the sacrament, occasionally we see a disturbing drift toward too much informality and casualness in dress and appearance.

Young men, before going to church, will you please pause before a mirror one more time and ask yourself if every aspect of your appearance is in order? Better still, invite someone you love, such as a parent, to look at you one more time, and if something is amiss, don't resent their counsel.

True servants of Jesus Christ are properly groomed and dressed, reflecting always His standards and not the worldly drift of casualness. Having every detail carefully attended to ensures that the Spirit of the Lord will be present. The dress or appearance of those administering the sacrament should not be a distraction for those who are earnestly seeking the blessings of the infinite Atonement.

A theme found in the messages of President Monson to us, the priesthood holders, is that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood: "It is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 60; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 57). I testify that this applies to the administration of the sacrament.

## Experiencing the arms of safety

While serving as a bishop, I witnessed the blessings of the Atonement in the lives

of Church members who committed serious transgressions. As a judge in Israel, I listened to their confessions and, when needed, placed restrictions upon them, such as not partaking of the sacrament for a time.

A young single adult in our ward was dating a young woman. They allowed their affections to get out of control. He came to me for counsel and help. Based on what was confessed and the impressions of the Spirit to me, among other things, he was not permitted to partake of the sacrament for a time. We met regularly to ensure that repentance had happened, and after an appropriate time I authorized him to again partake of the sacrament.

As I sat on the stand in that sacrament meeting, my eyes were drawn to him as he now partook of the sacrament worthily. I witnessed arms of mercy, love, and safety encircling him as the healing of the Atonement warmed his soul and lifted his load, resulting in the promised forgiveness, peace, and happiness.

## The Atonement—an ever-present power

I have experienced and have a witness of a truth that President Packer taught:

"For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 28; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 23).

I love my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I place my faith, my love, my loyalty, and my devotion in Them. I testify that God is our Heavenly Father and that we are His children. I bear witness that the Atonement is real and has

power in our lives. I testify that the restored gospel is true. These truths are found in the holy scriptures, especially

in the Book of Mormon. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder James J. Hamula

### Fighting the war against evil

I speak tonight to my brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. It is my desire to help you more deeply appreciate who you are, what your purpose in life is, and how you may succeed in accomplishing that purpose.

You have come into the world at a most significant time. We are entering the final stages of a great war. This war commenced before the foundations of the world and has been pursued with awful consequence throughout the world's history. I speak of the war between the followers of Christ and all those who deny Him as their God.<sup>1</sup>

John the Revelator wrote concerning this war:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”<sup>2</sup>

It was Satan who instigated this pre-mortal war. He did so by rebelling against our Father's plan of salvation for His children and rejecting the Christ, who was designated to effectuate the plan. Tragically, a third of our Father's children followed Satan.<sup>3</sup> Yet two-thirds did not. You, my young friends, were among these, and with them have come to earth to pursue the Father's plan of happiness.

Unfortunately, Satan's war did not end with his expulsion from heaven. As

John observed, Satan and his followers were “cast out into the earth”<sup>4</sup> and have come here with “great wrath.”<sup>5</sup> The evidence of their wrath can be seen in the blood and horror that has afflicted man from the beginning of time.

So profound and extensive have been the wounds suffered among men that God Himself wept as He surveyed man's condition.<sup>6</sup>

We now find ourselves in the last days of this earth's temporal history. In a coming day, our Father's Son will return to the earth from which He was rejected and reclaim it as His own.<sup>7</sup> In that day, He will subdue Satan and his legions and usher in a thousand years of peace and righteousness.<sup>8</sup> In anticipation of that day, God has restored His kingdom to the earth one last time. That kingdom is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>9</sup>

While God's kingdom has been established on the earth in times past, the people to whom the kingdom was previously committed were unable to keep it. This time, however, is different. The prophetic promise is that this time God's kingdom will not be lost but will overcome the world.<sup>10</sup>

### You are the Lord's warriors

To ensure its ultimate success, the final restoration of God's kingdom has been commenced with unprecedented spiritual power<sup>11</sup> and is being sustained by that same spiritual power and something more. Reserved to come forth in these last days and labor for our Father and His Son are some of the most valiant and noble of our Father's sons and daughters. Their valiance and nobility were demonstrated in

the pre-earth struggle with Satan. There, “being left to choose good or evil,” they “[chose] good” and exhibited “exceedingly great faith” and “good works.”<sup>12</sup> Such are the traits that are now needed to sustain the work of God in the earth and to save the souls of men from the intensifying wrath of the adversary.

Now, my young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are these valiant and noble sons of our Father! You are the strength of the Lord’s house, His warriors!<sup>13</sup> You are those who chose good over evil and who exhibited “exceedingly great faith” and “good works.” And because of your personal history, you were entrusted to come to the earth in these last days to do again what you did before—to once again choose good over evil, exercise exceedingly great faith, and perform good works—and to do so in behalf of the kingdom of God on the earth and your fellowman!

### **The focus of Satan’s war is on you**

With God’s kingdom restored to the earth and your entry into the world, Satan knows that “he hath but a short time.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Satan is marshalling every resource at his disposal to entice you into transgression. He knows that if he can draw you into transgression, he may prevent you from serving a full-time mission, marrying in the temple, and securing your future children in the faith, all of which weakens not only you but the Church. He knows that nothing can overthrow God’s kingdom “save it [be] the transgression of [his] people.”<sup>15</sup> Make no mistake about it—the focus of his war is now on you—you who seek to “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

Now, my young friends, you need to appreciate that our days now and the days that lie ahead are “perilous.”<sup>17</sup> In this regard, President Boyd K. Packer has observed:

“I know of nothing in the history of the Church or in the history of the world

to compare with our present circumstances. Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Be sober, valiant warriors**

In referring to the perils of our day, I do not intend to inspire fear, but soberness. Being sober means being earnest and serious in assessing your circumstances and careful and circumspect in weighing the consequences of your actions. Soberness therefore yields good judgment, as well as measured conduct. No wonder, then, that prophets counsel young men to be sober.<sup>19</sup> Remember Mormon’s observation that what made Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors so effective in battle was not just their courage, strength, and trustworthiness, but their “soberness.”<sup>20</sup> Mormon valued such a trait because he was blessed to possess it himself. It was Mormon who was entrusted with the sacred records of the Nephite nation at only 10 years of age because he was a “sober child” and “quick to observe.”<sup>21</sup> And it was Mormon who, at age 15, was “visited of the Lord” and “knew of the goodness of Jesus” because he was of a “sober mind.”<sup>22</sup>

So, as we enter the final climactic stages of the war against Satan, be sober, my young friends. Understand that you cannot partake of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. You cannot participate in pornography or other immoral activity. You cannot lie, cheat, or steal. You cannot use false, demeaning, or dirty language. You cannot deface your body with tattoos and other piercings. You cannot do these things and be victorious in the battle for your own soul, let alone be a valiant warrior in the great struggle for the souls of all the rest of our Father’s children.<sup>23</sup>

### **How to win the war against evil**

Understand, my young friends, that there is only one way to win the war

against Satan, and that is to win it in the same way it was won in the beginning. When victory was finally achieved in the War in Heaven, a loud voice was heard to declare:

“Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. . . .

“For they [referring to Michael and his angels] have overcome him [referring to the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; for they loved not their own lives, but kept the testimony even unto death.”<sup>24</sup>

Do not miss the significance of this declaration. Satan was overcome in the beginning by (1) *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, (2) *testimony* of Him that was steadfastly kept to the very end, and (3) *consecration* of oneself to the Lord and His work. If this was the means for defeating him in the beginning, you can be sure that this is the one sure way to defeat him now.<sup>25</sup>

Now, you may wonder how to acquire the faith, testimony, and consecration of spirit necessary to overcome the adversary. Let me assure you that these qualities are already within you. You simply need to recover them. To that end, allow me to make three suggestions.

First, do as young Joseph Smith did. Find a quiet place and pray to your Father in Heaven.<sup>26</sup> Do so regularly and earnestly. Prayer is a precondition to revelation. The more regular and earnest the prayer, the more frequent the revelation. When received, revelation provides the evidence or assurance of things unseen, which is the foundation of faith.<sup>27</sup>

Second, learn to hear the voice of the Lord. His is a still, small, and whisper-like voice.<sup>28</sup> It is one that is felt more than it is heard. It comes in the form of thoughts, feelings, and impressions. To hear such a voice, you must be still and quiet in your own soul, laying aside your excess laughter and light-mindedness.<sup>29</sup> While it may not seem easy to so discipline your life,

hearing the precious, loving voice of the Lord will sustain you in every circumstance and is therefore worth every effort.

Third, obey the word of the Lord as it is given to you. His word will not only love and comfort but invariably instruct and correct. Do as He bids you to do, no matter how hard it may seem to you, and do it now. It is in doing the will of the Lord that knowledge of Him and love for Him accrue to your soul, which leads you to be ever more willing to lay down your own life and follow Him.<sup>30</sup>

My dear brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, these are your days! Do not squander them! Be sober! Take “the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall . . . quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”<sup>31</sup> Then “fight the good fight of faith.”<sup>32</sup> And when you have done all, “stand”<sup>33</sup> still and “see the salvation of the Lord.”<sup>34</sup> I assure you that His salvation will come, delivering you and yours from every evil. I so testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See 1 Nephi 14:10, 13 (“There are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil . . . [which] gather[s] together multitudes upon the face of all the earth . . . to fight against the Lamb of God”).
2. Revelation 12:7–9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
4. Revelation 12:9.
5. Revelation 12:12.
6. See Moses 7:29, 36–37.
7. See Matthew 21:33–44.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:110; Moses 7:64.
9. See Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 84.
10. See Daniel 2:44–45; Doctrine and Covenants 38:9–15; 82:24.
11. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–19 (the appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith was the first such appearance to man since the Garden of

- Eden); 1:30–49 (Moroni); Doctrine and Covenants 27:7–8, 12–13 (John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John); 110:11–16 (Moses, Elias, and Elijah); 128:19–21 (“divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present”).
12. Alma 13:3.
  13. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:55; 105:16.
  14. Revelation 12:12.
  15. Mosiah 27:13.
  16. Revelation 12:17.
  17. 2 Timothy 3:1.
  18. Boyd K. Packer, “The One Pure Defense” (address to CES religious educators, Feb. 6, 2004), 4.
  19. Alma counseled each of his sons—Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton—to “be sober” (see Alma 37:47; 38:15; 42:31). Paul also exhorted young men to be “sober minded” (Titus 2:6). In addition, Paul counseled others to be sober, particularly bishops (see Romans 12:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 1 Timothy 3:2, 11; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 12).
  20. See Alma 53:20–21.
  21. Mormon 1:2.
  22. Mormon 1:15.
  23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “An Unending Conflict, a Victory Assured,” *Ensign*, June 2007, 4–9.
  24. Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:9, 11.
  25. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53 (those who inherit the celestial kingdom “overcome by faith”); 1 John 5:4–5 (“this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” and “he that overcometh the world” is “he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God”).
  26. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–15.
  27. See Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21; Ether 12:6.
  28. The voice of the Spirit is described as a still, small voice of perfect mildness, as if it were a whisper. See 1 Kings 19:12; Helaman 5:30; Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
  29. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:69, 121.
  30. See Matthew 16:24–25; John 7:17.
  31. Ephesians 6:16.
  32. 1 Timothy 6:12.
  33. See Malachi 3:2. “Who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17). Those who have taken the “whole armour of God” and have “done all” (Ephesians 6:13).
  34. Exodus 14:13.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now stand and sing “Praise to the Man.” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us, after which we shall hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Praise to the Man.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Lift where you stand

Beloved brethren, I am honored to be with you at this worldwide priesthood gathering. With you, I am so grateful to be in the presence of our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, and President Eyring. Brethren, we thank you for your faithfulness and moral strength. It is indeed a privilege and a joy to be part of this great brotherhood.

Some years ago in our meetinghouse in Darmstadt, Germany, a group of brethren was asked to move a grand piano from the chapel to the adjoining cultural hall, where it was needed for a musical event. None were professional movers, and the task of getting that gravity-friendly instrument through the chapel and into the cultural hall seemed nearly impossible. Everybody knew that this task required



not only physical strength but also careful coordination. There were plenty of ideas, but not one could keep the piano balanced correctly. They repositioned the brethren by strength, height, and age over and over again—nothing worked.

As they stood around the piano, uncertain of what to do next, a good friend of mine, Brother Hanno Luschin, spoke up. He said, “Brethren, stand close together and lift where you stand.”

It seemed too simple. Nevertheless, each lifted where he stood, and the piano rose from the ground and moved into the cultural hall as if on its own power. That was the answer to the challenge. They merely needed to stand close together and lift where they stood.

I have often thought of Brother Luschin’s simple idea and have been impressed by its profound truth. Tonight I would like to expand on that simple concept, “lift where you stand.”

### **Some want to lead; others want to hide**

Although it may seem simple, lifting where we stand is a principle of power. Most of the priesthood bearers I know understand and live by this principle. They are eager to roll up their sleeves and go to work, whatever that work might be. They faithfully perform their priesthood duties. They magnify their callings. They serve the Lord by serving others. They stand close together and lift where they stand.

However, there are those who sometimes struggle with this concept. And when they do, they seem to fall into one of two camps: either they seek to lead, or they seek to hide. They covet a crown or a cave.

### **Those who seek to lead**

Those who seek to lead may feel they are capable of doing more than what they are currently asked to do. Some might think, “If only I were a bishop, I could

make a difference.” They believe that their abilities far surpass their calling. Perhaps if they were in an important position of leadership, they would work hard at making a difference. But they wonder, “What possible influence can I have as merely a home teacher or a counselor in the quorum presidency?”

### **Those who seek to hide**

Those who seek to hide may feel that they are too busy to serve in the Church. When the chapel needs to be cleaned, when the Mendez family needs help moving, when the bishop calls them to teach a class, they always seem to have a ready excuse.

Twenty years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson shared reports from bishops and stake presidents that some members “are turning down calls to serve claiming they are ‘too busy’ or they ‘haven’t got time.’ Others . . . accept such callings, but refuse to magnify those callings.”

President Benson went on to say that “the Lord expects each of us to have a calling in His Church so that others may be blessed by our talents and influence.”<sup>1</sup>

Oddly enough, often the root cause of both of these tendencies—seeking to lead or seeking to hide—may be the same: selfishness.

### **A better way**

There is a better way, taught to us by the Savior Himself: “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”<sup>2</sup>

When we seek to serve others, we are motivated not by selfishness but by charity. This is the way Jesus Christ lived His life and the way a holder of the priesthood must live his. The Savior did not care for the honors of men; Satan offered Him all the kingdoms and glory of the world, and Jesus rejected the offer immediately and completely.<sup>3</sup> Throughout His life, the Savior must have often felt

tired and pressed upon, with scarcely a moment to Himself; yet He always made time for the sick, the sorrowful, and the overlooked.

In spite of this shining example, we too easily and too often get caught up in seeking the honors of men rather than serving the Lord with all our might, mind, and strength.

Brethren, when we stand before the Lord to be judged, will He look upon the positions we have held in the world or even in the Church? Do you suppose that titles we have had other than “husband,” “father,” or “priesthood holder” will mean much to Him? Do you think He will care how packed our schedule was or how many important meetings we attended? Do you suppose that our success in filling our days with appointments will serve as an excuse for failure to spend time with our wife and family?

The Lord judges so very differently from the way we do. He is pleased with the noble servant, not with the self-serving noble.

Those who are humble in this life will wear crowns of glory in the next. Jesus taught this doctrine Himself when He told the story of the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and ate sumptuously every day, while the beggar Lazarus yearned merely to taste of the crumbs from the rich man’s table. In the next life, Lazarus appeared in glory next to Abraham, while the rich man was cast into hell, where he lifted up his eyes in torment.<sup>4</sup>

### **Example of John Rowe Moyle**

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Rowe Moyle. John was a convert to the Church who left his home in England and traveled to the Salt Lake Valley as part of a handcart company. He built a home for his family in a small town a valley away from Salt Lake City. John was an accomplished

stonecutter and, because of this skill, was asked to work on the Salt Lake Temple.

Every Monday John left home at two o’clock in the morning and walked six hours in order to be at his post on time. On Friday he would leave his work at five o’clock in the evening and walk almost until midnight before arriving home. He did this year after year.

One day while he was doing his chores at home, a cow kicked him in the leg, causing a compound fracture. With limited medical resources, the only option was to amputate the broken leg. So John’s family and friends strapped him onto a door and, with a bucksaw, cut off his leg a few inches from the knee.

In spite of the crude surgery, the leg started to heal. Once John could sit up in bed, he began carving a wooden leg with an ingenious joint that served as an ankle to an artificial foot. Walking on this device was extremely painful, but John did not give up, building up his endurance until he could make the 22-mile journey to the Salt Lake Temple each week, where he continued his work.

His hands carved the words “Holiness to the Lord” that stand today as a golden marker to all who visit the Salt Lake Temple.<sup>5</sup>

John did not do this for the praise of man. Neither did he shirk his duty, even though he had every reason to do so. He knew what the Lord expected him to do.

Years later, John’s grandson Henry D. Moyle was called as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Eventually he served in the First Presidency of the Church. President Moyle’s service in these callings was honorable, but his grandfather John’s service, though somewhat less public, is just as pleasing to the Lord. John’s character, his legacy of sacrifice, serves as a banner of faithfulness and an ensign of duty to his family and to the Church. John Rowe Moyle understood the meaning of “lift where you stand.”



### **Example of Helaman's 2,000 warriors**

Individual recognition is rarely an indication of the value of our service. We do not know the names, for example, of any of the 2,000 sons of Helaman. As individuals, they are unnamed. As a group, however, their name will always be remembered for honesty, courage, and the willingness to serve. They accomplished together what none of them could have accomplished alone.

That is a lesson for us, brethren of the priesthood. When we stand close together and lift where we stand, when we care more for the glory of the kingdom of God than for our own prestige or pleasure, we can accomplish so much more.

### **Every calling is an opportunity to grow**

No calling is beneath us. Every calling provides an opportunity to serve and to grow. The Lord organized the Church in a way that offers each member an opportunity for service, which, in turn, leads to personal spiritual growth. Whatever your calling, I urge you to see it as an opportunity not only to strengthen and bless others but also to become what Heavenly Father wants you to become.

When traveling to the stakes of Zion for the purpose of reorganizing a stake presidency, I have sometimes been surprised when, during an interview, a brother would tell me that he had received an impression that he would be in the next presidency.

When I first heard this, I wasn't sure how to react. It took some time before the Holy Spirit gave me understanding. I believe that the Lord has a certain calling for every man. Sometimes He grants spiritual promptings telling us that we are *worthy* to receive certain callings. This is a spiritual blessing, a tender mercy from God.

But sometimes we do not hear the rest of what the Lord is telling us. "Although you are worthy to serve in this position,"

He may say, "this is not my calling for you. It is my desire instead that you lift where you stand." God knows what is best for us.

### **An assignment only you can perform**

Every priesthood holder stands at a unique place and has an important task that only he can perform.

We all have heard stories of how President Monson visits and blesses the elderly and the sick, always attending to their needs and bringing them cheer, comfort, and love. President Monson has a natural way about him that makes people feel better about themselves. Wouldn't it be wonderful if President Monson could visit and watch over every family in the Church?

It would. But, of course, he can't—and he shouldn't. The Lord has not asked him to do that. The Lord has asked us, as home teachers, to love and watch over our assigned families. The Lord has not asked President Monson to organize and conduct our family home evening. He wants us, as fathers, to do this.

You may feel that there are others who are more capable or more experienced who could fulfill your callings and assignments better than you can, but the Lord gave you your responsibilities for a reason. There may be people and hearts only you can reach and touch. Perhaps no one else could do it in quite the same way.

Our Heavenly Father asks that we represent Him in the noble work of reaching out and blessing the lives of His children. He asks us to stand firm with the power of the priesthood in our hearts and souls and give the calling we have at this moment our best efforts.

Brethren, as strong as you are, you cannot and you should not lift a piano by yourself. Likewise, none of us can or should move the Lord's work alone. But if we all stand close together in the place the Lord has appointed and lift where we stand, nothing can keep this divine work from moving upward and forward.

Brethren, may we cease to aspire and cease to retire!

May we always remember this profound lesson: that we are banner bearers of the Lord Jesus Christ, upheld by the Holy Spirit of God, faithful and true to the end, each one devoted to give our all to the cause of Zion and bound by covenant to stand close together and lift where we stand.

For this I pray, and I leave you my blessing and my love in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 451–52; see also “Provo Tabernacle Rededicated,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 70.
2. Matthew 20:27.
3. See Matthew 4:8–10.
4. See Luke 16:19–31.
5. In Gene A. Sessions, ed., “Biographies and Reminiscences from the James Henry Moyle Collection,” typescript, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 203.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### To those who feel overwhelmed

My dear brethren, tonight I wish to encourage priesthood holders who at times feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities. That is a challenge I have spoken of before. I return to it because it returns so often in the lives of those I love and serve.

Most of you have discovered that your priesthood duties will stretch you to the point that you wonder if you can stretch that far. It may have happened when you were asked to speak in a stake conference before hundreds of people. For the recent convert, it may have been being asked to pray in public or teach a class for the first time. For some, it may have been trying to learn a language in a missionary training center. If that didn’t take you to your limit, it surely did on the streets of a strange city when your mission president charged you to speak to every person you met to testify of the Savior and of the restoration of the gospel.

You may have thought then, “Once I finish my mission, being a faithful priesthood holder will get easier.” But in a few years you found yourself getting even less sleep at night, while trying to support a wife and a new baby, being kind and loving, scrambling to get some education,

reaching out to the members of your elders quorum, perhaps even helping them to move their furniture, and trying to find time to serve your ancestors in the temple. You may have kept a smile on your face with the thought: “When I get a little older, being a faithful priesthood holder will not require so much. It will get easier.”

Those of you further down the road are smiling because you know something about priesthood service. It is this: the more faithful service you give, the more the Lord asks of you. Your smile is a happy one because you know that He increases our power to carry the heavier load.

### Go to your outer limits to gain strength

The tough part of that reality, however, is that for Him to give you that increased power you must go in service and faith to your outer limits.

It is like building muscle strength. You must break down your muscles to build them up. You push muscles to the point of exhaustion. Then they repair themselves, and they develop greater strength. Increased spiritual strength is a gift from God which He can give when we push in His service to our limits. Through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ,

our natures can be changed. Then our power to carry burdens can be increased more than enough to compensate for the increased service we will be asked to give.

That helps me understand when I see someone else who makes priesthood service look easy. I know that they have either passed hard tests or that the tests lie ahead. So rather than envying them, I stand ready to help when the going gets harder for them, because it surely will.

That testing of our limits in priesthood service is made necessary by God's plan to qualify His children to live with Him again forever. Heavenly Father loves His children. He offered us eternal life, to live with Him again in families and in glory forever. To qualify us to receive that gift, He gave us a mortal body, the opportunity to be tempted to sin, and a way to be cleansed from that sin and to rise in the First Resurrection. He gave us His Beloved Son, Jehovah, as our Savior to make that possible. The Savior was born in mortal life, was tempted but never sinned, and then in Gethsemane and on Golgotha paid the price of our sins so that we could be cleansed. The purifying can come only to those who have faith enough in Jesus Christ to repent of sin, be cleansed through the ordinance of baptism, and make and keep covenants to obey all His commandments. And there was to be a fierce enemy of our souls, Lucifer, who would with his legions relentlessly try to capture every child of God to keep him or her from having the joy of eternal life.

### **You can't do it by yourself**

In His kindness and in great trust, Heavenly Father, with the Savior, allowed a selected few of His sons on earth to hold the priesthood. We have the authority and the power to act in God's name, to offer the true gospel of Jesus Christ and its ordinances to as many of Heavenly Father's children as we can. So you can sense the magnitude of our trust from God. And you

can sense its supreme importance and the opposition we face.

It is not surprising that we feel from time to time nearly overwhelmed. Your thought that "I'm not sure I can do this" is evidence that you are understanding what it means to hold the priesthood of God. The fact is that you can't do it by yourself. The responsibility is too difficult and too important for your mortal powers and for mine. Recognizing that is at the foundation of great priesthood service.

### **Angels to bear you up**

When those feelings of inadequacy strike us, that is the time to remember the Savior. He assures us that we don't do this work alone. There are scriptures to put on your mirror and to remember in the moments when you are doubting your capacity.

For instance, President Thomas S. Monson remembered the promised words of the Savior as he blessed me six months ago to stand fearlessly in my calling when it seemed hard. These words of the Savior, which He gave to His tiny band of priesthood holders in this dispensation, came to the prophet's mind as he laid his hands on my head:

"And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>1</sup>

The promise which President Monson remembered and quoted was fulfilled for me. Confidence replaced doubt, the Spirit came, medical helpers were inspired, my life was preserved, and I was borne up. Because of that blessing by President Monson, it will always be easy for me to remember the Savior and trust His promise that He goes before and beside us in His service.

I know that the promise of angels to bear us up is real. You might want to bring

to memory the assurance of Elisha to his frightened servant. That assurance is ours when we feel close to being overwhelmed in our service. Elisha faced real and terrible opposition:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

“And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Support through callings, assignments**

Like that servant of Elisha, there are more with you than those you can see opposed to you. Some who are with you will be invisible to your mortal eyes. The Lord will bear you up and will at times do it by calling others to stand with you. That is why we have quorums. That is why quorum leaders look at faces and into eyes in quorum meetings. That is why the bishop is more than presiding in the priests quorum. He is watching the faces of the priests. You will have such a bishop or such an elders quorum president or such a mission president. And he will come to help you and call others to stand with you. It may be to call the right companion to serve with you in your time of need.

That suggests at least two things. One is to recognize and welcome those whom the Lord sends to help us. The other is to see in every assignment the opportunity to strengthen another. A mission president once told me of a missionary he assigned to more than 12 or 13 companions. He said to me, “Every one of those companions

was about to go home early or be sent home. But we didn’t lose one of them.”

When I mentioned that miraculous fact later to the companion who saved so many at the point of their being overwhelmed, I got a response which surprised and taught me. It was this: “I don’t think that story is true. I never had a companion who was failing.”

I could see that a mission president had been inspired to send the right angel time after time. We can expect in our service to have help sent to us at the right time who will see strength in us and lift us up. And we can look forward to being the one sent by the Lord to encourage another.

### **How to help those who feel overwhelmed**

I can tell you from experience something about how to help if you are the one sent. Shortly after I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve, I got a phone call from President Faust, counselor in the First Presidency. He asked me to come to his office. I went with some concern as to why he would take the time to visit with me.

After some pleasantries, he looked at me and said, “Has it happened yet?” When I looked puzzled, he went on to say, “I’ve been watching you in meetings. It seems to me that you have been feeling that your calling is beyond you and that you are not qualified.”

I said that doubt had come to me, as if I had hit a wall. I expected that he was going to reassure me. I told him that I appreciated his being aware of my doubts and asked for his help. But I was surprised by his kind, firm reply. He said, “Don’t ask me. Go to Him.” Then he pointed up to heaven. Now years later I sit in that same office. When I walk into it I look up and remember him and how he taught me by example how to help those who are feeling overwhelmed in the Lord’s service. Find a way to send them with confidence to Him. If they will follow your counsel,

they will gain the strength they need and to spare.

### **All your heart, might, mind, and strength**

Time and again over your life, the Lord has been giving you the experiences to build strength, courage, and determination. He knew how much you would need that to serve Him. Some of it may have come, as it did for me, when you stood with other priesthood holders and said aloud the words: "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day."<sup>3</sup>

When you committed to that high standard and met it, the Lord was building a trust and strength in you that would be there when you needed it, whenever you were called to serve a cause higher than self-interest. I felt it one bright spring day on a lawn. I was being commissioned to defend my country. We were not then at war, but I was heading for an unknown service that I knew would require all I had to offer, perhaps my life. I raised my right hand with the others to pledge that I would defend my country with "true faith and allegiance" and that "I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God."<sup>4</sup>

I have no doubt that the power to keep that promise, which I kept, had been forged in me from the time I was a deacon. In my early years in the priesthood, I sat a number of times in what was then called a "missionary farewell." There are now so many rising to the call to serve that we let them speak only briefly in a sacrament meeting before they go. But then an entire meeting was focused on the missionary who was embarking. It always included some selected music. I can still feel what I felt as a quartet of returned mis-

sionaries would sing, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord," and the words went on to pledge, "I'll say what you want me to say," and finally, "I'll be what you want me to be."<sup>5</sup>

### **Promises for faithful priesthood service**

My heart was stirred in those days then as it is now with a conviction that the promise was true for me and for us in all our priesthood service. We will find joy in going wherever the Lord would have us serve. We will be given the revelation to speak His words to invite Heavenly Father's children to become changed by the Atonement and fit to go home and live with Him. And I felt then as I do now that our faithful service would allow Him to change our hearts to fit us for His companionship and to serve Him forever.

I bear you my witness that when we give our all in priesthood service, the Lord will give us all the courage we need and the assurance that He goes with us and that angels will bear us up.

I testify that we are called of God. This is His true Church, and you hold His everlasting priesthood. I am a witness that President Thomas S. Monson holds all the keys of the priesthood and exercises them in the world today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
2. 2 Kings 6:15–17.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
4. "Oaths of Enlistment and Oaths of Office," <http://www.army.mil/CMH/faq/oaths.htm>.
5. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270.

### **President Monson**

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center for the beautiful music they've provided this evening and to the speakers for their inspiring messages.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The benediction will be offered by Elder Keith R. Edwards of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

You've seen a witness tonight of the strength of the two counselors in this First Presidency. I stand before you and declare your First Presidency is united as one under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to especially thank this missionary choir. I had an experience I think they may be interested in, and you may find it interesting also. Many years ago I had a desperate call from the head of the missionary training center. He said, "President Monson, I have a missionary who is going home. Nothing can prevent him from quitting."

I replied, "Well, that's not singular. It's happened before. What's his problem?"

He said, "He's been called to a Spanish-speaking mission, and he's absolutely certain he cannot learn Spanish."

I said, "I have a suggestion for you. Tomorrow morning have him attend a class learning Japanese. And then have him report to you at 12:00 noon."

The next morning he phoned at 10:00! He said, "The young man is here with me now, and he wants me to know he's absolutely certain he can learn Spanish."

When there's a will, there's a way.

### Counsel for difficult times

Now, as I speak to you tonight, truly you are a royal priesthood, assembled in many places but in unity. In all likelihood this is the largest assemblage of priesthood holders ever to come together. Your devotion to your sacred callings is inspiring. Your desire to learn your duty is evident.

The purity of your souls brings heaven closer to you and your families.

Many areas of the world have experienced difficult economic times. Businesses have failed, jobs have been lost, and investments have been jeopardized. We must make certain that those for whom we share responsibility do not go hungry or unclothed or unsheltered. When the priesthood of this Church works together as one in meeting these vexing conditions, near miracles take place.

We urge all Latter-day Saints to be prudent in their planning, to be conservative in their living, and to avoid excessive or unnecessary debt. The financial affairs of the Church are being managed in this manner, for we are aware that your tithing and other contributions have not come without sacrifice and are sacred funds.

Let us make our homes sanctuaries of righteousness, places of prayer, and abodes of love that we might merit the blessings that can come only from our Heavenly Father. We need His guidance in our daily lives.

In this vast throng are priesthood power and the capacity to reach out and share the glorious gospel with others. As has been mentioned, we have the hands to lift others from complacency and inactivity. We have the hearts to serve faithfully in our priesthood callings and thereby inspire others to walk on higher ground and to avoid the swamps of sin which threaten to engulf so many. The worth of souls is indeed great in the sight of God. Ours is the precious privilege, armed with this knowledge, to make a difference in the

lives of others. The words found in Ezekiel could well pertain to all of us who follow the Savior in this sacred work:

“A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . .

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”<sup>1</sup>

How might we merit this promise? What will qualify us to receive this blessing? Is there a guide to follow?

May I suggest three imperatives for our consideration. They apply to the deacon as well as to the high priest. They are within our reach. A kind Heavenly Father will help us in our quest.

First, learn what we should learn.

Second, do what we should do.

And third, be what we should be.

Let us discuss these objectives, that we might be profitable servants in the sight of our Lord.

### **Learn what we should learn**

First, *learn what we should learn*. The Apostle Paul placed an urgency on our efforts to learn. He said to the Philippians, “One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> And to the Hebrews he urged, “Lay aside . . . sin[;] . . . let us run with patience the race . . . set before us, looking [for an example] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The perfect plan of service*

President Stephen L. Richards, who served for many years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and then in the First Presidency, spoke often to holders of the priesthood and emphasized his philosophy pertaining to it. He declared: “The

Priesthood is usually simply defined as ‘the power of God delegated to man.’ This definition, I think, is accurate.”

He continued: “But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it ‘the perfect plan of service.’ I do so because it seems to me that it is only through the utilization of the divine power conferred on men that they may ever hope to realize the full import and vitality of this endowment. It is an instrument of service . . . and the man who fails to use it is apt to lose it, for we are plainly told by revelation that he who neglects it ‘shall not be counted worthy to stand.’”<sup>4</sup>

President Harold B. Lee, 11th President of the Church and one of the great teachers in the Church, put his counsel in easy-to-understand terms. Said he: “When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord’s errand.”<sup>5</sup>

Now, some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that the Lord will shape the back to bear the burden placed upon it.

### *Learning on an Aaronic Priesthood outing*

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching takes place other than in the chapel or the classroom. Well do I remember that some years ago, members holding the Aaronic Priesthood would eagerly look forward to an annual outing commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. By the busload the young men of our stake journeyed 90 miles north to the Clarkston Cemetery, where we viewed the grave of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the



Book of Mormon. While surrounding the beautiful granite shaft which marks the grave, a high councilor would present background concerning the life of Martin Harris, read from the Book of Mormon his testimony, and then bear his own witness to the truth. The young men listened with rapt attention, touched the granite marker, and pondered the words they had heard and the feelings they had felt.

At a park in Logan, lunch was enjoyed. The group of young men would then lie down on the lawn at the Logan Temple and gaze upward at its lofty spires. Often beautiful white clouds would hurry past the spires, moved along by a gentle breeze. The purpose of temples was taught. Covenants and promises became much more than words. The desire to be worthy to enter those temple doors entered those youthful hearts. Heaven was very close. Learning what we should learn was assured.

### **Do what we should do**

Number two, *do what we should do*. In a revelation on priesthood, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, recorded as the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, “learning” moves to “doing” as we read, “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”<sup>6</sup>

Each priesthood holder attending this session tonight has a calling to serve, to put forth his best efforts in the work assigned to him. No assignment is menial in the work of the Lord, for each has eternal consequences. President John Taylor warned us, “If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty.”<sup>7</sup> And who of us can afford to be responsible for the delay of eternal life of a human soul? If great joy is the reward of saving one soul, then how terrible must be the remorse of those whose timid efforts have allowed a child

of God to go unwarned or unaided so that he has to wait till a dependable servant of God comes along.

The old adage is ever true: “Do your duty, that is best; leave unto the Lord the rest.”

### *Service of Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek*

Most service given by priesthood holders is accomplished quietly, without fanfare. A friendly smile, a warm handclasp, a sincere testimony of truth can literally lift lives, change human nature, and save precious souls.

An example of such service was the missionary experience of Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, who were called to fill a two-year mission in Poland. Brother Fussek was born in Poland. He spoke the language. He loved the people. Sister Fussek was English and knew little of Poland and its people.

Trusting in the Lord, they embarked on their assignment. The living conditions were primitive, the work lonely, their task immense. A mission had not at that time been established in Poland. The assignment given the Fusseks was to prepare the way, that a mission could be established so that other missionaries could be called to serve, people could be taught, converts could be baptized, branches could be established, and chapels could be erected.

Did Elder and Sister Fussek despair because of the enormity of their assignment? Not for a moment. They knew their calling was from God. They prayed for His divine help, and they devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their work. They remained in Poland not two years but five years. All of the foregoing objectives were realized.

Elders Russell M. Nelson, Hans B. Ringer, and I, accompanied by Elder Fussek, met with Minister Adam Wopatka of the Polish government, and we heard him say, “Your church is welcome here. You may build your buildings; you may



send your missionaries. You are welcome in Poland. This man," pointing to Juliusz Fussek, "has served your church well. You can be grateful for his example and his work."

Like the Fussesks, let us do what we should do in the work of the Lord. Then we can, with Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, echo the Psalm: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth . . . : he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."<sup>8</sup>

### **Be what we should be**

Third, *be what we should be*. Paul counseled his beloved friend and associate Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>9</sup>

I would urge all of us to pray concerning our assignments and to seek divine help, that we might be successful in accomplishing that which we are called to do. Someone has said that "the recognition of power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him."<sup>10</sup> He must seek, believe in, pray, and hope that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unanswered: that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith. Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it.

From the Book of Mormon comes counsel that says it all. The Lord speaks: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."<sup>11</sup>

And what manner of man was He? What example did He set in His service? From John chapter 10 we learn:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

"The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

Said the Lord: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."<sup>12</sup>

Brethren, may we *learn what we should learn, do what we should do, and be what we should be*. By so doing, the blessings of heaven will attend. We will know that we are not alone. He who notes the sparrow's fall will, in His own way, acknowledge us.

### **Miraculous rescue of Theron W. Borup**

Several years ago I received a letter from a longtime friend. He bore his testimony in that letter. I would like to share part of it with you tonight, since it illustrates the strength of the priesthood in one who learned what he should learn, who did what he should do, and who always tried to be what he should be. I shall read excerpts of that letter from my friend Theron W. Borup, who passed away three years ago at the age of 90:

"At the age of eight, when I was baptized and received the Holy Ghost, I was much impressed about being good and able to have the Holy Ghost to be a help throughout my life. I was told that the Holy Ghost associated only in good company and that when evil entered our lives, he would leave. Not knowing when I would need his promptings and guidance, I tried to so live that I would not lose this gift. On one occasion it saved my life.

"During World War II, I was an engineer-gunner in a B-24 bomber fighting in the South Pacific. . . . One day there was an announcement that the longest bombing flight ever made would be attempted to knock out an oil refinery. The promptings of the Spirit told me I would be assigned on this flight but that I would not lose my life. At the time I was the president of the LDS group.

“The combat was ferocious as we flew over Borneo. Our plane was hit by attacking planes and soon burst into flames, and the pilot told us to prepare to jump. I went out last. We were shot at by enemy pilots as we floated down. I had trouble inflating my life raft. Bobbing up and down in the water, I began to drown and passed out. I came to momentarily and cried, ‘God save me!’ . . . Again I tried inflating the life raft and this time was successful. With just enough air in it to keep me afloat, I rolled over on top of it, too exhausted to move.

“For three days we floated about in enemy territory with ships all about us and planes overhead. Why they couldn’t see a yellow group of rafts on blue water is a mystery,” he wrote. “A storm came up, and waves thirty feet high almost tore our rafts apart. Three days went by with no food or water. The others asked me if I prayed. I answered that I did pray and we would indeed be rescued. That evening we saw our submarine that was there to rescue us, but it passed by. The next morning it did [the same. We knew] this was the last day [it would] be in the area. Then came the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ‘You have the priesthood. Command the sub to pick you up.’ Silently I prayed, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the priesthood, turn about and pick us up.’ In a few minutes, they were

alongside of us. When on deck, the captain . . . said, ‘I don’t know how we ever found you, for we were not even looking for you.’ I knew.”<sup>13</sup>

I leave with you my testimony that this work in which we are engaged is true. The Lord is at the helm. That we may ever follow Him is my sincere prayer, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ezekiel 36:26–28.
2. Philippians 3:13–14.
3. Hebrews 12:1–2.
4. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
5. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
7. John Taylor, *Deseret News*, Aug. 7, 1878, 418.
8. Psalm 121:2–4.
9. 1 Timothy 4:12.
10. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35.
11. 3 Nephi 27:27.
12. John 10:11–15.
13. Personal correspondence; italics added.

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The choir sang “Hark, All Ye Nations!”

Elder Keith R. Edwards offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, October 5, 2008. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang

“Now Let Us Rejoice” to begin the session.

#### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 178th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We

extend our greetings to all those who are participating with us and express gratitude to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Now Let Us Rejoice" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Earl C. Tingey, who was released yesterday as a Seventy and as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy after many, many years of service.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

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### **President Monson**

The choir just sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart." We shall now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president, and she will be followed by the choir singing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us.

## **President Henry B. Eyring**

### **Our hearts knit as one**

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be gathered with you on this Sabbath morning. We live in many different circumstances. We will come from every nation and many ethnic backgrounds into the kingdom of God. And that prophesied gathering will accelerate.

We see increased conflict between peoples in the world around us. Those divisions and differences could infect us. That is why my message of hope today is that a great day of unity is coming. The Lord Jehovah will return to live with those who have become His people and will find them united, of one heart, unified with Him and with our Heavenly Father.

You have heard that message of unity from me more than once. I may well speak of it in the future. I have heard it from every prophet of God in my lifetime. A plea

for unity was the last message I remember from President David O. McKay. The Lord's prophets have always called for unity. The need for that gift to be granted to us and the challenge to maintain it will grow greater in the days ahead, in which we will be prepared as a people for our glorious destiny.

My message is that we are doing better. Fathers and mothers are pleading for unity in their homes, and those prayers are being answered. Families are praying together night and morning. I was invited to kneel at bedtime with a family when I was a guest in their home. The smallest child was asked to be voice. He prayed like a patriarch for every person in the family, by name. I opened my eyes for an instant to see the faces of the other children and the parents. I could tell that they were joining their faith and their hearts in that little boy's prayer.

Some Relief Society sisters recently prayed together as they prepared to visit for the first time a young widow whose husband died suddenly. They wanted to know what to do and how to work together to help prepare the home for family and friends who would come at the time of the funeral. They needed to know what words of comfort they could speak for the Lord. An answer to their prayer came. When they arrived at the house, each sister moved to complete a task. The house was ready so quickly that some sisters regretted not being able to do more. Words of comfort were spoken which fit perfectly together. They had given the Lord's service as one, hearts knit together.

You have seen evidence, as I have, that we are moving toward becoming one. The miracle of unity is being granted to us as we pray and work for it in the Lord's way. Our hearts will be knit together in unity. God has promised that blessing to His faithful Saints whatever their differences in background and whatever conflict rages around them. He was praying for us as well as His disciples when He asked His Father that we might be one.<sup>1</sup>

### **Unity brings joy**

The reason we pray and ask for that blessing is the same reason the Father is granting it. We know from experience that joy comes when we are blessed with unity. We yearn, as spirit children of our Heavenly Father, for that joy which we once had with Him in the life before this one. His desire is to grant us that sacred wish for unity out of His love for us.

He cannot grant it to us as individuals. The joy of unity He wants so much to give us is not solitary. We must seek it and qualify for it with others. It is not surprising, then, that God urges us to gather so that He can bless us. He wants us to gather into families. He has established classes, wards, and branches and commanded us to meet together often. In those gatherings,

which God has designed for us, lies our great opportunity. We can pray and work for the unity that will bring us joy and multiply our power to serve.

To the Three Nephites, the Savior promised joy in unity with Him as their final reward after their faithful service. He said, "Ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one."<sup>2</sup>

### **Alma's people become of one heart**

The Lord has given us guides to know what to do to receive the blessing and joy of ever-increasing unity. The Book of Mormon recounts a time of success. It was in the days of Alma at the Waters of Mormon. What the people did in those difficult and dangerous circumstances gives us both a guide and encouragement.

Everything Alma and his people were inspired to do was pointed at helping people choose to have their hearts changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is the only way God can grant the blessing of being of one heart.

In Mosiah we read:

"And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church. . . .

"And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

"Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people.

"And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another,

but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.

“And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God.”<sup>3</sup>

That is why Alma commanded the people to teach faith and repentance. That is why my children came to expect in every lesson in family night that I would find a way to encourage someone to testify of the Savior and His mission. Sometimes the parents did it. On our best nights we found a way to encourage the children to do it, either by presenting the lesson or answering questions. When testimony about the Savior was borne, the Holy Ghost verified it. On those nights we felt our hearts being knit together.

### **Principles that lead to greater unity**

In addition to ordinances, there are principles we are following as a people which are leading to greater unity.

#### *Seek revelation; keep the commandments*

One of those principles is revelation. Revelation is the only way we can know how to follow the will of the Lord together. It requires light from above. The Holy Ghost will testify to our hearts, and the hearts of those gathered around with us, what He would have us do. And it is by keeping His commandments that we can have our hearts knit together as one.

#### *Be humble; be peacemakers*

A second principle to guide our progress to become one is to be humble. Pride is the great enemy of unity. You have seen and felt its terrible effects. Just days ago I watched as two people—good people—began with a mild disagreement. It started as a discussion of what was true but became a contest about who was right. Voices

became gradually louder. Faces became a little more flushed. Instead of talking about the issue, people began talking about themselves, giving evidence why their view, given their great ability and background, was more likely to be right.

You would have felt alarm as I did. We have seen the life-destroying effects of such tragic conflict. You and I know people who left the fellowship of the Saints over injured pride.

Happily I am seeing more and more skillful peacemakers who calm troubled waters before harm is done. You could be one of those peacemakers, whether you are in the conflict or an observer.

One way I have seen it done is to search for anything on which we agree. To be that peacemaker, you need to have the simple faith that as children of God, with all our differences, it is likely that in a strong position we take, there will be elements of truth. The great peacemaker, the restorer of unity, is the one who finds a way to help people see the truth they share. That truth they share is always greater and more important to them than their differences. You can help yourself and others to see that common ground if you ask for help from God and then act. He will answer your prayer to help restore peace, as He has mine.

That same principle applies as we build unity with people who are from vastly different backgrounds. The children of God have more in common than they have differences. And even the differences can be seen as an opportunity. God will help us see a difference in someone else not as a source of irritation but as a contribution. The Lord can help you see and value what another person brings which you lack. More than once the Lord has helped me see His kindness in giving me association with someone whose difference from me was just the help I needed. That has been the Lord's way of adding something I lacked to serve Him better.

*Speak well of each other*

That leads to another principle of unity. It is to speak well of each other. Think of the last time you were asked what you thought about how someone else was doing in your family or in the Church. It happened to me more than once in the past week. Now, there are times we must judge others. Sometimes we are required to pronounce such judgments. But more often we can make a choice. For instance, suppose someone asks you what you think of the new bishop.

As we get better and better at forging unity, we will think of a scripture when we hear that question:

“And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.”<sup>4</sup>

Realizing that you see others in an imperfect light will make you likely to be a little more generous in what you say. In addition to that scripture, you might remember your mother saying—mine did—“If you can’t say anything good about a person, don’t say anything at all.”

That will help you look for what is best in the bishop’s performance and character. The Savior, as your loving judge, will surely do that as He judges your performance and mine. The scripture and what you heard from your mother may well lead you to describe what is best in the bishop’s performance and his good intent. I can promise you a feeling of peace and joy when you speak generously of others in the Light of Christ. You will feel, for instance, unity with that bishop and with the person who asked your opinion, not because the bishop is perfect or because the person asking you shares your generous evaluation. It will be because the Lord will let you feel His appreciation for choosing to step away from the possibility of sowing seeds of disunity.

We must follow that same principle as the Lord gathers more and more people who are not like us. What will become more obvious to us is that the Atonement brings the same changes in all of us. We become disciples who are meek, loving, easy to be entreated, and at the same time fearless and faithful in all things. We still live in different countries, but we come into the Church through a process that changes us. We become by the gifts of the Spirit what the Apostle Paul saw:

“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”<sup>5</sup>

With the unity I see increasing, the Lord will be able to perform what the world will think as miraculous. The Saints can accomplish any purpose of the Lord when fully united in righteousness.

**Move together in power**

Presidents of countries, governors, and leaders of worldwide charitable organizations have praised us—in my hearing—with words like these: “Your church was the first on the ground to help when disaster came. Hundreds of your people arrived who brought everything with them which the survivors needed. They even brought their own tents and supplies. They were tireless and cheerful. They seemed to know where to go and when.” Then there has come a line usually something like this: “Your church knows how to organize to get things done.”

I thank them without saying that the miracle lies not in organization alone but in the people’s hearts. The Saints came in the name of the Lord to give the succor He would give. They came listening to the direction of the Lord’s chosen leaders. Because their hearts were knit, they were magnified in their power.

I bear you my solemn witness that the unity we now experience will increase.



God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers in love. The Savior Jesus Christ, resurrected and glorious, lives and reaches out to us in mercy. This is His true Church. President Monson is the living prophet of God. If we are united in sustaining him with all our hearts, with willing obedience to do what God would have us do, we will move together in power to go wherever God would have us go and to become what He wants us to be.

I leave you my blessing that you will enjoy unity in your homes and in the

Church. And I leave you the Lord's promise that you will have the righteous desire of your heart for that joy in unity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See John 17:21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:43; 93:3.
2. 3 Nephi 28:10.
3. Mosiah 18:17, 19–22.
4. Moroni 7:18.
5. Ephesians 2:18–19.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Christlike responses to antagonists

We have gathered together as one, we have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ, and we are Christians. One of the questions we would ask: why then, if we have that love of the Savior, would someone want to be an antagonist or to attack us?

Recently a group of bright, faithful young Latter-day Saints wrote down some of the most pressing questions on their minds. One sister asked, “Why doesn’t the Church defend itself more actively when accusations are made against it?”

To her inquiry I would say that one of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments we may want to respond aggressively—to “put up our dukes.” But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. And in Lehi’s dream, those coming to the Savior also endured “mocking and pointing . . . fingers” (1 Nephi 8:27). “The world hath hated [my disciples],” Jesus said, “because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But when we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite

others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

### Christian courage in responses

Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to “love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage.

The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated this courage throughout his life. Though he “suffer[ed] severe persecution

at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27), he did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. *That* is Christian courage.

When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. *That* is Christian courage.

### Opportunity in the midst of opposition

Through the years we learn that challenges to our faith are not new, and they aren’t likely to disappear soon. But *true disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.*

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi was bound and brought before the evil King Noah. Although the king vigorously opposed Abinadi and eventually sentenced him to death, Abinadi boldly taught the gospel and bore his testimony anyway. Because Abinadi took advantage of that opportunity, a priest named Alma was converted to the gospel and brought many souls unto Christ. The courage of Abinadi and Alma was Christian courage.

Experience shows that seasons of negative publicity about the Church can help accomplish the Lord’s purposes. In 1983 the First Presidency wrote to Church leaders:

“Opposition may be in itself an opportunity. Among the continuing challenges faced by our missionaries is a lack of interest in religious matters and in our message. These criticisms create . . . interest in the Church. . . . This provides an opportunity [for members] to present the truth to those whose attention is thus directed toward us.”<sup>1</sup>

We can take advantage of such opportunities in many ways: a kind letter to the editor, a conversation with a friend, a comment on a blog, or a reassuring word to one who has made a disparaging comment. We can answer with love those who have been influenced by misinformation and prejudice—who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12). I assure you that to answer our accusers in this way is never weakness. *It is* Christian courage in action.

### Respond in ways that invite the Spirit

As we respond to others, each circumstance will be different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our accusers and how we can most effectively respond to them. *As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit, they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter.* And in every encounter, *true disciples respond in ways that invite the Spirit of the Lord.*

Paul reminded the Corinthians that his preaching was “not with [the] enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Because that power resides in the Spirit of the Lord, we must never become contentious when we are discussing our faith. As almost every missionary learns, Bible bashing always drives the Spirit away. The Savior has said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29).

More regrettable than the Church being accused of not being Christian is when Church members react to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our conversations with others always be marked by the fruits of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is “manifesting patience and long-suffering; enduring injury without resentment.”<sup>2</sup> Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.



This is especially important in our interactions with members of other Christian denominations. Surely our Heavenly Father is saddened—and the devil laughs—when we contentiously debate doctrinal differences with our Christian neighbors.

This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness, we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with Satan's counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.

### **Slow to take offense, quick to forgive**

*As true disciples, our primary concern must be others' welfare, not personal vindication.* Questions and criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them understand the truth, not to defend our egos or score points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers. And such testimonies can be borne only in love and meekness. We should be like Edward Partridge, of whom the Lord said, "His heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile" (D&C 41:11). To be guileless is to have a childlike innocence, to be slow to take offense and quick to forgive.

These qualities are first learned in the home and family and can be practiced in all our relationships. To be guileless is to look for our own fault first. When accused, we should ask as the Savior's Apostles did, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22). If we listen to the answer given by the Spirit, we can, if needed, make corrections, apologize, seek forgiveness, and do better.

Without guile, *true disciples avoid being unduly judgmental of others' views.* Many of us have cultivated strong friendships with those who are not members of our Church—schoolmates, colleagues at work, and friends and neighbors throughout the world. We need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught, "Let us learn respect for others. . . . None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world."<sup>3</sup>

### **Do not leave the high ground**

As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, *sometimes true disciples must show Christian courage by saying nothing at all.* Once when I was golfing, I barely brushed up against a large cholla cactus, which seems to shoot needles like a porcupine. Thorns from that plant stuck all over my clothing, even though I had barely touched the cactus plant. Some situations are like that plant: they can only injure us. In such instances, we are better off to keep our distance and simply walk away. As we do, some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah urged Lehonti to "come down" and meet him in the valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was poisoned "by degrees" until he died, and his army fell into Amalickiah's hands (see Alma 47).

By arguments and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high ground. The high ground is where the light is. It's where we see the first light of morning and the last light in the evening. It is the safe ground. It is true and where knowledge is. Sometimes others want us to come down off the high ground and join them in a theological scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual respect and love.

In doing so, we follow the example of the prophet Nehemiah, who built a wall

around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's enemies entreated him to meet them on the plain, where "they thought to do [him] mischief." Unlike Leonti, Nehemiah wisely refused their offer with this message: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2-3). We too have a great work to do, which will not be accomplished if we allow ourselves to stop and argue and be distracted. Instead we should muster Christian courage and move on. As we read in Psalms, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers" (Psalm 37:1).

Evil will always be with us in this world. Part of mortality's great test is to be in the world without becoming like the world. In His Intercessory Prayer, the Savior asked His Heavenly Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). But even as the Savior warned of persecution, He promised peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). I testify that with the mantle of His peace upon us, the First Presidency's promise will be fulfilled: "The opposition which may seem hard to bear will be a blessing to the kingdom of God upon the earth."<sup>4</sup>

### Love our accusers

To my inquiring sister and all who seek to know how we should respond to our accusers, I reply, we *love* them. What-

ever their race, creed, religion, or political persuasion, if we follow Christ and show forth His courage, we must love them. We do not feel we are *better* than they are. Rather, we desire with our love to show them a *better way*—the way of Jesus Christ. His way leads to the gate of baptism, the strait and narrow path of righteous living, and the temple of God. *He* is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Only through Him can we and all our brothers and sisters inherit the greatest gift we can receive—eternal life and eternal happiness. To help them, to be an example for them, is not for the weak. It is for the strong. It is for you and me, Latter-day Saints who pay the price of discipleship by answering our accusers with Christian courage.

I conclude by making the testimony of Mormon my own: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). I bear my special witness of Him—that our lives can be everlasting because His love is everlasting. That we may share His eternal, unconditional love with our brothers and sisters everywhere is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.
2. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1993), "meek," 1403.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "In Quest of the Abundant Life," *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 3.
4. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### God loves and helps all of His children

One of the overarching truths of the Restoration is that God lives and dwells in His heavens, that He is an exalted man with "a body of flesh and bones,"<sup>1</sup> and that

He is yesterday, today, and forever the same unchangeable God,<sup>2</sup> the fountain of all virtue and truth.

Adam and Eve were the first of His mortal children upon this earth. Of their advent, He said, "And I, God, created

man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.”<sup>3</sup>

This truth elevates the human family. Men and women are wondrous creations endowed with divine attributes. At the time of Creation, God placed in Adam and Eve the supernal capacity to bear children in their likeness. We are all, therefore, in His image.

### **Help from our fellowman**

We do, however, contend with serious mortal frailties and hazards. Sickness, aging, and death are inescapable. Hardships and heartaches are part of life’s journey. Personal dispositions, appetites, and passions clamor for gratification.

For all these reasons and more, we need Heavenly Father’s help. An important source of this help comes through man’s service to his fellowman.<sup>4</sup> The commandment is to “love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>5</sup> Because we are all brothers and sisters, we are all “neighbors,” though separated at times by distance, culture, religion, or race. Said the Prophet Joseph, “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”<sup>6</sup> The Lord sets the example, “for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; . . . and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God.”<sup>7</sup>

To provide for others in the Lord’s way, we strive to care for ourselves and sacrifice to help those in need. The poor labor for what they receive and seek the betterment of others as well.<sup>8</sup> This pattern has been with us from the beginning.<sup>9</sup>

The Church welfare plan embodies this divine pattern, and faithful Church members follow it. Their offerings provide succor to the widow, care to the orphan, and refuge to the suffering.

A few years ago a high-ranking official from China visited Salt Lake City, toured Church sites, and spoke at Brigham Young University. Learning about the Church welfare program, he said, “If we all loved each other like this, the world would be a more peaceful place.”

Fasting and giving the value of the meals not eaten to help the poor captured his attention. At the conclusion of his visit to Welfare Square, he handed the manager a small red envelope—a “red pocket.” In China a “red pocket” is given as a gesture of love, blessing, and a wish for good fortune. “It does not contain much,” the visitor said, “but it represents the money I have saved from missing breakfast the last two mornings. I would like to give my fast offering to the Welfare program of the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

The Church welfare plan is God-inspired. Its tenets are fundamental to the salvation of man.<sup>11</sup> It is an ensign for service, a witness to the world that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored. It is heaven’s help in practical ways. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “Welfare principles . . . do not change. They will not change. They are revealed truths.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Help through prayer**

Another essential way to receive God’s help is through prayer. We are commanded to pray to God, our Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. The admonition is, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.”<sup>13</sup> Heavenly Father answers all sincere prayers.

As the Lord’s prophet, President Monson counsels:

“At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end—no dawn to break the night’s darkness. . . . We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always

take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face.”<sup>14</sup>

In the face of some needs, we turn to a form of prayer available only under the hands of those authorized to minister for God. Jesus Christ went forth “healing the sick, raising the dead,”<sup>15</sup> and lifting up desperate souls. With the Restoration of the gospel came priesthood power and authority to continue this aspect of God’s work.<sup>16</sup>

When one is sick or deeply troubled, “call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”<sup>17</sup> Faithful elders are commissioned to do what the Lord would do if He were present.<sup>18</sup>

### **A miraculous healing**

If records had been kept of prayers answered, the world could not contain the many volumes. From Elder Glen L. Rudd, an emeritus General Authority and beloved associate, comes this treasured testimonial:

“I received a phone call informing me that a family member, a 12-year-old girl named Janice, was in the hospital with critical injuries. Her mother wanted her to receive a priesthood blessing.

“Elder Cowley and I went to the hospital. There we learned details of the accident. Janice had been hit by a city bus. The double rear wheels had passed over her head and body.

“Elder Cowley and I entered the room where Janice lay. She had a broken pelvis, a badly injured shoulder, multiple broken bones, and severe head injuries that were beyond repair. Nonetheless, it was our feeling that we should administer to her and bless her. I anointed her with oil, and Elder Cowley sealed the anointing. In a strong and resolute manner he blessed her to become well and whole and

to live a normal life. He blessed her that she would recover with no lasting effects from her many injuries. It was a great blessing and a truly magnificent moment.”

Elder Rudd goes on to say: “Janice didn’t move a muscle for more than a month. We never lost faith. A blessing had been pronounced that she would get well and have no lasting impairments.”

Elder Rudd concluded: “Many years have now passed since that hospital visit. I spoke with Janice recently. She is now 70 years of age, the mother of 3 children, the grandmother of 11 grandchildren. To this day, she has not suffered a single negative effect from her accident.”<sup>19</sup>

Hers is but one of many such healings. But none stands as a greater witness of how Heavenly Father helps His children through prayer than the one that took place in a hospital room, with 12-year-old Janice and two humble servants of God, some 58 years ago.

### **Help from Jesus Christ**

The ultimate help from Heavenly Father comes to us through His Son, “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>20</sup>

It is with great reverence and awe that I bear witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, I am reminded of how careful we must be in the use of His name. While His influence, teachings, and deliverance endear Him to us, we would do well not to speak of Him as though He were the friend next door.

He is the Firstborn of our Father’s spirit children. He did all that was ordained for Him to do—hence, all things give Him reverence and bear witness of Him.<sup>21</sup> He told the ancient prophets what to write and reveals His will to His prophets today—and He fulfills their every word.<sup>22</sup>

Begotten of God, He was born of the virgin Mary, conquered death, atoned for

the sins of the world, and brought salvation to both the living and dead. As our resurrected Lord, He ate fish and honeycomb with the Apostles and invited multitudes on both hemispheres to feel the wounds in His hands, feet, and side that all might know He is the God of Israel—He is the living Christ. To all He declares:

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”<sup>23</sup>

He is our Lawgiver and Judge, the Redeemer of the world. At His Second Coming, “the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”<sup>24</sup> Of this I bear witness in the most sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:17.
3. Moses 2:27; see also Genesis 1:27.
4. See Mosiah 2:17.
5. Matthew 22:39.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
7. 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–18; 78:13–14; 104:13–18.
9. See Genesis 3:19; Exodus 23:10–11; Leviticus 19:9–10; Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 4:16–27; Moses 4:25; 5:1.

10. In Neil K. Newell, “The Red Pocket” (unpublished manuscript, 1999), 1.
11. See Mosiah 4:16–27.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 3.
13. Matthew 7:7; see also verse 8.
14. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 89; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 90.
15. Mosiah 3:5.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; 27:12–13; 110:11–16; 128:20–21.
17. James 5:14–15.
18. See John 14:11–14; Articles of Faith 1:7; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 345.
19. From a conversation with Glen L. Rudd; see also Glen L. Rudd, *Treasured Experiences of Glen L. Rudd* (self-published manuscript, 1995), Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 270–72.
20. John 3:16.
21. See Moses 6:63.
22. See Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
23. John 11:25–26.
24. 2 Nephi 19:6; see also Isaiah 9:6.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

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## Elaine S. Dalton

### A focus on the temple

Last general conference I was called by President Monson to be the new Young Women general president. As I stood in the presence of a prophet of God and was given this sacred trust, I pledged that I would serve with all my heart, might, mind, and strength. Prior to this calling, I had a small plate inscribed with a motto

that read, “I can do hard things.” That little plate bearing that simple motto gave me courage. But now if I could change that motto, it would read, “In the strength of the Lord, I can do *all* things.”<sup>1</sup> It is on that strength that I rely today as I stand at this sacred pulpit.

Last April, two days after general conference, we held our first meeting as a newly sustained presidency. We hiked to

the top of Ensign Peak, and as we looked on the valley below, we saw the temple with the angel Moroni shining in the sun. For each of us, it was clear. The vision for our presidency was the temple. And our responsibility was also clear. We must “help prepare each young woman to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.”<sup>2</sup>

The temple is the reason for everything we do in the Church.<sup>3</sup> The temple was the reason our pioneer ancestors left their established homes and came west. It was the reason they suffered privation and even death. Temple covenants were the reason that, although babies were buried along the way, those pioneers could sing:

Come, come, ye Saints,  
No toil nor labor fear;  
But with joy wend your way.<sup>4</sup>

Some lost everything but came into the valley with *everything*, really—temple ordinances, sacred covenants, and the promise of eternal life together as families.

### A return to virtue

Just two days after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and his associates hiked Ensign Peak. Atop that peak they unfurled a banner—a yellow bandana tied to a walking stick, which symbolized an ensign or standard to the nations.<sup>5</sup> The Saints were to be the light, the standard. Last April, atop Ensign Peak, we three women also unfurled a banner which we made from a walking stick and a gold Peruvian shawl. It was *our* ensign, *our* standard to the nations—*our* banner calling for a return to virtue.

Virtue is a prerequisite to entering the Lord’s holy temples and to receiving the Spirit’s guidance. Virtue “is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards.”<sup>6</sup> It encompasses chastity and moral purity. Virtue begins in the heart and in the mind. It is nurtured in

the home. It is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions.

*Virtue* is a word we don’t hear often in today’s society, but the Latin root word *virtus* means strength. Virtuous women and men possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost. President Monson has counseled:

“*You* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone. Have the moral courage to be a light for others to follow. There is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so.”<sup>7</sup>

### Deceptions that entice some from virtue

Could it be that we have been slowly desensitized into thinking that high moral standards are old-fashioned and not relevant or important in today’s society? As Elder Hales has just reminded us, Lehonti in the Book of Mormon was well positioned on the top of a mountain. He and those he led were “fixed in their minds with a determined resolution” that they would not come down from the mount. It took the deceitful Amalickiah only four tries, each one more bold than the previous, to get Lehonti to “come down off from the mount.”<sup>8</sup> And then having embraced Amalickiah’s false promises, Lehonti was “poison[ed] by degrees”<sup>9</sup> until he died—not just poisoned, but “by degrees.”

Could it be that this may be happening today? Could it be that first we tolerate, then accept, and eventually embrace the vice that surrounds us?<sup>10</sup> Could it be that we have been deceived by false role models and persuasive media messages that cause us to forget our divine identity? Are we too being poisoned by degrees?

What could be more deceptive than to entice the youth of this noble generation to do nothing or to be busy ever-texting but never coming to a knowledge of the truths contained in a book that was written for you and your day by prophets of God—the Book of Mormon?

What could be more deceptive than to entice women, young and old, you and me, to be so involved in ourselves, our looks, our clothes, our body shape and size that we lose sight of our divine identity and our ability to change the world through our virtuous influence?

What could be more deceptive than to entice men—young and old, holding the holy priesthood of God—to view seductive pornography and thus focus on flesh instead of faith, to be consumers of vice rather than guardians of virtue?

### How to begin a return to virtue

The Book of Mormon relates the story of 2,000 young heroes whose virtue and purity gave them the strength to defend their parents' covenants and their family's faith. Their virtue and commitment to be "true at all times" changed the world!<sup>11</sup> I truly believe that one virtuous young woman or young man, led by the Spirit, can change the world, but in order to do so, we must return to virtue. We must engage in strict training. As the marathon runner Juma Ikangaa said after winning the New York Marathon, "The will to win is nothing without the will to prepare."<sup>12</sup> Now is the time to prepare by exercising more self-discipline. Now is the time to become "more fit for the kingdom."<sup>13</sup> Now is the time to set our course and focus on the finish. A return to virtue must begin individually in our hearts and in our homes.

What can each of us do to begin our return to virtue? The course and the training program will be unique to each of us. I have derived my personal training program from instructions found in the scriptures:

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly."<sup>14</sup>

"Cleave unto [your] covenants."<sup>15</sup>

"Stand . . . in holy places."<sup>16</sup>

"Lay aside the things of [the] world."<sup>17</sup>

"Believe that ye must repent."<sup>18</sup>

"Always remember him and keep his commandments."<sup>19</sup>

And "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, . . . seek after these things."<sup>20</sup>

Now more than ever before, it is time to respond to Moroni's call to "awake, and arise" and to "lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing."<sup>21</sup>

### The most powerful force for virtue

Recently I attended the blessing of our newest granddaughter. It was a holy sight to me as my husband and our sons, along with many other loved ones, encircled this little infant. She was so elegant all dressed in white—and it didn't hurt a bit that she was named after her two grandmothers! But the thing that touched me most was the blessing given by her father, our son Zach. He blessed little Annabel Elaine that she would understand her identity as a daughter of God, that she would follow the examples of her mother, grandmothers, and sister, and that she would find great joy as she lived a virtuous life and prepared to make and keep sacred temple covenants. In that sacred moment I prayed that *every* young woman might be encircled, strengthened, and protected by righteous priesthood power, not only at the time of birth and blessing but throughout life.

During the solemn assembly last conference when President Uchtdorf called for the sustaining of our new prophet and First Presidency, I watched the entire congregation of priesthood brethren arise and stand. I felt your strength and your priesthood power. You are the guardians



of virtue. Then I was overcome with emotion when President Uchtdorf said, “Will the young women please arise?” From my seat, I saw all of you arise and stand together. Today there could be no more powerful force for virtue in the world. You must never underestimate the power of your righteous influence.

I testify that a return to virtue is possible because of the Savior’s example and the “infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice.”<sup>22</sup> I testify that we will be enabled and strengthened not only to do hard things but to do *all* things. Now is the time for each of us to arise and unfurl a banner to the world calling for a return to virtue. May we so live that we can be instruments in preparing the earth for His Second Coming, “that when he shall appear we shall be like him, . . . *purified* even as he is pure.”<sup>23</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Alma 20:4.
2. First Presidency letter, Sept. 25, 1996.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 40; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 32.
4. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
5. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 52; Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 85.
6. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 118.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 66; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 65.
8. See Alma 47:4–12.
9. Alma 47:18.
10. See Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, epistle 2, lines 217–20.
11. Alma 53:20; see also Alma 56.
12. Juma Ikangaa, quoted in Michael Sandrock, *Running with the Legends: Training and Racing Insights from 21 Great Runners* (1996), 415.
13. “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 25:13.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
18. Mosiah 4:10.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
20. Articles of Faith 1:13; see also Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Jacob 4:6; Alma 37:36; Moroni 10:32.
21. Moroni 10:30–31.
22. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
23. Moroni 7:48; italics added.

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The choir sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### The truth of God shall go forth

My brothers and sisters, on July 19th of this year the Sons of Utah Pioneers placed at This Is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City a statue of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successor, President Brigham Young. This statue, entitled *Eyes Westward*, shows these two great prophets with a map of the western territories.

Many people, including Latter-day Saints, forget that Joseph Smith was very much aware that the Church would eventually be relocated to the great American West. In August of 1842 he prophesied “that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our



persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some [would] live to . . . build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains” (*History of the Church*, 5:85).

Even Joseph’s closest associates in those early years did not fully understand the trials that the Latter-day Saints would endure as the Church rolled forth from its small beginnings in the early 1800s. But Joseph Smith knew that no enemy then present or in the future would have sufficient power to frustrate or stop the purposes of God. We are all familiar with his prophetic words: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

Nearly 18 decades have passed since the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830. We have had 178 years to observe the fulfillment of prophecy and to watch “the truth of God” as it goes “forth boldly, nobly, and independent.”

### **The Church’s beginnings**

The Church began its first decade with only a few members. Despite intense opposition, 597 missionaries were called during the 1830s, and over 15,000 converts were baptized into the Church. The United States, Canada, and Great Britain were opened to the preaching of the gospel.

There were many converts during the 1840s while persecutions continued to rage against the Church and especially

against the Prophet Joseph. In the midst of these difficulties and despite the great challenges of travel, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ continued to cover more of the earth through the faithful service of 1,454 missionaries called during the 1840s, and Church membership grew to more than 48,000. On June 27, 1844, the persecution of Joseph Smith culminated when he and his brother Hyrum were killed by a mob in the Carthage Jail.

### **Settlement in the West, more expansion**

Soon after the martyrdom and in fulfillment of Joseph’s vision, Brigham Young and the Church began preparations to move to the Rocky Mountains. Hardship, affliction, death, and apostasy were ever present. Still, the work moved forward. In the 1850s some 705 missionaries were called to serve in areas including Scandinavia, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Hawaii. Missionary work also began in such diverse parts of the world as India, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, South Africa, and the West Indies.

Among faithful converts from Scandinavia and Britain baptized during the decade of the 1850s were those who suffered and died, on land and on the seas, as they journeyed to join with the Saints here in the Rocky Mountains.

In 1875 the first seven missionaries were called to Mexico, and the work there flourished even amid revolution and other challenges. And it was just four years ago, in 2004, that the Church reached the milestone of one million members in Mexico.

The faith of the Saints was tested in every footstep as Brigham Young led them to build temples and establish more than 350 colonies in the West. By the time Brigham Young died in 1877, worldwide Church membership had grown to more than 115,000. Despite all of the persecution, the truth of God was indeed going forth boldly and nobly.

Time does not allow a detailed review of the growth of the Church during the next few decades. But it should be noted that during the 40-year period from 1890 to 1930, while the Church and its doctrine were still under public attack, Elder Reed Smoot was elected to the United States Congress and had to fight to be seated. A great deal was said of the Church and its teachings during that time—much of it hurtful and directed toward President Joseph F. Smith and other Church leaders. However, some newspaper articles began to speak of members of the Church as contributing citizens and good people.

### **Growth of the Church in South America**

On September 3, 1925, President Heber J. Grant announced that the Church would begin missionary work in South America. Following the Lord's pattern for taking the restored gospel to all nations, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—my paternal grandfather, Elder Melvin J. Ballard—was sent, with others, to South America to dedicate the land for the preaching of the gospel.

On Christmas morning of 1925 in Argentina, Elder Ballard dedicated the South American countries and started missionary work. Before leaving the following July, he prophesied:

“The work of the Lord will grow slowly for a time here just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn. It will not shoot up in a day as does the sunflower that grows quickly and then dies. But thousands will join the Church here. It will be divided into more than one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church. The work here is the smallest that it will ever be” (in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard: Crusader for Righteousness* [1966], 84).

Anyone familiar with the growth of the Church in South America knows the fulfillment of that prophecy. Today, Brazil alone has over one million members.

### **Growth from 1930 to 1970**

During the four decades from 1930 to 1970, more than 106,000 missionaries were called to serve worldwide. Church membership increased fourfold, to over 2,800,000. More than one million new members were added just during the 1960s. By 1970 missionaries were serving in 43 nations and 9 territories. During this 40-year period, the South American nations of Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela were opened to missionary work. In Central America, servants of the Lord unlocked the nations of Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In Asia, major new efforts began to bear fruit in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and the Philippines.

None of this was easy. Challenges, obstacles, and persecution accompanied every attempt to take “the truth of God” into every continent and country so that it could “[sound] in every ear.” Still, we moved forward in faith; challenges were met, and obstacles were overcome.

### **Continued unprecedented growth**

President Spencer W. Kimball asked members of the Church to lengthen their stride in spreading the gospel and sharing gospel truth. He asked every stake in the world to increase the number of missionaries, and he led the Church into using media to help convey our message to hundreds of millions of people throughout the earth.

During his 12 years as President of the Church, nearly 200,000 missionaries served full-time missions. Worldwide Church membership almost doubled, and the number of stakes nearly tripled. Missionary work was opened or reopened in many countries, and the miracle of conversion was happening in many lands despite every adversarial attempt to thwart the Lord's work or discourage the Lord's workers.

A little more than two decades have passed since the end of President Kimball's mortal ministry. During that period of time we have experienced unprecedented prominence in the worldwide community of faith. Probably not coincidentally, we have also experienced unprecedented ideological attacks on our people, our history, and our doctrine through the media.

And yet the Church continues to grow. Membership has more than doubled again—from 5.9 million in 1985 to more than 13 million today. And last year the one millionth missionary to serve during this dispensation was called.

### **The work of God cannot be frustrated**

Now, my brothers and sisters, my purpose in this brief review of Joseph's prophetic vision of the destiny of this Church and its literal fulfillment through the decades is to remind us of this simple truth:

"The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

"For God doth not walk in crooked paths, . . . neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

"Remember . . . that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men" (D&C 3:1–3).

God has spoken through His prophet and announced to the world that "the Standard of Truth has been erected" and that "no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing." That is undeniably and indisputably true. We have seen it for ourselves, in decade after decade, from the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith to the time of President Thomas S. Monson. Persecutions have raged. Calumny and lies and misrepresentation have attempted to defame. But in every decade from the time of the Restoration forward, the truth of God has gone "forth boldly, nobly, and independent." The little Church

that started in 1830 with just a handful of members has now grown to more than 13 million Latter-day Saints in many different nations around the world, and we are well on our way to penetrating every continent, visiting every clime, sweeping every country, and sounding in every ear.

### **Continue to move the work forward**

This is God's work, and God's work will not be frustrated. But there is still much to be done before the Great Jehovah can announce that the work is done. While we praise and honor those faithful Saints who have brought us to this point of public prominence, we cannot afford, my brothers and sisters, to be comfortable or content.

We are all needed to finish the work that was begun by those pioneering Saints more than 175 years ago and carried out through the subsequent decades by faithful Saints of every generation. We need to believe as they believed. We need to work as they worked. We need to serve as they served. And we need to overcome as they overcame.

Of course, our challenges are different today, but they are no less demanding. Instead of angry mobs, we face those who constantly try to defame. Instead of extreme exposure and hardship, we face alcohol and drug abuse, pornography, all kinds of filth, sleaze, greed, dishonesty, and spiritual apathy. Instead of families being uprooted and torn from their homes, we see the institution of the family, including the divine institution of marriage, under attack as groups and individuals seek to define away the prominent and divine role of the family in society.

This is not to suggest that our challenges today are more severe than the challenges faced by those who have gone before us. They are just different. The Lord isn't asking us to load up a handcart; He's asking us to fortify our faith. He isn't asking us to walk across a continent; He's

asking us to walk across the street to visit our neighbor. He isn't asking us to give all of our worldly possessions to build a temple; He's asking us to give of our means and our time despite the pressures of modern living to continue to build temples and then to attend regularly the temples already built. He isn't asking us to die a martyr's death; He's asking us to live a disciple's life.

This is a great time to live, brothers and sisters, and it is up to us to carry on the rich tradition of devoted commitment that has been the hallmark of previous generations of Latter-day Saints. This is not a time for the spiritually faint of heart. We cannot afford to be superficially righteous. Our testimonies must run deep, with spiritual roots firmly embedded in the rock of revelation. And we must continue to move the work forward as a covenanted, consecrated people, with faith in

every footstep, "till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done." That it may be so for us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

This has been a glorious session of conference. We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to those who have spoken to us.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Daniel L. Johnson of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

### **The constant of change**

My dear brothers and sisters, I am humbled as I stand before you this morning. I ask for your faith and prayers in my behalf as I speak about those things which have been on my mind and which I have felt impressed to share with you.

I begin by mentioning one of the most inevitable aspects of our lives here upon the earth, and that is *change*. At one time or another we've all heard some form of the familiar adage: "Nothing is as constant as change."

Throughout our lives, we must deal with change. Some changes are welcome; some are not. There are changes in our lives which are sudden, such as the unexpected passing of a loved one, an unforeseen illness, the loss of a possession we treasure. But most of the changes take place subtly and slowly.

This conference marks 45 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As the junior member of the Twelve then, I looked up to 14 exceptional men, who were senior to me in the Twelve and the First Presidency. One by one, each of these men has returned home. When President Hinckley passed away eight months ago, I realized that I had become the senior Apostle. The changes over a period of 45 years that were incremental now seem monumental.

This coming week Sister Monson and I will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary. As I look back to our beginnings, I realize just how much our lives have changed since then. Our beloved parents, who stood beside us as we commenced our journey together, have passed on. Our three children, who filled our lives so completely for many years, are grown and have

families of their own. Most of our grandchildren are grown, and we now have four great-grandchildren.

Day by day, minute by minute, second by second we went from where we were to where we are now. The lives of all of us, of course, go through similar alterations and changes. The difference between the changes in my life and the changes in yours is only in the details. Time never stands still; it must steadily march on, and with the marching come the changes.

### **Find joy in the journey**

This is our one and only chance at mortal life—here and now. The longer we live, the greater is our realization that it is brief. Opportunities come, and then they are gone. I believe that among the greatest lessons we are to learn in this short sojourn upon the earth are lessons that help us distinguish between what is important and what is not. I plead with you not to let those most important things pass you by as you plan for that illusive and non-existent future when you will have time to do all that you want to do. Instead, find joy in the journey—now.

I am what my wife, Frances, calls a “show-a-holic.” I thoroughly enjoy many musicals, and one of my favorites was written by the American composer Meredith Willson and is entitled *The Music Man*. Professor Harold Hill, one of the principal characters in the show, voices a caution that I share with you. Says he, “You pile up enough tomorrows, and you’ll find you’ve collected a lot of empty yesterdays.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Make the most of today**

My brothers and sisters, there is no tomorrow to remember if we don’t do something today.

I’ve shared with you previously an example of this philosophy. I believe it bears repeating. Many years ago, Arthur Gordon wrote in a national magazine, and I quote:

“When I was around thirteen and my brother ten, Father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunchtime there was a phone call; some urgent business required his attention downtown. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say [into the phone], ‘No, I won’t be down. It’ll have to wait.’

“When he came back to the table, Mother smiled. ‘The circus keeps coming back, you know,’ [she said.]

“‘I know,’ said Father. ‘But childhood doesn’t.’”<sup>2</sup>

If you have children who are grown and gone, in all likelihood you have occasionally felt pangs of loss and the recognition that you didn’t appreciate that time of life as much as you should have. Of course, there is no going back, but only forward. Rather than dwelling on the past, we should make the most of today, of the here and now, doing all we can to provide pleasant memories for the future.

If you are still in the process of raising children, be aware that the tiny fingerprints that show up on almost every newly cleaned surface, the toys scattered about the house, the piles and piles of laundry to be tackled will disappear all too soon and that you will—to your surprise—miss them profoundly.

### **Express love to friends and family**

Stresses in our lives come regardless of our circumstances. We must deal with them the best we can. But we should not let them get in the way of what is most important—and what is most important almost always involves the people around us. Often we assume that they *must* know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. Wrote William Shakespeare, “They do not love that do not show their love.”<sup>3</sup> We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from

our relationships with those who mean the most to us.

Send that note to the friend you've been neglecting; give your child a hug; give your *parents* a hug; say "I love you" more; always express your thanks. Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved. Friends move away, children grow up, and loved ones pass on. It's so easy to take others for granted—until that day when they're gone from our lives and we are left with feelings of "what if" and "if only." Said author Harriet Beecher Stowe: "The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone."<sup>4</sup>

In the 1960s during the Vietnam War, Church member Jay Hess, an airman, was shot down over North Vietnam. For two years his family had no idea whether he was dead or alive. His captors in Hanoi eventually allowed him to write home but limited his message to less than 25 words. What would you and I say to our families if we were in the same situation—not having seen them for over two years and not knowing if we would ever see them again? Wanting to provide something his family could recognize as having come from him and also wanting to give them valuable counsel, Brother Hess wrote—and I quote: "These things are important: temple marriage, mission, college. Press on, set goals, write history, take pictures twice a year."<sup>5</sup>

Let us relish life as we live it, find joy in the journey, and share our love with friends and family. One day each of us will run out of tomorrows.

In the book of John in the New Testament, chapter 13, verse 34, the Savior admonishes us, "As I have loved you, . . . love one another."

### **Be grateful for what we have**

Some of you may be familiar with Thornton Wilder's classic drama *Our Town*. If you are, you will remember the

town of Grover's Corners, where the story takes place. In the play, Emily Webb dies in childbirth and we read of the lonely grief of her young husband, George, left with their four-year-old son. Emily does not wish to rest in peace; she wants to experience again the joys of her life. She is granted the privilege of returning to earth and reliving her 12th birthday. At first it is exciting to be young again, but the excitement wears off quickly. The day holds no joy now that Emily knows what is in store for the future. It is unbearably painful to realize how unaware she had been of the meaning and wonder of life while she was alive. Before returning to her resting place, Emily laments, "Do . . . human beings ever realize life while they live it—every, every minute?"

Our realization of what is most important in life goes hand in hand with gratitude for our blessings.

Said one well-known author: "Both abundance and lack [of abundance] exist simultaneously in our lives, as parallel realities. It is always our conscious choice which secret garden we will tend . . . when we choose not to focus on what is missing from our lives but are grateful for the abundance that's present—love, health, family, friends, work, the joys of nature, and personal pursuits that bring us [happiness]—the wasteland of illusion falls away and we experience heaven on earth."<sup>6</sup>

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, verse 33, we are told: "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift."

The ancient Roman philosopher Horace admonished, "Whatever hour God has blessed you with, take it with grateful hand, nor postpone your joys from year to year, so that in whatever place you have been, you may say that you have lived happily."



### **Borghild Dahl's attitude of thankfulness**

Many years ago I was touched by the story of Borghild Dahl. She was born in Minnesota in 1890 of Norwegian parents and from her early years suffered severely impaired vision. She had a tremendous desire to participate in everyday life despite her handicap and, through sheer determination, succeeded in nearly everything she undertook. Against the advice of educators, who felt her handicap was too great, she attended college, receiving her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Minnesota. She later studied at Columbia University and the University of Oslo. She eventually became the principal of eight schools in western Minnesota and North Dakota.

She wrote the following in one of the 17 books she authored: "I had only one eye, and it was so covered with dense scars that I had to do all my seeing through one small opening in the left of the eye. I could see a book only by holding it up close to my face and by straining my one eye as hard as I could to the left."<sup>7</sup>

Miraculously, in 1943—when she was over 50 years old—a revolutionary procedure was developed which finally restored to her much of the sight she had been without for so long. A new and exciting world opened up before her. She took great pleasure in the small things most of us take for granted, such as watching a bird in flight, noticing the light reflected in the bubbles of her dishwater, or observing the phases of the moon each night. She closed one of her books with these words: "Dear . . . Father in heaven, I thank Thee. I thank Thee."<sup>8</sup>

Borghild Dahl, both before and after her sight was restored, was filled with gratitude for her blessings.

In 1982, two years before she died, at the age of 92 her last book was published. Its title: *Happy All My Life*. Her attitude

of thankfulness enabled her to appreciate her blessings and to live a full and rich life despite her challenges.

### **"In every thing give thanks"**

In 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament, chapter 5, verse 18, we are told by the Apostle Paul, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God."

Recall with me the account of the 10 lepers:

"And as [Jesus] entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."<sup>9</sup>

Said the Lord in a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things."<sup>10</sup> May we be found among those who give our thanks to our Heavenly Father. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues.

Despite the changes which come into our lives and with gratitude in our hearts, may we fill our days—as much as we can—with those things which matter most. May we cherish those we hold dear and express our love to them in word and in deed.

## Gratitude for our Savior

In closing, I pray that all of us will reflect gratitude for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His glorious gospel provides answers to life's greatest questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where does my spirit go when I die?

He taught us how to pray. He taught us how to serve. He taught us how to live. His life is a legacy of love. The sick He healed; the downtrodden He lifted; the sinner He saved.

The time came when He stood alone. Some Apostles doubted; one betrayed Him. The Roman soldiers pierced His side. The angry mob took His life. There yet rings from Golgotha's hill His compassionate words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>11</sup>

Earlier, perhaps perceiving the culmination of His earthly mission, He spoke the lament, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."<sup>12</sup> "No room in the inn"<sup>13</sup> was not a singular expression of rejection—just the first. Yet He invites you and me to receive Him. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."<sup>14</sup>

Who was this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief? Who is the King of glory, this Lord of hosts? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the Author of our Salvation. He beckons, "Follow me."<sup>15</sup> He instructs, "Go, and do thou likewise."<sup>16</sup> He pleads, "Keep my commandments."<sup>17</sup>

Let us follow Him. Let us emulate His example. Let us obey His word. By so

doing, we give to Him the divine gift of gratitude.

Brothers and sisters, my sincere prayer is that we may adapt to the changes in our lives, that we may realize what is most important, that we may express our gratitude always and thus find joy in the journey. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey, *The Music Man* (1957).
2. Arthur Gordon, *A Touch of Wonder* (1974), 77–78.
3. William Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act 1, scene 2, line 31.
4. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in Gorton Carruth and Eugene Erlich, comp., *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (1988), 173.
5. Personal correspondence.
6. Sarah Ban Breathnach, in John Cook, comp., *The Book of Positive Quotations*, 2nd ed. (2007), 342.
7. Borghild Dahl, *I Wanted to See* (1944), 1.
8. *I Wanted to See*, 210.
9. Luke 17:12–18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Matthew 8:20.
13. See Luke 2:7.
14. Revelation 3:20.
15. Mark 2:14.
16. Luke 10:37.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 11:6.

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The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder Daniel L. Johnson offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 5, 2008. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Uchtdorf made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 178th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these conference proceedings.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the

direction of Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Elder Paul B. Pieper offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Faith in Every Footstep.”

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### **President Uchtdorf**

The choir has sung “Faith in Every Footstep.”

We will now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Brother William D. Oswald, second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

## President Boyd K. Packer

It is my purpose to show that in troubled times, the Lord has always prepared a safe way ahead. We live in those “perilous times” which the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days.<sup>1</sup> If we are to be safe individually, as families, and secure as a church, it will be through “obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Persecutions of the early Saints**

On July 24, 1849, the Saints had been in the valley two years to the day. They

finally were free from years of mobbing and persecution. That called for a great celebration.

Just a few years earlier under dreadful conditions, the Prophet Joseph Smith suffered in Liberty Jail for months while the mobs drove the Saints from their homes. The words *liberty* and *jail* do not fit together very well. Joseph called out:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold

from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?"<sup>3</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith had earlier sought direction, and the Lord told the Saints to seek redress from the judges, the governor, and then the president.<sup>4</sup>

Their appeals to the judges failed. During his life, Joseph Smith was summoned to court over 200 times on all kinds of trumped-up charges. He was never convicted.

When they sought redress from Governor Boggs of Missouri, he issued a proclamation: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good."<sup>5</sup> That unleashed untold brutality and wickedness.

They appealed to President Martin Van Buren of the United States, who told them, "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you."<sup>6</sup>

I will read the final paragraphs of their third petition addressed to the Congress of the United States:

"The afflictions of your memorialists have already been overwhelming, too much for humanity, too much for American citizens to endure without complaint. We have groaned under the iron hand of tyranny and oppression these many years. We have been robbed of our property to the amount of two millions of dollars. We have been hunted as the wild beasts of the forest. We have seen our aged fathers who fought in the Revolution, and our innocent children, alike slaughtered by our persecutors. We have seen the fair daughters of American citizens insulted and abused in the most inhuman manner, and finally, we have seen fifteen thousand souls, men, women, and children, driven by force of arms, during the severities of winter, from their sacred homes and firesides, to a land of strangers, penniless and unprotected. Under all these afflicting circumstances, we imploringly stretch forth our hands towards the highest councils of our nation,

and humbly appeal to the illustrious Senators and Representatives of a great and free people for redress and protection.

"Hear! O hear the petitioning voice of many thousands of American citizens who now groan in exile . . . ! Hear! O hear the weeping and bitter lamentations of widows and orphans, whose husbands and fathers have been cruelly martyred in the land where the proud eagle . . . floats! Let it not be recorded in the archives of the nations, that . . . exiles sought protection and redress at your hands, but sought it in vain. It is in your power to save us, our wives, and our children, from a repetition of the bloodthirsty scenes of Missouri, and thus greatly relieve the fears of a persecuted and injured people, and your petitioners will ever pray."<sup>7</sup>

There was no pity, and they were turned away.

In 1844, while under the avowed protection of Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were shot to death in Carthage Jail. Words cannot express the brutality and suffering the Saints had endured.

### A grand patriotic celebration

Now on this 24th of July in 1849, free at last from the mobbings, they planned to celebrate.<sup>8</sup>

Everything the Saints owned would come across a thousand miles of desert by handcart or covered wagon. It would be 20 more years before the railroad came as far as Salt Lake City. With almost nothing to work with, they determined that the celebration would be a grand expression of their feelings.

They built a bowery on Temple Square. They erected a flagpole 104 feet tall. They made an enormous national flag 65 feet in length and unfurled it at the top of this liberty pole.

It may seem puzzling, incredible almost beyond belief, that for the theme of

this first celebration they chose patriotism and loyalty to that same government which had rejected and failed to assist them. What could they have been thinking of? If you can understand why, you will understand the power of the teachings of Christ.

Their brass band played as President Brigham Young led a grand procession to Temple Square. He was followed by the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy.

Then followed 24 young men dressed in white pants; black coats; white scarves on their right shoulders; coronets, or crowns, on their heads; and a sheathed sword at their left sides. In their right hand, of all things, each carried a copy of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The Declaration of Independence was read by one of those young men.

Next came 24 young women dressed in white, with blue scarves on their right shoulders and white roses on their heads. Each carried a Bible and a Book of Mormon.

Almost but not quite as amazing as their choice of patriotism for a theme was what came next: 24 aged sires (as they were called) led by patriarch Isaac Morley. They were known as the Silver Greys—all 60 years of age or older. Each carried a staff painted red with white ribbon floating at the top. One carried the Stars and Stripes. These men were a symbol of the priesthood, which was “from the beginning before the world was”<sup>9</sup> and had been restored in this dispensation.

### **Law-abiding, worthy citizens**

The Saints knew that the Lord had told them to be “subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.”<sup>10</sup> That commandment, revealed then, is true now of our members in every nation. We are to be law-abiding, worthy citizens.

The Lord told them, “I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.”<sup>11</sup>

And in another verse, the Lord told them that “it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.”<sup>12</sup> They were therefore antislavery. This was a very sore spot with the settlers in Missouri.

And so on that day of celebration in 1849, “Elder Phineas Richards came forward in behalf of the twenty-four aged sires, and read their loyal and patriotic address.”<sup>13</sup> He spoke of the need for them to teach patriotism to their children and to love and honor freedom. After he briefly recited the perils they had come through, he said:

“Brethren and friends, we who have lived to threescore years, have beheld the government of the United States in its glory, and know that the outrageous cruelties we have suffered proceeded from a corrupted and degenerate administration, while the pure principles of our boasted Constitution remain unchanged. . . .

“. . . As we have inherited the spirit of liberty and the fire of patriotism from our fathers, so let them descend [unchanged] to our posterity.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Followers of Christ**

One would think that, compelled by force of human nature, the Saints would seek revenge, but something much stronger than human nature prevailed.

The Apostle Paul explained:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. . . .

“. . . We have the mind of Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

That Spirit defined those early members of the Church as followers of Christ.

If you can understand a people so long-suffering, so tolerant, so forgiving,

so Christian after what they had suffered, you will have unlocked the key to what a Latter-day Saint is. Rather than being consumed with revenge, they were anchored to revelation. Their course was set by the teachings still found today in the Old and the New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

### **Living the gospel in perilous times**

If you can understand why they would celebrate as they did, you can understand why we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the principles of the gospel.

The Book of Mormon teaches, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>16</sup>

And so today in these strangely perilous times, in the true Church of Jesus Christ<sup>17</sup> we teach and live the principles of His gospel.

Three things about that 1849 commemoration were both symbolic and prophetic: first, that the young men carried the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence; next, that each young woman carried the Bible and the Book of Mormon; and finally, that the old men—the Silver Greys—were honored in the parade.

After the program they had a feast at makeshift tables. Several hundred gold-rush travelers and 60 Indians were invited to join them.

Then they went back to work.

### **Remaining true during the Utah War**

President Young had said, “If the people of the United States will let us alone for ten years we will ask no odds of them.”<sup>18</sup>

Eight years to the day after the 1849 celebration, the Saints were in Big Cottonwood Canyon to celebrate another 24th of

July. Four horsemen rode in to report that an army 2,500 soldiers strong was on the plains. The army of the United States, commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, was ordered by President James Buchanan to crush a nonexistent Mormon rebellion.

The Saints broke camp and headed for home to prepare their defenses. Rather than flee, this time President Young declared, “We have transgressed no law, and we have no occasion to do so, neither do we intend to; but as for any nation’s coming to destroy this people, God Almighty being my helper, they cannot come here.”<sup>19</sup>

My great-grandparents buried a child on the trail from Far West, when they were driven to Nauvoo, and another at Winter Quarters, when they were driven west.

Another great-grandmother, a teenager, was pushing a handcart along the south banks of the Platte River. They sang:

We’ll find the place which God for us  
prepared,  
Far away in the West,  
Where none shall come to hurt or  
make afraid;  
There the Saints will be blessed.<sup>20</sup>

Across the river they could see the sun glinting on the weapons of the soldiers of the army.<sup>21</sup>

In St. Louis my great-grandmother bought a little enameled pin of the American flag. She wore it on her dress for the rest of her life.

Neither mobbings nor the army could turn the Saints aside from what they knew to be true. A settlement was negotiated, and the Utah War (later called Buchanan’s Blunder) was over.

### **Guided by revelation, led by a prophet**

We are guided by the same revelations and are led by a prophet. When the Prophet Joseph Smith died, another took his place. The order of succession continues today.

Six months ago at general conference, Thomas S. Monson was sustained as the 16th President of the Church, just five months before his 81st birthday. He succeeded President Gordon B. Hinckley, who died in his 98th year.

The senior leaders of the Church will virtually always be seasoned by decades of preparation.

President Monson is ideally suited for the challenges of our day. He is sustained by two counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—all prophets, seers, and revelators.

That same Lucifer who was cast out of our Father's presence is still at work. He, with the angels who followed him, will trouble the work of the Lord and destroy it if he can.

But we will stay on course. We will anchor ourselves as families and as a church to these principles and ordinances. Whatever tests lie ahead, and they will be many, we must remain faithful and true.

I bear witness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, that They live, that Thomas S. Monson is called of God by prophecy.

"The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing."<sup>22</sup> Today the sun

never sets on congregations of the Latter-day Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See 2 Timothy 3:1–7.
2. Articles of Faith 1:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–2.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:86–88.
5. *History of the Church*, 3:175.
6. Martin Van Buren, quoted in Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 77.
7. Quoted in *Biography*, 152–53.
8. See *Biography*, 95–107.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 76:13.
10. Articles of Faith 1:12.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 101:80.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 101:79.
13. *Biography*, 100.
14. Phineas Richards, in *Biography*, 102–4.
15. 1 Corinthians 2:14, 16.
16. 2 Nephi 25:26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
18. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Sept. 23, 1857, 228.
19. *Deseret News*, Sept. 23, 1857, 228.
20. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.
21. See "By Handcart to Utah: The Account of C. C. A. Christensen," *Nebraska History*, winter 1985, 342.
22. *History of the Church*, 4:540.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Patterns of the shopper

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am deeply grateful for each of you. Together we feel a profound sense of gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this world abounding with misery, we are truly thankful for God's "great plan of happiness."<sup>1</sup> His plan declares that men and women are "that they might have joy."<sup>2</sup> That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God's eternal plan.

The importance of choice may be illustrated by a homespun concept that

came to mind one day when I was shopping in a large retail store. I call it "patterns of the shopper." As shopping is part of our daily life, these patterns may be familiar.

Wise shoppers study their options thoroughly before they make a selection. They focus primarily on the quality and durability of a desired product. They want the very best. In contrast, some shoppers look for bargains, and others may splurge, only to learn later—much to their dismay—that their choice did not endure well.

And sadly, there are those rare individuals who cast aside their personal integrity and steal what they want. We call them shoplifters.

The patterns of the shopper may be applied to the topic of marriage. A couple in love can choose a marriage of the highest quality or a lesser type that will not endure. Or they can choose neither and brazenly steal what they want as “marital shoplifters.”

### **The virtue of a temple marriage**

The subject of marriage is debated across the world, where various arrangements exist for conjugal living. My purpose in speaking out on this topic is to declare, as an Apostle of the Lord,<sup>3</sup> that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred—it is ordained of God.<sup>4</sup> I also assert the virtue of a temple marriage. It is the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children.

While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter.<sup>5</sup> Only those who are married in the temple and whose marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will continue as spouses after death<sup>6</sup> and receive the highest degree of celestial glory, or exaltation. A temple marriage is also called a celestial marriage. Within the celestial glory are three levels. To obtain the highest, a husband and wife must be sealed for time and all eternity and keep their covenants made in a holy temple.<sup>7</sup>

The noblest yearning of the human heart is for a marriage that can endure beyond death. Fidelity to a temple marriage does that. It allows families to be together forever.

This goal is glorious. All Church activities, advancements, quorums, and classes are means to the end of an exalted family.<sup>8</sup>

To make this goal possible, our Heavenly Father has restored priesthood keys

in this dispensation so that essential ordinances in His plan can be performed by proper authority. Heavenly messengers—including John the Baptist;<sup>9</sup> Peter, James, and John;<sup>10</sup> Moses, Elias, and Elijah<sup>11</sup>—have participated in that restoration.<sup>12</sup>

### **Proclamation on the family**

Knowledge of this revealed truth is spreading across the earth.<sup>13</sup> We, as the Lord’s prophets and apostles, again proclaim to the world that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>14</sup>

We further proclaim that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. [Heavenly Father’s great] plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”<sup>15</sup>

That proclamation on the family helps us realize that celestial marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship.<sup>16</sup> The earth was created and this Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.<sup>17</sup>

### **Temple marriage, a partnership with God**

Scriptures declare that “it is lawful that [a man] should have one wife, and



they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation.”<sup>18</sup> Another affirms that “the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, marriage is not only an exalting principle of the gospel; it is a divine commandment.

Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>20</sup> The Atonement of His Beloved Son enabled both of these objectives to be realized. Because of the Atonement, immortality—or resurrection from the dead—became a reality for all.<sup>21</sup> And because of the Atonement, eternal life—which is living forever in God’s presence, the “greatest of all the gifts of God”<sup>22</sup>—became a possibility. To qualify for eternal life, we must make an eternal and everlasting covenant with our Heavenly Father.<sup>23</sup> This means that a temple marriage is not only between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.<sup>24</sup>

### **Becoming an eternal family**

The family proclamation also reminds us that “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other.”<sup>25</sup> Children born of that union are “an heritage of the Lord.”<sup>26</sup> When a family is sealed in the temple, that family may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.<sup>27</sup>

Such a reward requires more than a hopeful wish. On occasion I read in a newspaper obituary of an expectation that a recent death has reunited that person with a deceased spouse, when, in fact, they did *not* choose the eternal option. Instead, they opted for a marriage that was valid only as long as they both should live. Heavenly Father had offered them a supernal gift, but they refused it. And in rejecting the gift, they rejected the Giver of the gift.<sup>28</sup>

One strong sentence of scripture clearly distinguishes between a hopeful wish and eternal truth:

“All covenants, contracts, . . . obligations, oaths, vows, . . . or expectations, that are *not* made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, . . . are of *no* efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are *not* made unto this end have an end when men are dead.”<sup>29</sup>

These truths are absolute. Members of this Church invite all people to learn them and to qualify for eternal life.<sup>30</sup> We invite all to gain faith in God the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, to repent, to receive the Holy Ghost, to obtain the blessings of the temple, to make and keep sacred covenants, and to endure to the end.

### **No blessing will be withheld**

Mercifully, God’s great plan of happiness and its eternal blessings can be extended to those who did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality. Temple ordinances can be done vicariously for them.<sup>31</sup>

But what of the many mature members of the Church who are not married? Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that, in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.<sup>32</sup> The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed.<sup>33</sup>

### **Marital happiness requires earnest effort**

Meanwhile, mortal misunderstandings can make mischief in a marriage. In fact, each marriage starts with two built-in handicaps. It involves two imperfect people. Happiness can come to them only

through their earnest effort. Just as harmony comes from an orchestra only when its members make a concerted effort, so harmony in marriage also requires a concerted effort. That effort will succeed if each partner will minimize personal demands and maximize actions of loving selflessness.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: “To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty—the fulfillment of which brings true joy.”<sup>34</sup>

Harmony in marriage comes only when one esteems the welfare of his or her spouse among the highest of priorities. When that really happens, a celestial marriage becomes a reality, bringing great joy in this life and in the life to come.

### Celestial marriage—the best choice

God’s plan of happiness allows us to choose for ourselves. As with the patterns of the shopper, we may choose celestial marriage or lesser alternatives.<sup>35</sup> Some marital options are cheap, some are costly, and some are cunningly crafted by the adversary. Beware of his options; they always breed misery!<sup>36</sup>

The best choice is a celestial marriage. Thankfully, if a lesser choice has previously been made, a choice can now be made to upgrade it to the best choice. That requires a mighty change of heart<sup>37</sup> and a permanent personal upgrade.<sup>38</sup> Blessings so derived are worth all efforts made.<sup>39</sup>

The full realization of the blessings of a temple marriage is almost beyond our mortal comprehension. Such a marriage will continue to grow in the celestial realm. There we can become perfected.<sup>40</sup> As Jesus ultimately received the fulness of the glory of the Father,<sup>41</sup> so we may “come unto the Father . . . and in due time receive of his fulness.”<sup>42</sup>

Celestial marriage is a pivotal part of preparation for eternal life. It requires one to be married to the right person, in the right place, by the right authority, and to obey that sacred covenant faithfully.<sup>43</sup> Then one may be assured of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Alma 42:8. It is also known as the “plan of . . . God” (see 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9), the “plan of redemption” (see Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:26, 30, 32–33; 29:2; 42:13), the “plan of salvation” (see Alma 24:14; 42:5), and the “plan of mercy” (see Alma 42:15, 31).
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:35.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 5–8; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 7–10.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53; 132:7.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
8. One example of this objective is the scriptural declaration that “thy duty is unto the church forever, and this *because* of thy family” (D&C 23:3; italics added).
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 13.
10. See Matthew 16:18–19; Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:8, 18; 132:45–46.
13. See 2 Nephi 10:2; 30:8.
14. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
15. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
16. Previously I have stated that “marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 37; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 36).
17. Whenever scriptures warn that the “earth would be utterly wasted,” the warning is connected to the need for priesthood authority to seal families together in holy temples (see D&C 2:1–3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39).



18. Doctrine and Covenants 49:16; see also Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7–9; Doctrine and Covenants 42:22; Moses 3:24; Abraham 5:18.
19. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
20. Moses 1:39.
21. See 2 Nephi 9:22; Alma 12:8; 33:22; Helaman 14:17; Mormon 9:13; Moses 7:62; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 7:69.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
24. See Matthew 19:6.
25. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
26. Psalm 127:3.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; italics added.
30. Jesus taught this concept to the people of ancient America (see 3 Nephi 27:16–20). See also 2 Nephi 33:4; Doctrine and Covenants 42:61; Joseph Smith Translation, 1 John 5:13.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:1–18; 137:7–8.
32. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76–77.
33. See Alma 41:3; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
34. “Messages of Inspiration from President Monson,” *Church News*, July 5, 2008, 2.
35. See 2 Nephi 2:27; Jacob 6:8.
36. Satan wants us to be miserable, as he is (see Revelation 12:9; 2 Nephi 2:18; D&C 10:22–27; Moses 4:6).
37. See Alma 5:12–14. Such a mighty change includes repentance, forgiveness, and a renewed determination to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).
38. “The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4). Repentance requires a complete change for the better—a total personal upgrade.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.
40. See Moroni 10:32.
41. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:13–14.
42. Doctrine and Covenants 93:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 66:2; 132:5–6.
43. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 118.

## William D. Oswald

### Learning to jump the rope

Recently Sister Oswald and I decided to teach our five-year-old twin granddaughters how to jump the rope. Jumping the rope is a children’s game in which participants jump over a rope as it passes under their feet and then over their heads. After receiving some simple instructions, both girls tried but failed on several attempts.

Just as we were ready to give up, two older neighbor children walked by, and we enlisted their help. Both of the neighbor girls were experienced rope jumpers and

were able to show our granddaughters how to jump the rope. As the neighbor girls jumped the rope, I noticed that they sang a song that helped them jump to the rhythm of the swinging rope.

Once our granddaughters understood the principles of rope jumping and were shown how to jump the rope, the rest of the lesson was easy. With a little practice, both of the twins were well on their way to mastering the fundamentals of rope jumping.

During the rope-jumping lesson, another granddaughter, only three years old, was sitting quietly on the lawn observing.

When someone asked her if she wanted to try to jump the rope, she nodded, came forward, and stood next to the rope. As we turned the rope, to our great surprise she jumped just as she had seen her sisters do. She jumped once, then twice, and then again and again, repeating aloud the same song the older children had sung.

### Learning to be effective gospel teachers

All three granddaughters observed that there was an art to jumping the rope. It was a simple thing that all of them could do after learning a few basic principles and being shown how. So it is with gospel teaching. When we learn a few fundamental principles about teaching and are shown how to teach, all of us can do it.

President Boyd K. Packer often reminds us that “all of us—leaders, teachers, missionaries, and parents—have a lifelong challenge from the Lord to both teach and learn the doctrines of the gospel as they have been revealed to us.”<sup>1</sup> As simply stated by Elder L. Tom Perry, “Every position in the Church requires an effective teacher.”<sup>2</sup>

Since every member is a teacher and “teaching is the center of all that we do,”<sup>3</sup> we all have a sacred responsibility to learn some basic principles of teaching. There are many principles of teaching and learning, and it is not enough for us just to read about them. First, we need to *understand* these basic principles, and second, we need to be *shown* how they are used by successful teachers. This can be done by carefully watching able teachers in our wards and branches and by reviewing the worldwide leadership training meeting on teaching and learning found on the Church Web site or in Church magazines.<sup>4</sup>

The basic principles that apply to learning and teaching the gospel are found in the scriptures. They are also discussed in an excellent but often neglected teaching resource entitled *Teaching, No Greater Call*.<sup>5</sup>

### Scriptural examples of successful teachers

When we look for a model of the ideal teacher who can show us how to teach the gospel, we are inescapably drawn to Jesus of Nazareth. His disciples called him “Rabboni; which is to say, Master” or “Teacher.”<sup>6</sup> He was and is the Master Teacher.

Jesus differed from other teachers of His day in that He taught “as one having authority.”<sup>7</sup> This authority to teach and minister came from His Heavenly Father, for “God anointed Jesus . . . with the Holy Ghost and with power . . . ; for God was with him.”<sup>8</sup>

Following this pattern, Jesus was taught by His Heavenly Father, as recorded by John. Jesus said, “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me.”<sup>9</sup> “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do. . . . For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.”<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the scriptures we can find additional examples of successful gospel teachers who changed the lives and saved the souls of those they taught. From the Book of Mormon, for example, Nephi,<sup>11</sup> Alma,<sup>12</sup> and the sons of Mosiah<sup>13</sup> readily come to mind. Notice the personal preparation of the sons of Mosiah as they prepared to teach the gospel:

“They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”<sup>14</sup>

Another powerful gospel teacher was Moroni, who was chosen as “a messenger sent from the presence of God”<sup>15</sup> to teach and to tutor the Prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph has given us a brief but detailed

description of what Moroni said and did when he taught Joseph.<sup>16</sup>

The first time Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, Joseph was a teenage boy of 17 with little formal education. Joseph described himself as “an obscure boy . . . of no consequence in the world,”<sup>17</sup> and a friend later called him “untutored” and “untaught.”<sup>18</sup> In the hands of a patient and caring teacher like Moroni—and other heaven-sent messengers who instructed him—this young man would become the central figure in what the Lord referred to as “a marvelous work and a wonder.”<sup>19</sup>

### Three basic principles of gospel teaching

What are some of the principles of teaching and learning we might identify by observing the way Moroni taught Joseph Smith? There are a number of important principles we could discuss, but let us focus on three basic principles essential to good teaching.

*Principle 1: Show love to those you teach and call them by name.*

Joseph Smith said that when the angel Moroni first appeared to him, Joseph “was afraid; but the fear soon left” him. What was it that Moroni did to help dispel this fear? Joseph said, “He called me by name.”<sup>20</sup> Teachers who love their students and call them by name are following a heavenly pattern.<sup>21</sup>

In a recent meeting with President Thomas S. Monson, I noticed that he greeted each of us by name. He spoke to us about his boyhood Sunday School teacher Lucy Gertsch, noting that she was a teacher who knew the names of each student in her class. President Monson has said of her: “She unfailingly called on those who missed a Sunday or who just didn’t come. We knew she cared about us. None of us has ever forgotten her or the lessons she taught.”<sup>22</sup>

*Principle 2: Teach from the scriptures.*

Another teaching principle practiced by Moroni is that he knew and taught from

the scriptures. Joseph Smith said that at their very first meeting, Moroni “commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. . . . He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations.”<sup>23</sup> From the many scriptures quoted by Moroni, Joseph learned about his prophetic role in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the true gospel again to the earth.<sup>24</sup>

*Principle 3: Encourage the pondering of gospel truths.*

A third principle employed by Moroni in teaching Joseph Smith was to cause him to ponder on what he had been taught. Joseph states that after his third meeting with Moroni, he “was again left to ponder on . . . what [he] had just experienced.”<sup>25</sup> Effective teachers will want to follow the pattern of the resurrected Christ among the Nephites when He asked the multitude to return to their “homes, and ponder upon the things” He had taught them so that they might “understand.”<sup>26</sup>

Nephi reminds us that the act of pondering involves using not only our heads but also our hearts. He said, “My heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.”<sup>27</sup> The act of pondering on the scriptures and the things we have seen and heard invites personal revelation to come into our lives.

### A teacher come from God

I testify that teaching the gospel is a sacred and holy calling. When you love your students and call them by name, when you open the scriptures and teach from them, and when you encourage your students to ponder the truths of the restored gospel and apply them, then your influence for good will be magnified and the lives of your students will be blessed more abundantly. In that glorious day, they will say to you as it was said of Jesus of Nazareth, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God.”<sup>28</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer and L. Tom Perry, "Principles of Teaching and Learning," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 82.
2. L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, June 2007, 84; see also 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11–14.
3. Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, June 2007, 86.
4. See *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 81–112; proceedings of this meeting are also available at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org).
5. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999).
6. John 20:16; see footnote *a*.
7. Matthew 7:29; see also Mark 1:22.
8. Acts 10:38.
9. John 8:28.
10. John 5:19–20.
11. See 2 Nephi 33:1–13.
12. See Mosiah 27:32–37.
13. See Alma 17:1–12.
14. Alma 17:2–3.
15. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
16. See Joseph Smith—History 1:27–54.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
18. Orson Pratt, *Deseret News*, July 21, 1880, 386.
19. 2 Nephi 25:17; 27:26; see also Isaiah 29:14; 3 Nephi 21:9–10.
20. Joseph Smith—History 1:32–33; see also verse 49.
21. See Matthew 3:17; 3 Nephi 11:7; Moroni 2:1–2; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
22. Thomas S. Monson, "Examples of Great Teachers," *Ensign*, June 2007, 109.
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:36, 41.
24. See Joseph Smith—History 1:33–54; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:8–9.
25. Joseph Smith—History 1:47.
26. 3 Nephi 17:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:1, 6, 11, 29.
27. 2 Nephi 4:16; see also Moroni 10:3.
28. John 3:2.

**President Uchtdorf**

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Eduardo Gavarret and Carlos A. Godoy of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"How Firm a Foundation."

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**Elder Eduardo Gavarret****Warmth at home, warmth at church**

It gets very cold during the winter in my hometown of Minas, Uruguay. At sunset my mother used to place logs in the fireplace in order to keep our dining room warm, and one by one, my parents, sisters, and I would gather together, once our daily chores were done. That cozy room—created by the warmth of the fireplace, combined with the presence of each one of the members of the family—instilled feelings within me that I shall treasure forever.

After my wife and I formed our own family, wherever we were living, we all also gathered often, whether around a fireplace or simply around the warmth we always feel whenever we are reunited with our children. What a beautiful feeling! What a lovely place is our house, our home, our refuge.

Through the years our family has lived in different countries, and in each one of them we were able to find within the Church the same feeling of warmth from members in every ward we attended.

Each member of the Church should have the opportunity to experience such pleasant feelings, and they can experience these feelings through our efforts of re-activation and missionary work.

### Members “returning home” in Peru

Let me share with you something that has been happening in some stakes and districts in Peru, and in so doing I will mention some family names: the Causo family, the Banda family, the Vargas family, and the list goes on. It includes over 1,700 names of members who have come home. They are members of different wards, branches, stakes, and districts from all over the country of Peru who were invited by stake presidents, bishops, and leaders of quorums and auxiliary organizations to return home. They accepted the invitation made by priesthood leaders, full-time missionaries, and others who took upon themselves the responsibility to help them return to church and come unto Christ. To each one of them, we say, “Welcome. Welcome home!”

What made it possible for these persons to return home? It was the combined effort of 14 stakes and 4 districts in a mission laboring for one year to bring about the return of all these persons through re-activation and the ordinances of baptism and confirmation.

This effort was inspired by the Savior’s words: “Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:16) and by the teaching of President Thomas S. Monson, who said:

“Over the years we have issued appeals to the less active, the offended, the critical, the transgressor—to come back. ‘Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 89).

Alma, feeling great suffering for the souls of his brethren, prayed to the Lord, saying:

“O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

“Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee” (Alma 31:34–35).

### Dear are the lambs of His fold

President Angel Alarcón from the Puente Piedra stake in Lima, Peru, shared the following experience with me: “Each Saturday, the missionaries, the bishop, some leaders from auxiliary organizations, and I visit less-active members, nonmembers, and new converts from 8:30 a.m. till noon.”

At this point of his story, the words of the hymn came to my mind:

Dear to the heart of the Shepherd,  
Dear are the lambs of his fold;  
Some from the pastures are straying,  
Hungry and helpless and cold.

See, the Good Shepherd is seeking,  
Seeking the lambs that are lost,  
Bringing them in with rejoicing,  
Saved at such infinite cost.  
[“Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd,”  
*Hymns*, no. 221]

Brother Vargas, whose home was located in an area of limited access, received a call one Saturday morning. It was President Alarcón, calling from his mobile phone, announcing his arrival. Brother Vargas then said, “I am surprised; it is very hard to reach my house.”

To which came the reply: “Well, I am at your door right now, and I wish to speak to you. We need you, and we invite you to come to our Church meetings tomorrow.”

Then the man, who had stopped attending church for many years, replied, “I will be there.” Thus, he started his journey back home.

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . .

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:35–36, 40).

### **Keeping the flame alive**

While taking part in Sunday meetings a couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to meet a brother who was attending for the first time after many years of being away. He was accompanied by his wife, who was not a member of the Church.

When I asked him why he decided to return, he replied, “My friend Fernando and this good bishop invited me to come, and I did. I found the Church many years ago, and I have a small flame still burning within my heart. It may not be strong, but it is there.”

I concluded, “Well, as your brethren, we shall blow that flame together to keep it alive.” Then we gave each other a hug.

The interest, attention, and care toward our brethren are profound manifestations of love for our Heavenly Father. In fact, we express our love for God when we serve and when this service is focused on our neighbor’s well-being.

King Benjamin taught about it: “And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

What a tremendous impact we can make in the lives of so many less-active families and of those who are not members of the Church when we accept the Savior’s invitation to feed His sheep and help everyone to come unto Christ!

### **Seek for my lost ones**

These experiences are a few of what thousands of brethren are quietly doing: accepting the Lord’s invitation to feed His sheep. Let us remember that love and service are like twins who seek each other’s companionship.

Oh, that each one of us would accept, as a beautiful demonstration of our love for our Heavenly Father, the responsibility we bear as members of this Church to seek after those who are not here with us! If through this loving service we should bring only one soul to the Church and if we would make it the object of our lives, how much rejoicing would we bring upon us and upon those whom we help return to Christ!

Hark! he is earnestly calling,  
Tenderly pleading today:  
“Will you not seek for my lost ones,  
Off from my shelter astray?”  
[*Hymns*, no. 221]

I testify that we are sons and daughters of a Heavenly Father, who loves us and who knows each of us by our own name.

I bear my testimony of the love of our Father and Savior. He loved us first and gave His Son so that, through Him, we could be able to come back home. I express my love for Him, my Savior, my Lord, my Master, and my Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Carlos A. Godoy

### Testimony as a process

A few years ago, when I was serving as an Area Seventy in Brazil, my family and I were on vacation in the beautiful city of Florianópolis. On Sunday, as usual, we went to the closest church that we could find. My wife and I and our oldest daughter attended a Sunday School class where they were discussing our personal testimony of the gospel.

At some point in the lesson, the teacher asked the class members if they would share a powerful spiritual experience they had while developing their testimony of the Church. While some brothers and sisters were sharing their stories, I mentally reviewed my own experiences as a convert for something I could share with them, but I could not think of anything very remarkable in my process of gaining a testimony.

While I was thinking and listening to the others' experiences, I realized that the teacher expected me to participate. She was listening to the other members, and she let me know that she was waiting for my great experience to be shared. After all, I was an Area Seventy, and I should have something impressive to share. Feeling that the time was passing and she was waiting for me, I tried harder to find something that would fit in this category of a powerful event, but I was not able to think of anything, to the disappointment of the teacher. For all I wanted to help, I could not meet her expectation.

Fortunately that was a fast Sunday, and during sacrament meeting, I took the opportunity to express my testimony to the congregation and especially to that sister and her Sunday School class. It was not a remarkable experience that I had to share but a sincere testimony that I have about the truths of the restored gospel.

### The Spirit whispers rather than shouts

Sometimes we think that to have a testimony of the Church, we need some great, powerful experience, or a single event which would erase any doubts that we have received an answer or a confirmation. President Boyd K. Packer taught:

"The voice of the Spirit is described in the scripture as being neither 'loud' nor 'harsh.' It is 'not a voice of thunder, neither [a] voice of a great tumultuous noise.' But rather, 'a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper,' and it can 'pierce even to the very soul' and 'cause [the heart] to burn.' (3 Ne. 11:3; Hel. 5:30; D&C 85:6–7.) Remember, Elijah found the voice of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but was a 'still small voice.' (1 Kgs. 19:12.)"

President Packer continues:

"The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. . . .

"Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening and say in our manner and expression, like Samuel of ancient times, 'Speak [Lord], for thy servant heareth.' (1 Sam. 3:10.)" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

### Danger of looking for something great

Great events are not a guarantee that our testimony will be strong. Laman and Lemuel are good examples of this. They were visited by angels, and even then, almost in the very next minute, they were questioning the will of the Lord. Some great leaders of these latter days can also



teach us about this principle. They were taught from on high during the early days of the Restoration and still were not strong enough to endure to the end. These experiences show us that to receive the witness of the “still small voice” sometimes can have a stronger impact on our testimonies than the visit of an angel.

As a young man in Porto Alegre, Brazil, learning about the Church from two sister missionaries, I remember looking for an answer to my prayers—something big and unquestionable. It never happened. That does not mean that I did not develop enough certainty to join the restored Church.

Alma teaches this process of nurturing a testimony: “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe [and I think that was my case as an investigator], let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27).

Since those days, for me as an investigator of the Church, and later as a missionary, and then as a father and a leader, all of these experiences together formed a set of experiences and feelings, most often small, that leave no doubt that the seed “is a good seed” (Alma 32:30).

Alma continues his teaching about testimony:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it . . . beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea,

it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

A testimony, then, for some people, may come through a single and irrefutable event. But for others, it may come through a process of experiences that, perhaps not as remarkable but when combined, testify in an indisputable way that what we have learned and lived is true.

### **A testimony of absolute certainty**

Today, after many years as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I might not be able to remember most of the experiences that have shaped my testimony. Still, all of these experiences have left their mark and contributed to my testimony of the restored Church. Today I have an absolute certainty of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would like to finish expressing this testimony, not only for that sister who taught the Sunday School class but also for all of you. I know that our Heavenly Father lives. I know He loves us. We are His children. He listens to our prayers. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He died, was resurrected, and atoned for our sins. His Atonement has blessed me every day of my life.

I testify that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored in these latter days by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was a prophet of God. I know that we are led today by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I know he is a prophet for our days, just as Moses, Abraham, and Isaiah were in their days.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God, as well as the Bible, and it is another testimony of the Savior. I know that the power of the priesthood was restored and has been blessing many Saints throughout the world. And I testify of this in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Quentin L. Cook

### **“Hope ya know, we had a hard time”**

Last winter my daughter had a white-knuckle experience driving in a severe snowstorm. She reminded me of a similar situation I had with my two sons many years ago. My youngest son, Joe, was three years old, and my son Larry was six. We were traveling by car from San Francisco to Utah in June. The weather had been very good.

As we started our ascent to the Donner Pass summit in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, suddenly and without warning an enormous snowstorm hit us. None of the drivers was prepared. A semitruck in front of us had jackknifed and was spread across two lanes. Other trucks and cars had slid off the freeway. One lane was open, and many vehicles, including ours, were desperately trying to gain traction to avoid the other vehicles. All traffic then came to a halt.

We were not prepared for this blizzard in June. We had no warm clothing, and our fuel was relatively low. I huddled with the two boys in an effort to keep us warm. After many hours, safety vehicles, snowplows, and tow trucks began to clear up the massive logjam of vehicles.

Eventually a tow truck hauled us to a service station on the other side of the pass. I called my wife, knowing she would be worried because she had expected a call the prior evening. She asked if she could speak to the two boys. When it was the three-year-old's turn, with a quivering voice he said, “Hope ya know, we had a hard time!”

I could tell, as our three-year-old talked to his mother and told her of the hard time, he gained comfort and then reassurance. Our prayers are that way when we go to our Father in Heaven. We know He cares for us in our time of need.

### **Each of us will face trials and hardships**

The incident I just recounted, while a difficult travel situation, was brief, and there were no lasting consequences. However, many of the trials and hardships we encounter in life are severe and appear to have lasting consequences. Each of us will experience some of these during the vicissitudes of life. Many listening to this conference are experiencing situations of a most serious nature at this very moment.

We resonate with the Prophet Joseph's petition after he had been falsely accused and imprisoned in Liberty Jail for months: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

The Lord's answer is reassuring: “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the essential doctrines illuminated by the Restoration is that there must be opposition in all things for righteousness to be brought to pass.<sup>2</sup> This life is not always easy, nor was it meant to be; it is a time of testing and proving. As we read in Abraham, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>3</sup> Elder Harold B. Lee taught:

“Sometimes the things that are best for us and the things that bring eternal rewards seem at the moment to be the most bitter, and the things forbidden are oftentimes the things which seem to be the more desirable.”<sup>4</sup>

The novel *A Tale of Two Cities* opens with the oft-quoted line “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”<sup>5</sup> The scriptures make it clear that each generation has its own version of best and worst of times. We are all subject to the conflict between good and evil<sup>6</sup> and the contrast

between light and dark, hope and despair. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained, “The sharp, side-by-side contrast of the sweet and the bitter is essential until the very end of this brief, mortal experience.”<sup>7</sup> We know from our doctrine that good will overcome evil,<sup>8</sup> and those who repent and are sanctified shall be given eternal life.<sup>9</sup>

### *Trials of the early Saints*

Near the time Dickens was writing his novel, the heroic efforts of the early Saints who settled the Intermountain West were occurring.

Even with their common faith, the Saints had experienced much hardship and approached the evacuation of Nauvoo with very different expectations. Some looked forward with optimism, others with concern. Two excellent examples are presented by Helen Mar Whitney and Bathsheba Smith. Both have left compelling records of their feelings.

Sister Whitney recorded her expectations upon leaving Nauvoo: “I will pack away all my little ribbons, collars and laces, etc., for we are going where we cannot purchase them. We are going out from the world to live beyond the Rocky Mountains where none others will wish to go. . . . There will be neither rich nor poor among us, and we will have none but the honest and virtuous.”<sup>10</sup> Sister Whitney’s words resonate with an idealistic optimism.

Sister Bathsheba Smith’s recorded feelings are also full of faith but evidence some trepidation. She had seen the mobs arrayed against the Saints in Missouri and was present at the death of the Apostle David W. Patten. Recalling the evacuation of Nauvoo, she wrote:

“My last act in that precious spot was to tidy the rooms, sweep up the floor and set the broom in its accustomed place behind the door. Then with emotions in my heart . . . I gently closed the door and faced an unknown future, . . . faced it with faith in God and with no less assurance of the ultimate establishment of the Gospel

in the West and of its true enduring principles, than I had felt in those trying scenes in Missouri.”<sup>11</sup>

Both of these LDS pioneer women remained strong in the gospel throughout their lives and provided wonderful service in building Zion, but they faced many additional trials and hardships, which they both faithfully endured.<sup>12</sup> Despite Sister Whitney’s optimism, her first three children died at or near birth—two of them during her extended exodus from Nauvoo to Salt Lake.<sup>13</sup> Sister Whitney has blessed us with her writings in defense of our faith and was the mother of the Apostle Orson F. Whitney.

Sister Smith recorded the poverty, sickness, and privation the Saints suffered as they made their way west.<sup>14</sup> In March of 1847 her mother passed away, and the next month her second son, John, was born. Her record of that is brief: “He was my last child, and lived only four hours.”<sup>15</sup> Later in her life she was the matron of the Salt Lake Temple and the fourth general president of the Relief Society.

We are deeply touched by the hardships the early Saints endured. Brigham Young captured this somewhat humorously in February 1856 when he stated:

“I might say something with regard to the hard times. You know that I have told you that if any one was afraid of starving to death, let him leave, and go where there is plenty. I do not apprehend the least danger of starving, for until we eat up the last mule, from the tip of the ear to the end of the fly whipper, I am not afraid of starving to death.”

He went on to say, “There are many people who cannot now get employment, but the spring is going to open upon us soon, and we are not going to suffer any more than what is for our good.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Challenges of today*

The challenges we face today are in their own way comparable to challenges of the past. The recent economic crisis

has caused significant concern throughout the world. Employment and financial problems are not unusual. Many people have physical and mental health challenges. Others deal with marital problems or wayward children. Some have lost loved ones. Addictions and inappropriate or harmful propensities cause heartache. Whatever the source of the trials, they cause significant pain and suffering for individuals and those who love them.

We know from the scriptures that some trials are for our good and are suited for our own personal development.<sup>17</sup> We also know that the rain falls on the just and the unjust.<sup>18</sup> It is also true that every cloud we see doesn't result in rain. Regardless of the challenges, trials, and hardships we endure, the reassuring doctrine of the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ includes Alma's teaching that the Savior would take upon Him our infirmities and "succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>19</sup>

### *Be prepared, grateful*

The scriptures and modern prophets have made it clear that there will be lean years and plentiful years.<sup>20</sup> The Lord expects us to be prepared for many of the challenges that come. He proclaims, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."<sup>21</sup> Part of the trauma I experienced crossing the Sierras in that blizzard many years ago occurred because I was not prepared for this sudden, unexpected event. One of the great blessings of the scriptures is that they warn us of challenges that are unexpected but often occur. We would do well to be prepared for them. One form of preparation is to keep the commandments.

In numerous places in the Book of Mormon, the people were promised that they would prosper in the land if they would keep the commandments.<sup>22</sup> This promise is often accompanied by the warning that if they do not keep the commandments of God, they shall be cut off from His presence.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, having the

blessings of the Spirit—the ministration of the Holy Ghost—is an essential element to truly prosper in the land and to be prepared.

Regardless of our trials, with the abundance we have today, we would be ungrateful if we did not appreciate our blessings. Despite the obvious nature of the hardships the pioneers were experiencing, President Brigham Young talked about the significance of gratitude. He stated, "I do not know of any, excepting the unpardonable sin, that is greater than the sin of ingratitude."<sup>24</sup>

### **Gratitude for the Savior and His Atonement**

Our foremost gratitude should be for the Savior and His Atonement. We are aware that many who are listening to this conference are experiencing trials and hardships of such intensity that the underlying feeling in their hearts as they approach our Father in Heaven in prayer is "Hope ya know, I'm having a hard time."

Let me share with you the true account of one sister, Ellen Yates from Grantsville, Utah. Early in October, 10 years ago, she kissed her husband, Leon, good-bye as he left to go to work in Salt Lake City. This would be the last time she would see Leon alive. He had a collision with a young man 20 years of age who was late for his first job and had tried to pass a slower vehicle, resulting in a head-on collision that killed them both instantly. Sister Yates said that after two compassionate highway patrolmen told her the news, she plunged into shock and grief.

She records, "As I tried to look ahead in life, all I could see was darkness and pain." It turned out that her husband's best friend was the bishop of the young man's ward. The bishop called Sister Yates and told her that the young man's mother, Jolayne Willmore, wanted to talk with her. She remembers "being shocked because I was so centered on my grief and

pain that I had not even thought about the young man and his family. I suddenly realized that here was a mother who was in as much or more pain than I was. I quickly gave my permission . . . for a visit.”

When Brother and Sister Willmore arrived, they expressed their great sorrow that their son was responsible for Leon’s death and presented her with a picture of the Savior holding a little girl in His arms. Sister Yates says, “When times become too hard to bear, I look at this picture and remember that Christ knows me personally. He knows my loneliness and my trials.” One scripture that comforts Sister Yates is “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”<sup>25</sup>

Each October, Sister Yates and Sister Willmore (both of whom are here together in the Conference Center today) go to the temple together and offer thanks for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for the plan of salvation, for eternal families, and for the covenants that bind together husbands and wives and families on both sides of the veil. Sister Yates concludes, “Through this trial, I have felt the love of my Father in Heaven and my Savior in greater abundance than I had ever felt before.” She testifies that “there is no grief, no pain, no sickness so great that the Atonement of Christ and the love of Christ cannot heal.”<sup>26</sup> What a wonderful example of love and forgiveness these two sisters have demonstrated. It has allowed the Atonement of Jesus Christ to be efficacious in their lives.

Think of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane during the Atonement process, suffering agony so great that He bled from every pore.<sup>27</sup> His cry to His Father included the word *Abba*.<sup>28</sup> This might be interpreted as the cry of a son who is in distress to his father: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>29</sup>

I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ covers all of the trials and hardships that any of us will encounter in this life. At times when we may feel to say, “Hope you know, I had a hard time,” we can be assured that He is there and we are safe in His loving arms.

When our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, was asked on his birthday this past August what would be the ideal gift that members worldwide could give him, he said without a moment’s hesitation, “Find someone who is having a hard time, . . . and do something for them.”<sup>30</sup>

I, with you, am eternally grateful to Jesus Christ, the rescuer of mankind. I bear witness that He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1, 7–8.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
3. Abraham 3:25.
4. Harold B. Lee, *The Fall of Man* (address delivered at a meeting for seminary and institute teachers, June 23, 1954).
5. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Signet Classic, 1997), 13.
6. See 2 Nephi 2:15–16.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, “Enduring Well,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 7.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:2–3; 133:64.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:62; 14:7; John 17:3.
10. *A Woman’s View: Helen Mar Whitney’s Reminiscences of Early Church History*, ed. Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel (1997), 329–30.
11. Bathsheba W. Smith, *Autobiography*, ed. Alice Merrill Horne, typescript, 15, as quoted in Maurine Jensen Proctor and Scot Facer Proctor, photo essay, “Joseph, Joseph, Joseph: The Temple Has Returned to Nauvoo, Part 4, ‘Lift Up Thine Eyes,’” *Meridian Magazine*, 2002, <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/photoessay/020522nauvoo/020522nauvoo3.html>.

12. See Ether 12:6.
13. See *A Woman's View*, 491.
14. See Heidi Swinton, "I Gently Closed the Door," in *Heroines of the Restoration*, ed. Barbara B. Smith and Blythe Darlyn Thatcher (1997), 134.
15. Bathsheba W. Smith, in *Heroines of the Restoration*, 134.
16. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1997), 177.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
18. See Matthew 5:45.
19. Alma 7:12.
20. See Genesis 41:29–31; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
22. See 2 Nephi 4:4.
23. See Alma 36:30.
24. *Teachings: Brigham Young*, 177.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
26. Ellen Yates, personal account delivered at the Grantsville Utah Stake conference, Saturday evening session, Feb. 16, 2008.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
28. See Mark 14:36.
29. Matthew 26:39.
30. Thomas S. Monson, quoted in Gerry Avant, "Prophet's Birthday: Milestone of 81," *Church News*, Aug. 23, 2008, 4.

### President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir; the Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah; and the priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in the conference sessions.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "We Ever Pray for Thee." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Study and ponder conference messages

Brothers and sisters, I know you will agree with me that this has been a most inspiring conference. We have felt the Spirit of the Lord in rich abundance these past two days as our hearts have been touched and our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. I am certain I represent the membership of the Church everywhere in expressing appreciation to the brethren and sisters who have addressed us. I am reminded of the words of Moroni found in the Book of Mormon:

"And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power

of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done."<sup>1</sup>

May we long remember what we have heard during this general conference. The messages which have been given will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study them and to ponder their teachings.

To you brethren who have been released at this conference, we express our deep appreciation for your many years of dedicated service. The entire membership of the Church has benefited from your countless contributions.

I assure you that our Heavenly Father is mindful of the challenges we face in the world today. He loves each of us and will bless us as we strive to keep His commandments and seek Him through prayer.

### Reach out to others

We are a global church, brothers and sisters. Our membership is found throughout the world. May we be good citizens of the nations in which we live and good neighbors in our communities, reaching out to those of other faiths, as well as to our own. May we be men and women of honesty and integrity in everything we do.

There are those throughout the world who are hungry; there are those who are destitute. Working together, we can alleviate suffering and provide for those in need. In addition to the service you give as you care for one another, your contributions to the funds of the Church enable us to respond almost immediately when disasters occur anywhere in the world. We are nearly always among the first on the scene to provide whatever assistance we can. We thank you for your generosity.

There are other difficulties in the lives of some. Particularly among the young, there are those who are tragically involved in such things as drugs, immorality, gangs, and all the serious problems that go with them. In addition, there are those who are lonely, including widows and widowers, who long for the company and the concern of others. May we ever be mindful of the needs of those around us and be ready to extend a helping hand and a loving heart.

### Eternal life—our most precious goal

Brothers and sisters, how blessed we are that the heavens are indeed open, that the restored Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth today, and that the Church is founded upon the rock of revelation.

We know that continuous revelation is the very lifeblood of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May each of us go safely to our homes. May we live together in peace and harmony and love. May we strive each day to follow the Savior's example.

God bless you, my brothers and sisters. I thank you for your prayers in my behalf and in behalf of all the General Authorities. We are deeply grateful for you.

In one of Christopher Marlowe's plays, *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, there is portrayed an individual, Dr. Faustus, who chose to ignore God and follow the pathway of Satan. At the end of his wicked life, and facing the frustration of opportunities lost and punishment certain to come, he lamented, "[There is] more searing anguish than [flaming] fire—eternal exile from God."<sup>2</sup>

My brothers and sisters, just as eternal exile from God may be the most searing anguish, so eternal life in the presence of God is our most precious goal.

With all my heart and soul I pray that we might continue to persevere in the pursuit of this most precious prize.

I bear witness to you that this work is true, that our Savior lives, and that He guides and directs His Church here upon the earth. I bid you farewell, my dear brothers and sisters, until we meet again in six months. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior, our Redeemer whom we serve, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moroni 6:9.
2. See "Deviled Marlowe," *Time*, Oct. 16, 1964, 77.

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The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder Marcus B. Nash offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Ed Thompson directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A Primary choir from Kaysville and Fruit Heights, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Colleen Paddock directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center provided the music for the priesthood session. Douglas Brechley conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Andrew Unsworth, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**Brook P. Hales**

Clerk of the Conference





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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-ninth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 4 and 5, 2009**



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# Report of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, 2009. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 4, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday morning, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Saturday afternoon session, and President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, Jay E. Jensen, and Donald L. Hallstrom

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado,

Mervyn B. Arnold, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Yoon Hwan Choi, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Brent H. Nielson, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Joseph W. Sitati, Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zaballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Douglas L. Callister, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Bruce A. Carlson, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Bradley D. Foster, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, James B. Martino, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Kent F. Richards, Gregory A. Schwitzer, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, Kent D. Watson, and Robert S. Wood

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “The Morning Breaks.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the first session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extend a special welcome to members and friends participating here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, wherever you may be.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a

public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “The Morning Breaks” and will now favor us with “Press Forward, Saints.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Press Forward, Saints.” Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir will sing “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Sister Margaret S. Lifferth, first counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Brother Michael A. Neider, second counselor in the Young Men organization, will address us.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

My dear brothers and sisters, as we open this, the 179th Annual General Conference, we note with sadness the absence of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We mourn his passing. We miss him. We extend our love to his family. I have no doubt that he is carrying on this great work on the other side of the veil.

### **Sustaining of new Apostle**

Because of the passing of Elder Wirthlin, there exists a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. After much fasting and prayer, we have called Elder Neil Linden Andersen to fill this vacancy. We present his name to you this morning for your sustaining vote. All those of you who feel you can sustain him in this

sacred calling will please signify by the uplifted hand. Any who may be opposed may signify by the same sign.

We thank you for your sustaining vote. Elder Andersen's name will be included when the officers of the Church are read this afternoon.

Elder Andersen, we invite you now to take your place on the stand with the members of the Twelve. We look forward to hearing from you in the Sunday morning session of conference.

### Temple dedications

Since we met six months ago, my brothers and sisters, I have traveled to Mexico City, Mexico, with President and Sister Henry B. Eyring, to rededicate the temple there. For many months it had been undergoing extensive renovations.

The evening before the rededication, a magnificent cultural event was held in the Aztec Stadium. Approximately 87,000 spectators squeezed into the open-air stadium, and a cast of more than 8,000 young people participated in the program, which featured an 80-minute display of music, dance, and Mexican history.

President Eyring and I were each presented a serape and a sombrero. Outfitted in this native costume, I couldn't resist serenading the group with an impromptu version of "El Rancho Grande," which I had originally learned in my ninth-grade Spanish class. I shall not do that today.

Each of the two dedicatory sessions the following day was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

Just two weeks ago, in 12 sessions we dedicated the Draper Utah Temple, a magnificent structure nestled in the foothills of the mountains in the south portion of the Salt Lake Valley. There were approximately 685,000 people—members and nonmembers alike—who attended the open house. Over 365,000 members were present at the dedicatory sessions, including the sessions broadcast by satellite to various stake centers. The Spirit of

the Lord was present in rich abundance as the temple was dedicated.

In the near future, we will be dedicating the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple, and then in the coming months and years there will be many more dedications. We look forward to these occasions. There is something about a temple dedication which prompts a reevaluation of one's own performance and a sincere desire to do even better.

### The work of the Lord moves forward

Now, my brothers and sisters, I am pleased to report that the Church is doing very well. The work of the Lord continues to move forward uninterrupted.

We now have approximately 53,000 missionaries serving in 348 missions throughout the world. We take most seriously the Savior's mandate when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> We are deeply grateful for the labors of our missionaries and for the sacrifices which they and their families make in order for them to serve.

We also have countless volunteers and missionaries in nonproselyting activities. These are generally mature individuals who donate their time and talents in order to further the work of the Lord and to bless our Heavenly Father's children. How thankful we are for the valuable services these individuals are providing.

The Perpetual Education Fund, established in 2001, continues to move forward. Since its inception, 35,600 young men and young women have been enrolled in the program and have trained to improve their skills and their employment opportunities. Thus far, 18,900 have finished that training. On average, with the 2.7 years of education they are now receiving, they are increasing their income by three to four times. What a blessing this is in their lives! This is indeed an inspired program.

My brothers and sisters, I thank you for your faith and devotion to the gospel. I thank you for the love and care you show to one another. I thank you for the service you provide in your wards and branches and in your stakes and districts. It is such service that enables the Lord to accomplish His purposes here upon the earth.

I express my thanks to you for your kindnesses to me wherever I go. I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. I have felt those prayers and am most grateful for them.

### **Conference messages teach and inspire**

Now, my brothers and sisters, we are anxious to listen to the messages which will be presented to us during the next two days, that we might be taught and inspired and have a renewed determination to live the gospel and to serve the Lord. Those who will address us have sought heaven's help and direction as they have prepared their messages. They have been

impressed concerning that which they will share with us.

To those of you who are new in the Church, we welcome you. To those of you who are struggling with challenges or with disappointments or with losses, we pray for you. Our Heavenly Father loves each of us and is mindful of our needs. May we be filled with His Spirit as we listen to that which will be presented. Such is my prayer this morning as we open this great conference. I also add a fond remembrance of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who preceded me as President of the Church. I'm sure he's serving well on the other side. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTE**

1. Matthew 28:19.

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The choir sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

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## **Elder Robert D. Hales**

How blessed we are to be led by a living prophet! Growing up during the Great Depression, President Thomas S. Monson learned how to serve others. Often his mother asked him to deliver food to needy neighbors, and she would give homeless men odd jobs in exchange for home-cooked meals. Later as a young bishop, he was taught by President J. Reuben Clark, "Be kind to the widow and look after the poor" (see Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 79; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 62). President Monson looked after 84 widows and cared for them until they passed away. Through the years, his service to members and neighbors throughout the world has become the hallmark of his ministry. We are grateful to have his example. Thank you, President Monson.

Brothers and sisters, as did President Monson, our children are growing up in times of economic uncertainty. Just as our grandparents and great-grandparents learned vital lessons through economic adversity, what we learn now, in our present circumstances, can bless us and our posterity for generations to come.

### **Solution for debt and addiction**

Today I speak to all whose freedom to choose has been diminished by the effects of ill-advised choices of the past. I speak specifically of choices that have led to excessive debt and addictions to food, drugs, pornography, and other patterns of thought and action that diminish one's sense of self-worth. All of these excesses

affect us individually and undermine our family relationships. Of course some debt incurred for education, a modest home, or a basic automobile may be necessary to provide for a family. Unfortunately, however, additional debt is incurred when we cannot control our wants and addictive impulses. And for both debt and addiction, the hopeful solution is the same—we must turn to the Lord and follow His commandments. We must want more than anything else to change our lives so that we can break the cycle of debt and our uncontrolled wants. I pray that in the next few minutes, and throughout this conference, you will be filled with hope in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and find hope in the doctrines of His restored gospel.

Our challenges, including those we create by our own decisions, are part of our test in mortality. Let me assure you that your situation is not beyond the reach of our Savior. Through Him, every struggle can be for our experience and our good (see D&C 122:7). Each temptation we overcome is to strengthen us, not destroy us. The Lord will never allow us to suffer beyond what we can endure (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

We must remember that the adversary knows us extremely well. He knows where, when, and *how* to tempt us. If we are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we can learn to recognize the adversary's enticements. Before we yield to temptation, we must learn to say with unflinching resolve, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23).

Our success is never measured by how strongly we are tempted but by how faithfully we respond. We must ask for help from our Heavenly Father and seek strength through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. In both temporal and spiritual things, obtaining this divine assistance enables us to become provident providers for ourselves and others.

## **Becoming provident providers**

What is a provident provider?

All of us are responsible to provide for ourselves and our families in both temporal and spiritual ways. To provide providently, we must practice the principles of provident living: joyfully living within our means, being content with what we have, avoiding excessive debt, and diligently saving and preparing for rainy-day emergencies. When we live providently, we can provide for ourselves and our families and also follow the Savior's example to serve and bless others.

Being provident providers, we must keep that most basic commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17). Our world is fraught with feelings of entitlement. Some of us feel embarrassed, ashamed, less worthwhile if our family does not have everything the neighbors have. As a result, we go into debt to buy things we can't afford—and things we do not really need. Whenever we do this, we become poor temporally *and* spiritually. We give away some of our precious, priceless agency and put ourselves in self-imposed servitude. Money we could have used to care for ourselves and others must now be used to pay our debts. What remains is often only enough to meet our most basic physical needs. Living at the subsistence level, we become depressed, our self-worth is affected, and our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and the Lord are weakened. We do not have the time, energy, or interest to seek spiritual things.

## **Two lessons in provident living**

How, then, do we avoid and overcome the patterns of debt and addiction to temporal, worldly things? May I share with you two lessons in provident living that can help each of us. These lessons, along with many other important lessons of my



life, were taught to me by my wife and eternal companion. These lessons were learned at two different times in our marriage—both on occasions when I wanted to buy her a special gift.

The first lesson was learned when we were newly married and had very little money. I was in the air force, and we had missed Christmas together. I was on assignment overseas. When I got home, I saw a beautiful dress in a store window and suggested to my wife that if she liked it, we would buy it. Mary went into the dressing room of the store. After a moment the salesclerk came out, brushed by me, and returned the dress to its place in the store window. As we left the store, I asked, “What happened?” She replied, “It was a beautiful dress, but *we can’t afford it!*” Those words went straight to my heart. I have learned that the three most loving words are “I love you,” and the four most caring words for those we love are “We can’t afford it.”

The second lesson was learned several years later when we were more financially secure. Our wedding anniversary was approaching, and I wanted to buy Mary a fancy coat to show my love and appreciation for our many happy years together. When I asked what she thought of the coat I had in mind, she replied with words that again penetrated my heart and mind. “Where would I wear it?” she asked. (At the time she was a ward Relief Society president helping to minister to needy families.)

Then she taught me an unforgettable lesson. She looked me in the eyes and sweetly asked, “Are you buying this for me or for you?” In other words, she was asking, “Is the purpose of this gift to show your love for me or to show me that you are a good provider or to prove something to the world?” I pondered her question and realized I was thinking less about her and our family and more about me.

After that, we had a serious, life-changing discussion about provident living, and both of us agreed that our money would be better spent in paying down our home mortgage and adding to our children’s education fund.

These two lessons are the essence of provident living. When faced with the choice to buy, consume, or engage in worldly things and activities, we all need to learn to say to one another, “*We can’t* afford it, even though we want it!” or “*We can* afford it, but we don’t *need* it—and we really don’t even want it!”

There is an equally important principle underlying these lessons: we can learn much from communicating with our husbands and wives. As we counsel and work together in family councils, we can help each other become provident providers and teach our children to live providently as well.

### **Tithes, offerings, family budget**

The foundation of provident living is the law of the tithe. The primary purpose of this law is to help us develop faith in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Tithing helps us overcome our desires for the things of this world and willingly make sacrifices for others. Tithing is the great equitable law, for no matter how rich or poor we are, all of us pay the same one-tenth of our increase annually (see D&C 119:4), and all of us receive blessings so great “that there shall not be room enough to receive [them]” (Malachi 3:10).

In addition to our tithes, we should also be an example with the payment of fast offerings. A fast offering is at least the cost of the two consecutive meals from which we fast each month. By not eating these two meals, we draw close to the Lord in humility and prayer and also participate in anonymous giving to bless our brothers and sisters all over the world.

Another important way we help our children learn to be provident providers is by establishing a family budget. We should regularly review our family income, savings, and spending plan in family council meetings. This will teach our children to recognize the difference between wants and needs and to plan ahead for meaningful use of family resources.

When our boys were young, we had a family council and set a goal to take a “dream vacation” down the Colorado River. When any of us wanted to buy something during the next year, we would ask each other, “Do we really want to buy that thing now, or do we want to take our dream trip later?” This was a wonderful teaching experience in choosing provident living. By not satisfying our every immediate want, we obtained the more desirable reward of family togetherness and fond memories for years to come.

Whenever we want to experience or possess something that will impact us and our resources, we may want to ask ourselves, “Is the benefit temporary, or will it have eternal value and significance?” Truthfully answering these questions may help us avoid excessive debt and other addictive behavior.

### **Seeking what the Lord alone can provide**

In seeking to overcome debt and addictive behaviors, we should remember that addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite. When we are addicted, we seek those worldly possessions or physical pleasures that seem to entice us. But as children of God, our deepest hunger and what we should be seeking is what the Lord alone can provide—His love, His sense of worth, His security, His confidence, His hope in the future, and assurance of His love, which brings us eternal joy.

We must want, more than anything else, to do our Heavenly Father’s will and providently provide for ourselves and others. We must say, as did King Lamoni’s father, “I will give away all my sins to know thee” (Alma 22:18). Then we can go to Him with steadfast determination and promise Him, “I will do whatever it takes.” Through prayer, fasting, obedience to the commandments, priesthood blessings, and His atoning sacrifice, we will feel His love and power in our lives. We will receive His spiritual guidance and strength through the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Only through our Lord’s Atonement can we obtain a mighty change of heart (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14) and experience a mighty change in our addictive behavior.

With all the love I have in me and with the Savior’s love through me, I invite you to come unto Him and hear His words: “Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted” (2 Nephi 9:51).

I testify that the appetite to possess worldly things can only be overcome by turning to the Lord. The hunger of addiction can only be replaced by our love for Him. He stands ready to help each one of us. “Fear not,” He said, “for you are mine, and I have overcome the world” (D&C 50:41).

I bear my special witness that through the Atonement He has overcome all things. May each of us also overcome worldly temptation by coming unto Him and by becoming provident providers both temporally and spiritually for ourselves and others is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Margaret S. Liffferth

### An appeal for respect and reverence

The last chapter of John tells of an especially tender exchange between Peter and the resurrected Christ. Three times the Savior asks, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” And each time, when Peter assures the Savior of his love, Jesus “saith unto him, Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep.”<sup>1</sup>

There is great need in today’s world to nourish the souls of our children and youth with “living water”<sup>2</sup> and the “bread of life.”<sup>3</sup> Like Peter, we too love the Lord, so today’s parents and leaders work diligently to instill in each heart a testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. We teach in our homes, in missionary settings, and in the chapels and classrooms of our churches. We prepare and invite the Spirit to be with us. But to truly be able to feed His lambs and nourish His sheep with testimony and the Spirit, we must also cultivate in our homes and classrooms respect for each other and reverence for God.

My appeal today is to parents, teachers, and leaders to work together to teach, exemplify, and encourage the standards of respect and reverence that will strengthen our children and youth and invite the spirit of worship into our homes and chapels.

### Respect for each other

May I suggest that our ability and our credibility to exemplify reverence for God are strengthened as we show respect for each other. In today’s society, the standards of decorum, dignity, and courtesy are assailed on every side and in every form of media. As parents and leaders, our examples of respect for each other are critical for our youth and children because they are watching not only the media—they are watching us! Are we the examples we need to be?

Ask yourself these questions: Am I an example of respect in my home by the

way I treat those I love the most? What is my demeanor during a sports event? If my child has a disagreement with a teacher, coach, or peer, do I listen to both sides of the issue? Do I show respect for the property of others as well as take care of my own? How do I respond to others with whom I disagree in matters of religion, lifestyle, or politics?

As parents and leaders exemplify and teach respect for others, we confirm in the hearts of our children that each of us is truly a child of God and all are brothers and sisters through eternity. We will focus on the things we have in common—on the qualities of heart that bind the family of God together—rather than on our differences.

### Reverence for God

Respect for others and reverence for God are close cousins. They are rooted in humility and love. President David O. McKay said that “reverence is profound respect mingled with love,”<sup>4</sup> and Elder L. Tom Perry taught that “reverence flows from our admiration and respect for Deity.”<sup>5</sup> Primary children learn this concept as they sing this verse from a Primary song:

Rev’rence is more than just quietly sitting:

It’s thinking of Father above,

A feeling I get when I think of his blessings.

I’m rev’rent, for rev’rence is love.<sup>6</sup>

However, reverent behavior is not a natural tendency for most children. It is a quality that is taught by parents and leaders through example and training. But remember, if reverence is rooted in love, so is the teaching of it. Harshness in our training begets resentment, not reverence. So begin early and have reasonable expectations. A toddler *can* learn to fold his arms and get ready for prayer. But



it takes time, patience, and consistency. Remember that we are not only teaching a child his first lessons in reverence, but the child may be mastering his first attempts at self-discipline.

This process of teaching and self-discipline continues line upon line and precept upon precept. Thus a child learns to be reverent during prayers and the sacrament. He sits by his parents during the meeting. Then he grows in lessons of self-discipline as later he learns to fast, to obey the Word of Wisdom, to make good Internet choices, and to keep the law of chastity. We each grow in ability as well as understanding. We bless our children and youth as we exemplify, teach, and encourage them through this process, because self-mastery is not only the root of self-respect; it is essential in inviting the Spirit to teach, confirm, and testify.

I remember a talk that President Boyd K. Packer gave in conference almost 20 years ago entitled “Reverence Invites Revelation.”<sup>7</sup> That phrase has remained in my heart all these years. It reminds me that we *must* create in our hearts, our homes, and our meetings places of reverence that will invite the Spirit to comfort, guide, teach, and testify. Because when the Spirit testifies to each of us that God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our Savior, it is *that* revelation that will invite true reverence born of love and profound respect.

### Parents and leaders set example

So, as parents and leaders, what can we do? We can exemplify reverence as we pray humbly, use the proper language of prayer, and speak the names of Deity appropriately. We can handle the scriptures with respect and teach doctrine from them with conviction.

Reverence will increase as we show proper respect not only for the General Authorities but for local priesthood and auxiliary leaders as well. My stake president has been a dear friend for over 30

years, and as friends, we have always called each other by our first names. But because he serves in a calling of priesthood leadership, in public and certainly in a Church setting I make a conscious effort to refer to him as President Porter. Teaching our children and youth that it is appropriate to address our leaders as president, bishop, brother, and sister encourages respect and reverence. It also teaches the truth that leaders are called of God and have been given sacred responsibilities.

As parents and leaders, we *must* set the example of reverent behavior in our Church meetings. Our chapels provide places for many different functions, but on Sunday they are places of worship. We gather to renew covenants that will heal our souls. We come to learn doctrine and strengthen testimony. Missionaries bring their investigators. Only in an attitude of reverence can the Spirit confirm the truths of the gospel through the word of God, music, testimony, and prayer.

We are a friendly people and we love each other, but reverence will increase if our socializing is done in the foyer and if sacrament meeting begins with the prelude music, not the opening prayer. We encourage reverence when we take a crying child out of the chapel and find another room where we continue to listen to the meeting until the baby is calmed or a disruptive toddler is soothed. Reverence includes turning off our cell phones and BlackBerry devices. Texting or reading e-mails in a Church meeting is not only irreverent; it is distracting and signals a lack of respect for those around us. So we exemplify reverence by participating in the meeting, listening to the speakers, and singing the hymns of Zion together.

### Ideas for teaching reverence

Our teachers in Primary, Sunday School, and the youth programs have unique opportunities to teach and exemplify respect and reverence. May I offer a few ideas.

First of all, love those in your class. Often the child who is the most disruptive needs your love the most.

Take the time to explain what reverence is and why it is important. Display a picture of the Savior. Define behavior that is acceptable, and then be loving and consistent as you not only encourage it but expect it.

Be prepared. Prepare not only the material, but prepare yourself to teach with the Spirit. Many problems with reverence can be defused with a well-prepared lesson in which the students participate.

Talk with parents of children who have disabilities to determine a reasonable expectation for their child, because every child deserves a chance to progress.

Use the resources of the ward to help. Often if there is a reverence problem with children or youth, there is a reverence problem in the ward. Take concerns to the ward council, where ward leaders can work together to increase respect and reverence on every level.<sup>8</sup>

Years ago President Packer promised the Lord's blessings to those who worship in reverence. Surely those promises apply today: "While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the

lives of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems."<sup>9</sup>

I believe the promises of a prophet. I know that I have a loving Heavenly Father and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior. I pray that our increased reverence will reflect our deepest love for Them and improve our quest to feed Their sheep, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John 21:15–17.
2. See John 4:10–14.
3. John 6:48.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 86.
5. L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 70.
6. "Reverence Is Love," *Children's Songbook*, 31.
7. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 26–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–23.
8. See *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 79–87.
9. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 23.

## Michael A. Neider

I love these words of Nephi: "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men."<sup>1</sup> It is my prayer that the power of the Holy Ghost will carry my message to your hearts.

### "Practise virtue"

May I represent the priesthood holders of the Church and express gratitude to our Church leaders and to the Young Women

general presidency for recently adding virtue as an emphasized value for young women. As I hear the young women of the Church quote the Young Women theme, my desire and commitment to be virtuous and to be holy are strengthened. As bearers of the holy priesthood, we should see that the sisters are not the only examples of virtue.

The Lord has commanded each of us, in section 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants, to be virtuous: "And let every man esteem

his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Revealed quorum principles**

I wish to speak today about God’s revealed quorum principles and the inspired direction of latter-day prophets relating to the Aaronic Priesthood. I invite young men ages 12 to 18 and their quorum presidencies to listen, for we will be discussing scripture the Lord has directed to you. I also invite parents and other priesthood leaders to listen so you will have a better understanding of how the quorum assists you in strengthening and preparing God’s sons.

As I begin, I emphasize the principle of study, or obtaining God’s word. I have learned from the example of my wife, Rosemary, that we should become dedicated students. Like many of you, she regularly studies scripture as well as other good books. She is a student of God’s commandments, of successful marriage principles, of good parenting, and of good health. Often with a smile, she gives me a book and says, “Here, you need to read only the underlined parts.” And if she gives me a book about marriage, I smile back and say, “Thank you.”

Brethren, we should be earnest students of revealed priesthood and quorum principles. Our goal is to correctly use inspired direction from God and His prophets to maximize the virtues and blessings of the quorum and strengthen young men and their families. The work of the quorum is to increase faith in Christ, prepare and save young men, and eliminate mistakes and sloth in implementing God’s will. As we seek wisdom from God, let us also be students of revealed quorum principles.

President Monson has taught that the “teaching of fundamentals is urgent. That we might better understand our task and our opportunity” and in order to merit the discernment of the Spirit, priesthood leaders must do their homework.<sup>3</sup>

President Stephen L. Richards taught that a quorum is a class, a brotherhood, and

a service unit: a class where a young man may be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ; a brotherhood where we can strengthen, build, lift, and friendship each other; and a service unit to give service to quorum members and others.<sup>4</sup>

The Doctrine and Covenants is a significant and abundant source of revealed quorum principles. For example, verse 85 of section 107 instructs a deacons quorum president how to minister to his quorum members: “And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of a president over the office of a deacon is to preside over twelve deacons, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their duty, edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Use of inspired questions**

Our Church leaders have taught and we have felt the Spirit invite the use of inspired questions given of the Spirit to help us learn of God and His will for us.<sup>6</sup>

I invite quorum presidencies to ask the following questions and seek other questions the Spirit will inspire: What does an Aaronic Priesthood quorum president do to preside over a quorum? What are his duties? What does he do as he sits in council with quorum members? How and when does he teach? What are the covenants referenced in the verses? And what do the quorum adviser and the bishopric member do as each assists the president in his duties and in his use of priesthood keys of presidency?

Brethren, as you study these verses and the handbooks, other questions will come into your hearts. For example: Does my quorum operate as described by the Lord in scripture? If not, why not? And what should I do to appropriately implement revealed quorum principles in my quorum? As a presidency prays for help and guidance, the Spirit, the bishopric, advisers, and the quorum will help and be sure to regularly use the inspired Church handbooks.

## Youth leadership

Many quorum presidents and other priesthood leaders throughout the world have discovered that more can be accomplished and expected from Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and their quorums as they minister in the ward or branch.<sup>7</sup> More youth leadership can then be exerted by quorum presidencies, while advisers can spend more time in support and leadership training.<sup>8</sup> As we focus on quorum duties, the frequency of regular quorum presidency meetings usually increases for better preparation and leadership opportunity. Quorum leaders will find that individual Aaronic Priesthood quorums should meet separately after the general priesthood opening exercises for proper age-group instruction and increased quorum leadership opportunities. Any combining of quorums will be viewed as temporary.

Many tools have been given by the Lord and our Brethren to assist in the work of the Aaronic Priesthood quorum, including the mighty prayer of faith, fasting, scripture study, *For the Strength of Youth*, Duty to God, the quorum instruction manual, *Preach My Gospel* as a resource, varied activities, and Scouting. Scouting is used in the United States, Canada, and other places in the world where approved by priesthood leaders.<sup>9</sup> The presidencies learn to use these tools and weave each one into the quorum and its activities in a way that is directed by the priesthood and the Spirit and that meets the needs of each quorum member and enhances brotherhood, retention, missionary work, and fun.

As we review the tools provided for use by the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, we can see the quorum is expected to help parents strengthen their sons spiritually and in every other facet of their character, activity, and personal lives. As these quorum principles and tools are used with planning and wisdom and in the exercise of faith, miracles will be obtained.

## Example of teachers quorum president

There are abundant examples of successful youth leadership occurring minute by minute all over the world. Let me give you just one example.

I met Matt Andersen, a teachers quorum president whose father was serving as a mission president in Mexico. When Matt was set apart as the quorum president, he was the only member of the teachers quorum attending church in his ward. Young President Matt Andersen was learning a new language so he could be an effective missionary. Going forward with faith, courage, and confidence gained at home and in the deacons quorum, he determined to use his keys of presidency to bless the members of his quorum and their families. He immediately asked for a list of quorum members from the ward clerk, practiced his Spanish, and with a prayer in his heart called the one boy who was listed with a telephone number. He said, “¡Omar: Tú, Iglesia, Hoy!” Or in English, “Omar! You, Church, Today!” Just the basic message!

The miracle is that Omar came to church that day, and soon thereafter so did his mother and sister. Our young quorum president, Matt Andersen, then invited the bishop to drive him, translate, and together visit two other boys whose names were on the list but without telephone numbers. His keys of presidency, the ministering of angels, and the powers of heaven combined. The result was that these two boys also came to church and formed the new teachers quorum presidency. Other boys and their families also returned to the blessings of the gospel and the priesthood.

My young brethren and sisters, you are powerful tools in the Savior’s hands, and He can use you to bring the blessings of the gospel to others. Bishops, do not overlook the strength and skill of your Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class presidencies. The Lord needs them in this important work. There are hearts they can reach and work perhaps only they can

do. Give them assignments! Open doors for their leadership and the ministering of angels as promised in Doctrine and Covenants 13.

May we, as leaders in the Aaronic Priesthood, be students of the life and Atonement of Christ. May we be students of the revealed principles of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums. May we follow the counsel of President Monson to do our homework so we will understand our task and opportunity and merit the Spirit. And, like quorum president Matt Andersen, let us go forward in faith, confidence, and virtue, serving with Christ to help save our families and all of our Heavenly Father's children within our reach.

I give you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that He lives and loves us, and that the work of the Aaronic Priesthood is a sacred and important part of His work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 33:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:24.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, regional representatives' seminar, Apr. 3, 1981, 2.
4. See Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118; see also L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 24–27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 23–26; D. Todd Christofferson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 53–56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 40–42; Robert L. Backman, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38–41; Robert L. Backman, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 109–12; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 84–85.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:85; see also verses 86–89.
6. See Henry B. Eyring, “Elder David A. Bednar: Going Forward in the Strength of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2005, 16–21; Neal A. Maxwell, “Jesus, the Perfect Mentor,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2001, 8–17; David A. Bednar, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 94–97; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 94–97.
7. See Robert L. Backman, Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38–41; Robert L. Backman, Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 109–12; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 84–85.
8. See Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 55–60; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 43–46; “Aaronic Priesthood,” section 2 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 175–92; see also note 7.
9. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 25–29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 19–21; *Scouting Handbook* (1997); see also note 8.

#### President Monson

We have been spiritually fed.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Allan F. Packer of the Seventy will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir will then sing a favorite of mine, “Consider the Lilies.”

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Elder Allan F. Packer

### Challenging but wonderful times

Elder Andersen, we extend our love, blessings, and support as you fill this new

calling. Brothers and sisters, individuals and families across the world are challenged by current conditions. While I believe there are serious challenges ahead,



I also know it is a wonderful time to be alive, especially for the youth. I see my children and grandchildren having full, satisfying lives even as they have challenges, setbacks, and obstacles to overcome.

These are the days when prophecies are being fulfilled. We live in the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the time to prepare for the Savior's return. It is also the time to work out our own salvation.

When the winds blow and the rains pour, they blow and pour on all. Those who have built their foundations on bedrock rather than sand survive the storms.<sup>1</sup> There is a way to build on bedrock by developing a deep personal conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing how to receive inspiration. We must know—and know that we know. We must stand spiritually and temporally independent of all worldly creatures.<sup>2</sup> This begins by understanding that God the Father is the Father of our spirits and that He loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and Savior, and that the Holy Ghost can communicate with our minds and our hearts.<sup>3</sup> This is how we receive inspiration. We need to learn how to recognize and apply these promptings.

### **Recognizing promptings of the Spirit**

When I was a young man in high school, one of my passions was American football. I played middle linebacker. The coach worked the team hard, teaching us the basics. We practiced until the skills became natural and automatic. During one play against our biggest rival, I had an experience that has helped me over the years. We were on defense. I knew my assigned opponent, and as the play unfolded, he moved to my right into the line of scrimmage. There was a lot of noise from players and fans. I reacted as the coach had taught us and followed my man into the line, not knowing if he had the ball. To my surprise, I felt the ball partially in my

hands. I gave it a tug, but my opponent didn't let go. As we tugged back and forth, amid all the noise I heard a voice yelling, "Packer, tackle him!" That was enough to bring me to my senses, so I dropped him on the spot.

I have wondered how I heard that voice above all the other noise. I had become acquainted with the voice of the coach during the practices, and I had learned to trust it. I knew that what he taught worked.

We need to be acquainted with the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and we need to practice and apply gospel teachings until they become natural and automatic. These promptings become the foundation of our testimonies. Then our testimonies will keep us happy and safe in troubled times.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks defined a testimony this way: "A testimony of the gospel is a personal witness borne to our souls by the Holy Ghost that certain facts of eternal significance are true and that we know them to be true."<sup>4</sup> At another time Elder Oaks said, "Testimony is to know and to feel, conversion is to do and to become."<sup>5</sup>

### **Conversion and receiving inspiration**

There are several things we can do to develop a deep conversion and learn how to receive divine inspiration. First, we must have a desire. Alma said, "For I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life . . . according to their wills."<sup>6</sup>

Next, Alma challenged us to experiment on the word: "We will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is

a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”<sup>7</sup>

To study and learn is the next step. This includes pondering, which broadens and deepens our testimonies. “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right.”<sup>8</sup>

We can learn how answers come through inspiration. They come as thoughts and feelings to our minds and hearts.<sup>9</sup> Occasionally answers may come as a burning in the bosom. Elijah taught that answers come as a “still small voice.”<sup>10</sup> The Lord said, “And if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Smith told us to watch for answers by paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that come into our minds. Over time we will learn to recognize these as promptings.

He said: “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”<sup>12</sup>

Developing this capacity helps us gain testimonies and becomes the means for obtaining additional inspiration in the future.

While testimonies can come as dramatic manifestations, they usually do not. Sometimes people think they need to have an experience like Joseph Smith’s vision before they gain testimonies. If we have unrealistic expectations of how, when, or where answers come, we risk missing the answers which come as quiet, reassuring

feelings and thoughts that most often come after our prayers, while we are doing something else. These answers can be equally convincing and powerful.

Over time we will receive answers and learn how inspiration comes. This is something each person learns for himself.

### **Prayer and obedience invite inspiration**

Next, asking for a testimony of truth opens the window of inspiration. Prayer is the most common and powerful way to invite inspiration. Merely asking a question,<sup>13</sup> even in our minds, will start to open the window. The scriptures teach, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus also taught us to apply the doctrine in our lives: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>15</sup>

In time, a personal witness will come and we will know—and know that we know. We will then be independent of all other worldly things, for “by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things”<sup>16</sup> which are right<sup>17</sup> and expedient<sup>18</sup> for us. We will receive strength, comfort, and help to make good decisions and act with confidence in troubled times.<sup>19</sup>

This witness is not limited to the leaders but is available to all men, women, youth, and even little children. Having the capacity to receive personal inspiration will be necessary in the coming days.

As a youth I learned that my testimony could grow by fulfilling my priesthood duties. I had a desire to know. I studied and pondered; I prayed for answers. One day while sitting at the sacrament table as a priest, I felt and I knew.

This is a great time to be alive! The Lord needs each of us. This is our day; it is our time! From one of our hymns, we read:

Rise up, O men [*and I add women*]  
of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and soul and mind and  
strength  
To serve the King of Kings.<sup>20</sup>

I bear testimony of our Heavenly Father, the Father of our spirits; of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior; and of the Holy Ghost, who is the means through which we receive divine guidance. I bear testimony that we can personally receive inspiration. May we know the voice through which that inspiration comes, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 7:24–27.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 25; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 26.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, quoted in Kenneth Johnson, “Coming to Know for Ourselves,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 29.
6. Alma 29:4.
7. Alma 32:28.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
10. 1 Kings 19:12.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
12. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:381.
13. See Richard G. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively,” in *Brigham Young University 2007–2008 Speeches* (2008), 7.
14. Luke 11:9; see also Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7; Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–65.
15. John 7:17.
16. Moroni 10:5.
17. See 3 Nephi 18:20.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:64.
19. See Alma 48:15–16.
20. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 323.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

May I extend a warm and sincere welcome to Elder Neil L. Andersen to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He is a worthy and welcome addition.

### Faith in times of hardship

On August 15, 2007, Peru suffered a massive earthquake that all but destroyed the coastal cities of Pisco and Chincha. Like many other Church leaders and members, Wenceslao Conde, the president of the Balconcito Branch of the Church in Chincha, immediately set about helping others whose homes were damaged.

Four days after the earthquake, Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy was in Chincha helping to coordinate the Church’s relief efforts there and met President Conde. As they talked about the

destruction that had occurred and what was being done to help the victims, President Conde’s wife, Pamela, approached, carrying one of her small children. Elder Nash asked Sister Conde how her children were. With a smile, she replied that through the goodness of God they were all safe and well. He asked about the Condes’ home.

“It’s gone,” she said simply.

“What about your belongings?” he inquired.

“Everything was buried in the rubble of our home,” Sister Conde replied.

“And yet,” Elder Nash noted, “you are smiling as we talk.”

“Yes,” she said, “I have prayed and I am at peace. We have all we need. We have each other, we have our children, we are sealed in the temple, we have



this marvelous Church, and we have the Lord. We can build again with the Lord's help."

This tender demonstration of faith and spiritual strength is repeated in the lives of Saints across the world in many different settings. It is a simple illustration of a profound power that is much needed in our day and that will become increasingly crucial in days ahead. We need strong Christians who can persevere against hardship, who can sustain hope through tragedy, who can lift others by their example and their compassion, and who can consistently overcome temptations. We need strong Christians who can make important things happen by their faith and who can defend the truth of Jesus Christ against moral relativism and militant atheism.

### **Covenants give access to spiritual power**

What is the source of such moral and spiritual power, and how do we obtain it? The source is God. Our access to that power is through our covenants with Him. A covenant is an agreement between God and man, an accord whose terms are set by God (see Bible Dictionary, "Covenant," 651). In these divine agreements, God binds Himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments.

We enter into covenants by priesthood ordinances, sacred rituals that God has ordained for us to manifest our commitment. Our foundational covenant, for example, the one in which we first pledge our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ, is confirmed by the ordinance of baptism. It is done individually, by name. By this ordinance, we become part of the covenant people of the Lord and heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

Other sacred ordinances are performed in temples built for that very purpose. If we are faithful to the covenants made there, we become inheritors not only of

the celestial kingdom but of exaltation, the highest glory within the heavenly kingdom, and we obtain all the divine possibilities God can give (see D&C 132:20).

The scriptures speak of the new and everlasting covenant. The new and everlasting covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, the doctrines and commandments of the gospel constitute the substance of an everlasting covenant between God and man that is newly restored in each dispensation. If we were to state the new and everlasting covenant in one sentence, it would be this: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus explained what it means to believe in Him: "Now this is the commandment [or in other words, this is the covenant]: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

What is it about making and keeping covenants with God that gives us the power to smile through hardships, to convert tribulation into triumph, to "be anxiously engaged in a good cause, . . . and bring to pass much righteousness"? (D&C 58:27).

### **Strengthened by gifts and blessings**

First, as we walk in obedience to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we enjoy a continual flow of blessings promised by God in His covenant with us. Those blessings provide the resources we need to act rather than simply be acted upon as we go through life.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Lord's commandments in the Word of Wisdom regarding the care of our physical bodies bless us first and foremost with "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19). Furthermore, they

lead to a generally more healthy life and freedom from destructive addictions. Obedience gives us greater control over our lives, greater capacity to come and go, to work and create. Of course, age, accident, and illnesses inevitably take their toll, but even so, our obedience to this gospel law enhances our capacity to deal with these challenges.

In the covenant path we find a steady supply of gifts and help. “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46), love begets love, compassion begets compassion, virtue begets virtue, commitment begets loyalty, and service begets joy. We are part of a covenant people, a community of Saints who encourage, sustain, and minister to one another. As Nephi explained, “And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them” (1 Nephi 17:3).<sup>2</sup>

### Strengthened with increased faith

All this is not to say that life in the covenant is free of challenge or that the obedient soul should be surprised if disappointments or even disasters interrupt his peace. If you feel that personal righteousness should preclude all loss and suffering, you might want to have a chat with Job.

This brings us to a second way in which our covenants supply strength—they produce the faith necessary to persevere and to do all things that are expedient in the Lord. Our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ and keep His commandments requires a degree of faith, but as we honor our covenants, that faith expands. In the first place, the promised fruits of obedience become evident, which confirms our faith. Secondly, the Spirit communicates God’s pleasure, and we feel secure in His continued blessing and help. Thirdly, come what may, we can face life with hope and equanimity, knowing that we will succeed in the end because we have God’s promise to us individually, by

name, and we know He cannot lie (see Enos 1:6; Ether 3:12).

Early Church leaders in this dispensation confirmed that adhering to the covenant path provides the reassurance we need in times of trial:

“It was [the knowledge that their course in life conformed to the will of God] that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take . . . not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 5:1.)” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 67).

They further pointed out that in offering whatever sacrifice God may require of us, we obtain the witness of the Spirit that our course is right and pleasing to God (see *Lectures on Faith*, 69–71). With that knowledge, our faith becomes unbounded, having the assurance that God will in due time turn every affliction to our gain. Some of you have been sustained by that faith as you have endured those who point fingers of scorn from the “great and spacious building” and cry, “Shame!” (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27), and you have stood firm with Peter and the Apostles of old, “rejoicing that [you] were counted worthy to suffer shame for [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41).

The Lord said of the Church:

“Verily I say unto you, all among them who . . . are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

“For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8–9).

The Apostle Paul understood that one who has entered into a covenant with God

is both given the faith to face trials and gains even greater faith through those trials. Of his personal “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7), he observed:

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“Therefore I take pleasure in [my] infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:8–10).<sup>3</sup>

### **Strengthened through the “power of godliness”**

We have considered, first, the empowering blessings and, second, the endowment of faith that God grants to those who keep their covenants with Him. A final aspect of strength through covenants that I will mention is the bestowal of divine power. Our covenant commitment to Him permits our Heavenly Father to let His divine influence, “the power of godliness” (D&C 84:20), flow into our lives. He can do that because by our participation in priesthood ordinances we exercise our agency and elect to receive it. Our participation in those ordinances also demonstrates that we are prepared to accept the additional responsibility that comes with added light and spiritual power.

In all the ordinances, especially those of the temple, we are endowed with power from on high.<sup>4</sup> This “power of godliness” comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is part of the new and everlasting covenant. It is an essential part of our baptism, the baptism of the Spirit. It is the messenger of grace by which the blood of Christ is applied to take away our sins and sanctify us (see 2 Nephi 31:17). It is the gift by which Adam was “quickened in the inner man” (Moses 6:65). It was by

the Holy Ghost that the ancient Apostles endured all that they endured and by their priesthood keys carried the gospel to the known world of their day.

When we have entered into divine covenants, the Holy Ghost is our comforter, our guide, and our companion. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are “the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment” (Moses 6:61). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are testimony, faith, knowledge, wisdom, revelations, miracles, healing, and charity, to name but a few (see D&C 46:13–26).

It is the Holy Ghost that bears witness of your words when you teach and testify. It is the Holy Ghost that, as you speak in hostile venues, puts into your heart what you should say and fulfills the Lord’s promise that “you shall not be confounded before men” (D&C 100:5). It is the Holy Ghost that reveals how you may clear the next seemingly insurmountable hurdle. It is by the Holy Ghost in you that others may feel the pure love of Christ and receive strength to press forward. It is also the Holy Ghost, in His character as the Holy Spirit of Promise, that confirms the validity and efficacy of your covenants and seals God’s promises upon you.<sup>5</sup>

### **Let covenants be paramount**

Divine covenants make strong Christians. I urge each one to qualify for and receive all the priesthood ordinances you can and then faithfully keep the promises you have made by covenant. In times of distress, let your covenants be paramount and let your obedience be exact. Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you as you work and watch. In His own time and way He will stretch forth His hand to you, saying, “Here am I.”

I testify that in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is found the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances by which we can enter into binding covenants with our Heavenly Father in the name of His Holy Son. I testify that God will keep His promises to you as you honor your covenants with Him. He will bless you in “good measure, pressed down, . . . shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). He will strengthen and finish your faith. He will, by His Holy Spirit, fill you with godly power. I pray that you will always have His Spirit to be with you to guide you and deliver you from want, anxiety, and distress. I pray that through your covenants, you may become a powerful instrument for good in the hands of Him who is our Lord and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, “As God has designed our happiness—and the happiness of all His creatures, He never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of His law and ordinances” (in *History of the Church*, 5:135).
2. Some see only sacrifice and limitations in obedience to the commandments of the new and everlasting covenant, but those who live the experience—who give themselves freely and unreservedly to the covenant life—find greater liberty and fulfillment. When we truly understand, we seek more commandments, not fewer. Each new law or commandment we learn and live is like one more rung or step on a ladder that enables us to climb higher and higher. Truly, the gospel life is the good life.
3. The Apostle James taught the same lesson:
 

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions;  
 “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.  
 “But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2–4).
4. As the Prophet Joseph petitioned in the prayer dedicating the Kirtland Temple, which prayer was revealed to him by the Lord, “We ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them” (D&C 109:22).
5. In the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer referenced earlier, the Prophet petitioned, “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:14–15). The “fulness of the Holy Ghost” includes what Jesus described as “the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son” (D&C 88:4–5).

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The choir sang “Consider the Lilies.”

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#### President Monson

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Eyring’s remarks, the choir will sing “My Redeemer Lives.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder William W. Parmley of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### Adversity can seem unfair

My beloved brothers and sisters, this opportunity to speak to you is a great and sacred privilege. I pray that my words may be helpful and give you encouragement.

With all the differences in our lives, we have at least one challenge in common. We all must deal with adversity. There may be periods, sometimes long ones, when our lives seem to flow with little difficulty. But it is in the nature of our being human that comfort gives way to distress, periods of good health come to an end, and misfortunes arrive. Particularly when the comfortable times have gone on for a while, the arrival of suffering or the loss of material security can bring fear and sometimes even anger.

The anger comes at least in part from a feeling that what is happening is unfair. The good health and the serene sense of being secure can become to seem deserved and natural. When they vanish, a feeling of injustice can come. Even a brave man I knew wept and cried out in his physical suffering to those who ministered to him: "I have always tried to be good. How could this happen?"

That aching for an answer to "How could this happen?" becomes even more painful when those struggling include those we love. And it is especially hard for us to accept when those afflicted seem to us to be blameless. Then the distress can shake faith in the reality of a loving and all-powerful God. Some of us have seen such doubt come to infect a whole generation of people in times of war or famine. Such doubt can grow and spread until some may turn away from God, whom they charge with being indifferent or cruel. And if unchecked, those feelings can lead to loss of faith that there is a God at all.

### Trials prepare us for eternal life

My purpose today is to assure you that our Heavenly Father and the Savior live and that They love all humanity. The very opportunity for us to face adversity and affliction is part of the evidence of Their infinite love. God gave us the gift of living in mortality so that we could be prepared to receive the greatest of all the gifts of God, which is eternal life. Then our spirits will be changed. We will become able to want what God wants, to think as He thinks, and thus be prepared for the trust of an endless posterity to teach and to lead through tests to be raised up to qualify to live forever in eternal life.

It is clear that for us to have that gift and to be given that trust, we must be transformed through making righteous choices where that is hard to do. We are prepared for so great a trust by passing through trying and testing experiences in mortality. That education can come only as we are subject to trials while serving God and others for Him.

In this education we experience misery and happiness, sickness and health, the sadness from sin and the joy of forgiveness. That forgiveness can come only through the infinite Atonement of the Savior, which He worked out through pain we could not bear and which we can only faintly comprehend.

### The Savior's power to comfort

It will comfort us when we must wait in distress for the Savior's promised relief that He knows, from experience, how to heal and help us. The Book of Mormon gives us the certain assurance of His power to comfort. And faith in that power will give us patience as we pray and work and wait for help. He could have known how to succor us simply by revelation, but He chose



to learn by His own personal experience. Here is the account from Alma:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

“Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, [so] that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.”<sup>1</sup>

### **“Peace be unto thy soul”**

Even when you feel the truth of that capacity and kindness of the Lord to deliver you in your trials, it may still test your courage and strength to endure. The Prophet Joseph Smith cried out in agony in a dungeon:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord’s reply has helped me and can encourage us all in times of darkness. Here it is:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

“Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

“Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.”<sup>3</sup>

I have seen faith and courage come from a testimony that it is true that we are being prepared for eternal life. The Lord will rescue His faithful disciples. And the disciple who accepts a trial as an invitation to grow and therefore qualify for eternal life can find peace in the midst of the struggle.

### **Being spiritually prepared for adversity**

I spoke recently to a young father who has lost his job in the recent economic crisis. He knows that hundreds of thousands of people with exactly his skills are looking desperately for work to feed their families. His quiet confidence led me to ask him what he had done to become so confident that he would find a way to support his family. He said he had examined his life to be sure that he had done all he could to be worthy of the Lord’s help. It was clear that his need and his faith in Jesus Christ were leading him to be obedient to God’s commandments when it is hard to do. He said that he saw that opportunity as he and his wife were reading in Alma where the Lord had prepared a people to find the gospel through adversity.

You remember the moment when Alma turned to the man who led the people in distress. The man told him that they had been persecuted and rejected for their poverty. And the record goes:

“And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld with great joy; for he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.

“Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he stretched forth his hand, and cried unto those whom he

beheld, who were truly penitent, and said unto them:

"I behold that ye are lowly in heart; and if so, blessed are ye."<sup>4</sup>

The scripture goes on to praise those of us who prepared for adversity in the more prosperous times. Many of you had the faith to try to qualify for the help you now need, before the crisis came.

Alma continued, "Yea, he that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed—yea, much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble because of their exceeding poverty."<sup>5</sup>

That young man with whom I spoke recently was one who had done more than put away food and a little savings for the misfortune which living prophets had warned would come. He had begun to prepare his heart to be worthy of the Lord's help which he knew he would in the near future need. When I asked his wife on the day he lost his job if she was worried, she said with cheerfulness in her voice, "No, we've just come from the bishop's office. We are full-tithe payers." Now, it is still too early to tell, but I felt assured as they seemed to be assured: "Things will work out." Tragedy did not erode their faith; it tested it and strengthened it. And the feeling of peace the Lord has promised has already been delivered in the midst of the storm. Other miracles are sure to follow.

### **Comforting others in need**

The Lord always suits the relief to the person in need to best strengthen and purify him or her. Often it will come in the inspiration to do what might seem especially hard for the person who needs help himself. One of the great trials of life is losing to death a beloved husband or wife. President Hinckley described the hurt when Sister Hinckley was no longer at his side. The Lord knows the needs of those separated from loved ones by death. He saw the pain of widows and knew of

their needs from His earthly experience. He asked a beloved Apostle, from the agony of the cross, to care for His widowed mother, who would now lose a son. He now feels the needs of husbands who lose their wives and the needs of wives who are left alone by death.

Most of us know widows who need attention. What touches me is to hear, as I have, of an older widow whom I was intending to visit again having been inspired to visit a younger widow to comfort her. A widow needing comfort herself was sent to comfort another. The Lord helped and blessed two widows by inspiring them to encourage each other. So He gave succor to them both.

The Lord sent help in that same way to the humble poor in Alma 34 who had responded to the teaching and testimony of His servants. Once they had repented and were converted, they were still poor. But He sent them to do for others what they might reasonably have thought was beyond them and which they still needed. They were to give others what they would have hoped He would give them. Through His servant, the Lord gave these poor converts this hard task: "After ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."<sup>6</sup>

That may seem much to ask of people in such great need themselves. But I know one young man who was inspired to do that very thing early in his marriage. He and his wife were barely getting by on a tiny budget. But he saw another couple even poorer than they were. To the surprise of his wife, he gave help to them from their scanty finances. A promised blessing of peace came while they were still in their poverty. The blessing of prosperity beyond their fondest dreams came

later. And the pattern of seeing someone in need, someone with less or in pain, has never ceased.

### **“I’m going to make it”**

There is yet another trial which, when endured well, can bring blessings in this life and blessings forever. Age and illness can test the best of us. My friend served as our bishop when my daughters were still at home. They speak of what they felt when he bore his simple testimony around campfires in the mountains. He loved them, and they knew it. He was released as our bishop. He had served as a bishop before in another state. Those I have met who were from his earlier ward remember him as my daughters do.

I visited him in his home from time to time to thank him and to give him priesthood blessings. His health began a slow decline. I can’t remember all the ailments he suffered. He needed surgery. He was in constant pain. Yet every time I visited him to give him comfort, he turned the tables; I always was the one comforted. His back and legs forced him to use a cane to walk. Yet there he was in church, always sitting near the door, where he could greet those arriving early, with a smile.

I will never forget the feeling of wonder and admiration which came over me when I opened the back door at home and saw him coming up our driveway. It was the day we put out our garbage cans to be picked up by city workers. I had put the can out in the morning. But there he was dragging my garbage can up the hill with one hand while he balanced himself with a cane in his other hand. He was giving me the help he thought I needed when he needed it far more than I did. And he was helping with a smile and without being asked.

I visited him when he finally had to be cared for by nurses and doctors. He was

lying in a hospital bed, still in pain and still smiling. His wife had called me to say that he was getting weaker. My son and I gave him a priesthood blessing as he lay in the bed with tubes and bottles connected to him. I sealed the blessing with a promise that he would have time and the strength to do all that God had for him to do in this life, to pass every test. He stretched out his hand to grasp mine as I stepped away from his bed to leave. I was surprised at the strength of his grip and the firmness in his voice when he said, “I’m going to make it.”

I left thinking that I would see him again soon. But the phone call came within a day. He was gone to the glorious place where he will see the Savior, who is his perfect judge and will be ours. As I spoke at his funeral, I thought of the words of Paul when he knew that he would go to that place where my neighbor and friend has gone:

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”<sup>7</sup>

I have confidence that my neighbor made it through his trial and will face his judge with a joyous smile.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. He set a course for each of us that can polish and perfect us to be with Him. I testify that the Savior lives. His Atonement makes possible our being purified as we keep His commandments and our sacred covenants. And I know from my own experience that He can and will give us strength to rise through every trial.



President Monson is the Lord's prophet. He holds all the keys of the priesthood. This is the Lord's true Church in which we are, with Him, lifting each other and being blessed to succor the fellow sufferers He places in our way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Alma 7:11–13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–2.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–10.
4. Alma 32:6–8.
5. Alma 32:15.
6. Alma 34:28.
7. 2 Timothy 4:5–8.

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The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."  
Elder William W. Parmley offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion. Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

### President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the second session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion, under the direction of

Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

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### President Uchtdorf

The choir just sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Monson has asked that I present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother Brook P. Hales, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2008.

## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Brothers and sisters, it is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Neil L. Andersen as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may so indicate.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2009:

Gutenberg G. Amorím, Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, José E. Boza, G. Lynn Brenchley, John J. Chipman, Yoon Hwan Choi, Clayton M. Christensen, Ernesto A. Da Silva, James Dunlop, David W. Eka, I. Lee Enece, Edgardo E. Fernando, Luiz C. França, Joseph T. Hicken, Michael H. Holmes, Pita F. Hopoate, Tohru Hotta, William K. Jackson, Bin Kikuchi, Miguel A. Lee, Yong Hwan

Lee, Alfredo Heliton de Lemos, James B. Martino, Lamont W. Moon, Kent H. Murdock, Brent H. Nielson, Alexander A. Nuñez, Russell T. Osguthorpe, Adilson de Paula Parrella, Pedro J. Penha, Errol S. Phippen, Neil E. Pitts, Gary L. Pocock, Dale G. Renlund, Ronald A. Stone, Jean Tefan, and Allen P. Young. Those who wish to join us in expressing our gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Brothers A. Roger Merrill, Daniel K. Judd, and William D. Oswald as the Sunday School general presidency. It is also proposed that we release Brothers Charles W. Dahlquist, Dean R. Burgess, and Michael A. Neider as the Young Men general presidency. We also release all members of the Sunday School and Young Men general boards. All who wish to join us in expressing thanks for the dedicated service given by these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Donald L. Hallstrom as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Mervyn B. Arnold, Yoon Hwan Choi, Brent H. Nielson, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, and Joseph W. Sitati, and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Bruce A. Carlson, Bradley D. Foster, James B. Martino, Kent F. Richards, and Gregory A. Schwitzer. All in favor, please manifest it. If there be any contrary, by the same sign, please.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Manuel M. Agustin, Victor A. Asconavieta, Juan C. Avila, Duck Soo Bae, Dennis C. Brimhall, Thomas M. Cherrington,

Samuel W. Clark, Carl B. Cook, Kevin R. Duncan, Rodolfo C. Franco, Gerrit W. Gong, Mauro Junot, Larry S. Kacher, Von G. Keetch, Katsumi Kusume, German Laboriel, J. Christopher Lansing, David E. LeSueur, Paulo C. Loureiro, Steven J. Lund, Dmitry Marchenko, Abraham Martinez, Hugo E. Martinez, Freebody A. Mensah, Christopher B. Munday, Hirofumi Nakatsuka, Hee Keun Oh, Chikao Oishi, Alejandro S. Patanía, Renato M. Petla, Marcos A. Prieto, Jonathan C. Roberts, J. Craig Rowe, Manfred Schütze, Walter C. Selden, T. Marama Tarati, Warren G. Tate, Hesbon O. Usi, Jack D. Ward, and Randy W. Wilkinson. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell Trent Osguthorpe as the new general president of the Sunday School, with David Merrill McConkie as first counselor and Matthew Ottesen Richardson as second counselor. It is proposed that we sustain David LeRoy Beck as the new general president of the Young Men, with

Larry Miner Gibson as first counselor and Adrián Ochoa as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote and for your faith, devotion, and prayers.

We invite Elder Hallstrom, the newly called members of the Seventy, and the new Sunday School and Young Men general presidencies to take their places on the stand. We welcome all of them, as well as Elder Andersen, who became this morning the 97th Apostle to serve in this dispensation.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2008

### Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren:

As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. Church departments expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets.

The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year

2008 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2008

### Brook P. Hales

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2008.

### Number of Church units

Stakes . . . . .	2,818
Missions . . . . .	348
Districts . . . . .	622
Wards and branches . . . . .	28,109

### Church membership

Total membership . . . . .	13,508,509
Increase in children of record during 2008 . . . . .	123,502
Converts baptized during 2008 . .	265,593

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries . . . . .	52,494
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### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2008 . . . . .	4
(Rexburg Idaho, Curitiba Brazil,	

Panama City Panama, and Twin Falls Idaho)	
Temples rededicated during 2008 . . . .	1
(Mexico City Mexico)	
Temples in operation . . . . .	128

### Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin* of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Alice Thornley Evans*, widow of Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Elder J. Thomas Fyans*, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder Douglas H. Smith*, a former member of the Seventy; *Sister Harriet Barbara Washburn*, wife of Elder J. Ballard Washburn, a former member of the Seventy; and *Brother Daniel H. Ludlow*, former director of the Church Correlation Department and editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.

### President Uchtdorf

We shall now hear from Elders M. Russell Ballard and Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

We live in a fascinating and sometimes bewildering time. The other day I mentioned to one of my grandsons that I was going over the text of my conference talk. His face reflected his confusion. “You’re going to text your conference talk?” he asked. “I thought you had to give it in the Conference Center.”

While for some, texting would be easier, I’m grateful for this opportunity today to speak, because I have a message I feel is important for that grandson and for my other grandchildren, as well as for all of the youth of the Church.

## Learning from others' experiences

Years ago when I was in business, I learned a very expensive lesson because I did not listen carefully to the counsel of my father, nor did I heed the promptings of the Spirit giving me guidance from my Heavenly Father. My father and I were in the automobile business, and the Ford Motor Company was looking for dealers to sell their new line of cars. Ford executives invited my father and me to a preview showing of what they thought would be a spectacularly successful product. When we saw the cars, my father, who had over 35 years' experience in the business, cautioned me about becoming a dealer. However, the Ford sales personnel were very persuasive, and I chose to become Salt Lake City's first—and actually last—Edsel dealer. And if you don't know what an Edsel is, ask your grandpa. He will tell you that the Edsel was a spectacular failure.

Now, there's a powerful lesson for all of you in this experience. When you are willing to listen and learn, some of life's most meaningful teachings come from those who have gone before you. They have walked where you are walking and have experienced many of the things you are experiencing. If you listen and respond to their counsel, they can help guide you toward choices that will be for your benefit and blessing and steer you away from decisions that can destroy you. As you look to your parents and others who have gone before you, you will find examples of faith, commitment, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that you should strive to duplicate.

It's hard to imagine a scenario in which it would not be worthwhile to consider and learn from the experience of others. Many professions require internships, during which aspiring professionals shadow seasoned veterans to learn from their years of experience and accumulated wisdom. Rookies in professional sports are often expected to sit on the bench and learn by

watching experienced players. New missionaries are assigned to work with a senior companion whose experience helps the new missionary learn the right way to effectively serve the Lord.

Of course, there are times when we have no choice but to venture out on our own and do the best we can at figuring things out as we go along. For example, there are *not* a lot of people in my generation whose experience can help when it comes to the most modern of technologies. When we have problems with modern technology, we must look for someone who knows more about it than we do—which usually means turning to one of you young people.

It is my message and testimony to you today, my young friends, that for the most important questions of your eternal lives, there are answers in the scriptures and in the words and testimonies of apostles and prophets. The fact that these words come largely from older men, past and present, doesn't make them any less relevant. In fact, it makes their words even more valuable to you because they come from those who have learned much through years of devout living.

## The repeating pattern of history

There is a famous saying attributed to George Santayana. You've probably heard it: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed. [1980], 703). There are, in fact, several different variations of this quote, including "Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it." Regardless of the exact language, the sentiment is profound. There are great lessons to be learned from the past, and you ought to learn them so that you don't exhaust your spiritual strength repeating past mistakes and bad choices.

You don't have to be a Latter-day Saint—you don't even have to be religious—to



see the repeating pattern of history in the lives of God's children as recorded in the Old Testament. Time and again we see the cycle of righteousness followed by wickedness. Similarly, the Book of Mormon records that ancient civilizations of this continent followed exactly the same pattern: righteousness followed by prosperity, followed by material comforts, followed by greed, followed by pride, followed by wickedness and a collapse of morality until the people brought calamities upon themselves sufficient to stir them up to humility, repentance, and change.

In the relatively short span of years covered by the New Testament, the historic pattern repeats itself again. This time the people turned against Christ and His Apostles. The collapse was so great we have come to know it as the Great Apostasy, which led to the centuries of spiritual stagnation and ignorance called the Dark Ages.

Now, I need to be very clear about these historically reoccurring periods of apostasy and spiritual darkness. Our Heavenly Father loves all of His children, and He wants them all to have the blessings of the gospel in their lives. Spiritual light is not lost because God turns His back on His children. Rather, spiritual darkness results when His children turn their collective backs on Him. It is a natural consequence of bad choices made by individuals, communities, countries, and entire civilizations. This has been proven again and again throughout the course of time. One of the great lessons of this historical pattern is that our choices, both individually and collectively, do result in spiritual consequences for ourselves and for our posterity.

In every dispensation, God's loving desire to bless His children is manifest in the miraculous restoration of the gospel truth to the earth through living prophets. The Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the early 1800s

is only the most recent example. Similar restorations were accomplished in earlier times through such prophets as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

### **The historical pattern in our time**

The 179 years that have passed since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized have been extraordinary by any measure. Never in recorded history has there been a period of such remarkable progress in terms of science and technology. These advances have helped to facilitate gospel growth and expansion throughout the world. But they have also contributed to the rise of materialism and self-indulgence and to the decline of morality.

We live in an era when the boundaries of good taste and public decency are being pushed to the point where there are no boundaries at all. The commandments of God have taken a beating in the vacillating marketplace of ideas that absolutely rejects the notion of right and wrong. Certain factions of society seem generally mistrustful of anyone who chooses to live according to religious belief. And when people of faith attempt to warn others of the possible consequences of their sinful choices, they are scoffed at and ridiculed, and their most sacred rites and cherished values are publicly mocked.

Does any of this sound familiar, my young brothers and sisters? Do you see the historical pattern emerging again—the pattern of righteousness followed by prosperity, followed by material comforts, followed by greed, followed by pride, followed by wickedness and a collapse of morality—the same pattern we've seen again and again within the pages of the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Mormon? More importantly, what impact will the lessons of the past have on the personal choices you make right now and for the rest of your lives?

## Learning from past is a choice

The voice of the Lord is clear and unmistakable. He knows you. He loves you. He wants you to be eternally happy. But according to your God-given agency, the choice is yours. Each one of you has to decide for yourself if you are going to ignore the past and suffer the painful mistakes and tragic pitfalls that have befallen previous generations, experiencing for yourself the devastating consequences of bad choices. How much better your life will be if you will follow the noble example of the faithful followers of Christ—such as the sons of Helaman, Moroni, Joseph Smith, and the stalwart pioneers—and choose, as they did, to remain faithful to your Heavenly Father’s commandments.

With all my heart I hope and pray that you will be wise enough to learn the lessons of the past. You don’t have to spend time as a Laman or a Lemuel in order to know that it’s much better to be a Nephi or a Jacob. You don’t have to follow the path of Cain or Gadianton in order to realize that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). And you don’t have to allow your community to become like Sodom or Gomorrah in order to understand that it isn’t a good place to raise a family.

## Personal faith and testimony

Learning the lessons of the past allows you to walk boldly in the light without running the risk of stumbling in the darkness. This is the way it’s supposed to work. This is God’s plan: father and mother, grandfather and grandmother teaching their children; children learning from them and then becoming a more righteous generation through their own personal experiences and opportunities. Learning the lessons of the past allows

you to build personal testimony on a solid bedrock of obedience, faith, and the witness of the Spirit.

Of course, it’s not enough to learn these lessons as a matter of history and culture. Learning the names and dates and sequence of events from the printed page won’t help you very much unless the meaning and the message are written in your hearts. Nourished by testimony and watered with faith, the lessons of the past can take root in your hearts and become a vibrant part of who you are.

And so it returns, as it always does, to your own personal faith and testimony. That is the difference-maker, my young brothers and sisters. That is how you know. That is how you avoid the mistakes of the past and take your spirituality to the next level. If you are open and receptive to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit in your lives, you will understand the lessons of the past, and they will be burned into your souls by the power of your testimonies.

And how do you get such a testimony? Well, there’s no new technology for that, nor will there ever be. You cannot do a Google search to gain a testimony. You can’t text message faith. You gain a vibrant, life-changing testimony today the same way it has always been done. The process hasn’t been changed. It comes through desire, study, prayer, obedience, and service. That is why the teachings of prophets and apostles, past and present, are as relevant to your life today as they ever have been.

That you may find joy and happiness and peace in the future by learning the great and eternal lessons of the past is my prayer for each of you—for my grandchildren and all of the youth of the Church, wherever you may be—which I offer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Quentin L. Cook

This mortal life can constitute a difficult journey, but the destination is truly glorious. Christ expressed this to His disciples: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good *cheer*; I have overcome the world.”<sup>1</sup>

My objective this afternoon is twofold: first, to address some stumbling blocks to faith; and second, to describe how our Father’s plan is big enough for all His children.

During the past two years in the United States and across the world, there has been a dramatic increase in the discussion of our faith and beliefs. This is not new; it has happened periodically throughout the history of the Church.

### Dickens reports on Latter-day Saints

In 1863 Charles Dickens, the English novelist, went on board the passenger ship *Amazon*, which was bound for New York. His purpose was to report on the Latter-day Saint converts who were emigrating to build up the Church in the American West. There had been thousands of converts who had already emigrated, and much had been written, particularly in the British media, about them and their beliefs. Most of what was written was unfavorable.

“I went on board their ship,” wrote Dickens, “to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it.”<sup>2</sup>

After observing and mingling with the converts, Dickens was impressed with them and described these English converts, most of whom were laborers, as being “in their degree, the pick and flower of England.”<sup>3</sup>

### Differing reports about the Church

There have been two contrasting reports with respect to the Church. On one hand, righteous members and the way they live

their lives have generally been reported on favorably. Those who know Latter-day Saints personally or have the opportunity to observe them up close have the same view that Charles Dickens reported almost 150 years ago.

Because of the uplifting doctrine of the Restoration, members rejoice in the gospel and find joy and satisfaction in the Church. We are viewed favorably when we live the teachings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. When members don’t live the teachings, it can be a stumbling block to those who do not belong to the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the favorable reports on righteous members, descriptions of the Church and its doctrine have often been untrue, unfair, and harsh. It should be acknowledged that some descriptions of Christianity in general have also been very harsh.<sup>5</sup>

This attitude toward our doctrine does not come as a surprise. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord indicated that there would be some who “lift up their voices and curse God,”<sup>6</sup> and some “turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.”<sup>7</sup>

Recent bus ads in London demonstrate the polarization that exists concerning religion in general. Some atheists, agnostics, and nonbelievers paid to display large posters on red double-decker buses in London that said, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” Opposing ads by Christians asserted, “There definitely is a God,” followed by uplifting messages.<sup>8</sup>

Nonbelievers find it hard to accept the miracles of the Old and New Testaments and the Savior’s virgin birth and Resurrection. They view these events with the same skepticism as the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They are not open to the possibility of a heavenly plan presided over by a supreme being. They do not have faith.<sup>9</sup>



## Doctrine of revelation

My principal concern is for the honorable people on the earth who are open to religious faith but have been discouraged or confused by incorrect doctrine. For instance, with respect to the doctrine that revelation still exists, some very good people have been confident that the Church could not be true because they have been taught, and therefore believe, that the heavens are closed and there will be no additional revelation, no scripture, and no pronouncements from heaven. Let me emphasize that this widely held belief is not scriptural, but it is a stumbling block to some.<sup>10</sup>

In a recent best-selling book, the author uses as his principal analogy the interesting fact that for centuries all Europeans believed that all swans were white. It wasn't until the discovery of Australia that swans of a different color were discovered. The author uses this analogy to help explain events which have actually occurred but were not expected.<sup>11</sup> As I thought about this analogy, I realized that many people have refused to seriously investigate the Church because they believe there can be no revelation in this dispensation. One convert, who is now serving as a mission president, describes how difficult this was for him when he was investigating the Church. He said, "I had been taught all my life that there would never again be prophets and apostles here upon the earth. So to accept Joseph Smith as a prophet created a large stumbling block." However, when he prayed, he states, "I received a witness that in fact the gospel had been restored to the earth and that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God."<sup>12</sup>

## Teachings about hell

For many of these people who are open to religious faith, one issue has been particularly troubling. They have had a difficult time reconciling the correct doctrine

that we have a loving Father in Heaven and the incorrect doctrine that most of mankind would be doomed to eternal hell.

This was an issue with my great-great-grandfather Phineas Wolcott Cook. He was born in 1820 in Connecticut. In his diary he notes that he had made a covenant with the Lord to serve Him if he could find the right way. He attended many churches and at one was asked to "testify [and] join the church [and] be a Christian." His response was he "could not tell which one to join, there were so many." He continued to investigate several churches. One doctrine was of particular significance to him. He explained: "Sometimes they found fault with me because I wanted a more liberal salvation for the family of man. I could not believe the Lord had made a part to be saved and a great part to be damned to all eternity."<sup>13</sup> Because of this doctrine, he allowed his name to be taken off the records of one Protestant religion. When the LDS missionaries taught him the true doctrine of the plan of salvation in 1844, he was baptized.

Phineas's faith in the loving mercy of the Lord and His plan of happiness has been shared by many honorable men and women, even when the teachings of their own churches were very bleak.

The Anglican church leader and classical scholar Frederic Farrar, the author of *The Life of Christ*, lamented in lectures in Westminster Abbey that the common teachings of the Protestant churches with respect to hell were incorrect. He asserted that a definition of hell which included endless torment and everlasting damnation was the result of translation errors from Hebrew and Greek to English in the King James Version of the Bible. Farrar also noted the overwhelming demonstration of a loving Father in Heaven throughout the Bible as additional evidence that the definitions of hell and damnation used in the English translation were incorrect.<sup>14</sup>

Lord Tennyson, in his poem "In Memoriam," expressed his heartfelt

sentiment after noting that “we trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill.” He continued:

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy’d,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.<sup>15</sup>

### Salvation through the Atonement

At the time Joseph Smith received revelations and organized the Church, the vast majority of churches taught that the Savior’s Atonement would *not* bring about the salvation of most of mankind. The common precept was that a few would be saved and the overwhelming majority would be doomed to endless tortures of the most awful and unspeakable intensity.<sup>16</sup> The marvelous doctrine revealed to the Prophet Joseph unveiled to us a plan of salvation that is applicable to all mankind, including those who do not hear of Christ in this life, children who die before the age of accountability, and those who have no understanding.<sup>17</sup>

At death, righteous spirits live in a temporary state called paradise. Alma the Younger teaches us “paradise [is] a state of rest, a state of peace, where [the righteous] shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.”<sup>18</sup> The unrighteous spirits dwell in spirit prison, sometimes referred to as hell.<sup>19</sup> It is described as an awful place, a dark place where those fearful of the “indignation of the wrath of God” shall remain until the resurrection.<sup>20</sup> However, because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all spirits blessed by birth will ultimately be resurrected, spirit and body reunited, and inherit kingdoms of glory that are superior to our existence here on earth.<sup>21</sup> The exceptions are confined to those who, like Satan and his angels, willfully rebel against God.<sup>22</sup> At the resurrection, the spirit prison or hell will deliver up its captive spirits. Jesus came

into the world “to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness.”<sup>23</sup>

The Savior said: “Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”<sup>24</sup> A succinct summary is provided in the book of Moses: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>25</sup>

### Respect for those of other faiths

After all the Savior has suffered for mankind, it is not surprising that in speaking of existing churches in the First Vision, He would instruct Joseph to “join none of them, for they were all wrong.”<sup>26</sup> The Savior subsequently ushered in the Restoration of His true doctrine with respect to the plan of salvation and other saving principles such as the doctrine of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

But notwithstanding the significance of our doctrinal differences with other faiths, our attitude toward other churches has been to refrain from criticism. They do much good. They bless mankind. Many help their members learn of the Savior and His teachings.

A reporter for the *Washington Post* visited one of our Church meetings in Nigeria. The reporter interviewed one new member and told of his conversion. The reporter states:

“[He] said . . . he jumped off a city bus and walked into the [LDS Church building]. He immediately liked what he heard inside [the chapel], especially that no one preached that people of other faiths were going to hell.”<sup>28</sup> This echoes the feeling of numerous converts to the Church since its organization.

Our leaders have consistently counseled us “to live with respect and appreciation for those not of our faith. There is so great a need for civility and mutual

respect among those of differing beliefs and philosophies.”<sup>29</sup>

It is equally important that we be loving and kind to members of our own faith, regardless of their level of commitment or activity. The Savior has made it clear that we are not to judge each other.<sup>30</sup> This is especially true of members of our own families. Our obligation is to love and teach and never give up. The Lord has made salvation “free for all men” but has “commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.”<sup>31</sup>

### Glorious destination

The desire of our hearts, of course, is not only to acquire salvation and immortality but also to attain eternal life with a loving Father in Heaven and our Savior in the celestial kingdom with our families. We can obtain eternal life only through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.<sup>32</sup> The Savior said, “For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me.”<sup>33</sup>

Those early European converts that Dickens met on board the ship *Amazon* had overcome many stumbling blocks. They had a testimony that revelation comes from heaven and that prophets and apostles are again on the earth. They had faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

They had come to understand the sublime destination that was in store for them. They were not fearful of the arduous journey they were undertaking, and their ultimate destination was not really the Salt Lake Valley. Their true destination was paradise followed by exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

That is why Latter-day Saints then and now sing the last verse of “Come, Come, Ye Saints” with faith and expectation.

And should we die before our journey’s  
through,  
Happy day! All is well!

We then are free from toil and sorrow,  
too;

With the just we shall dwell!<sup>34</sup>

A loving Father has provided a comprehensive and compassionate plan for His children “that saves the living, redeems the dead, rescues the damned, and glorifies all who repent.”<sup>35</sup> Even though our journey may be fraught with tribulation, the destination is truly glorious.

I rejoice in the great plan of salvation that is big enough for all of our Father in Heaven’s children. I express gratitude beyond my ability to articulate for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I bear my witness of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. John 16:33; italics added.
2. Charles Dickens, “The Uncommercial Traveller,” *All the Year Round*, July 4, 1863, 449; see also David M. W. Pickup, *The Pick and Flower of England* (2001), 2.
3. Dickens, “The Uncommercial Traveller,” 446.
4. See Alma 4:10.
5. See Paul Johnson, “Militant Atheism and God,” *Forbes*, Oct. 8, 2007, 27; John Gray, “Faith in Reason: Secular Fantasies of a Godless Age,” *Harper’s Magazine*, Jan. 2008, 86.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 45:29.
8. See William Lee Adams, “Christians and Atheists Battle in London Bus Wars,” *Time*, Feb. 8, 2009, [www.time.com](http://www.time.com).
9. See Luke 18:8.
10. Some have mistakenly cited Revelation 22:18, but this has reference to the book of Revelation, not the Bible as a whole. See also Deuteronomy 4:2.
11. See Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (2007), xvii–xxviii.
12. Gary G. Ely, May 16, 2008, conversation preparatory to his service as president of the Colorado Denver North Mission.

13. In Newell Cook McMillan, comp., *The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook* (1980), 19–20; spelling and punctuation standardized.
14. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (1892), xxxvi–xlii. For an expanded discussion of this topic, see H. Wallace Goddard, “God’s Plan—Kinder Than We Dare to Expect,” *Meridian Magazine*, [www.ldsmag.com/myth/060217plan.html](http://www.ldsmag.com/myth/060217plan.html).
15. *Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Henry Frowde (1907), 387–88.
16. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope*, xxii.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–50; 137:7–10.
18. Alma 40:12.
19. See 2 Nephi 9:10–14; Doctrine and Covenants 76:84–86.
20. See Alma 40:14.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
22. See Isaiah 14:12–15; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7–9; Doctrine and Covenants 76:32–37.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 76:41; see also 1 Corinthians 15:22.
24. John 14:1–2.
25. Moses 1:39.
26. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also verse 20.
27. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21; see also Hebrews 6:1–2; 2 John 1:9–10; 3 Nephi 11:30–40.
28. Mary Jordan, “The New Face of Global Mormonism,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 2007, p. A01.
29. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
30. See Luke 6:37.
31. 2 Nephi 26:27.
32. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 93:20.
34. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
35. Orson F. Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts* (1921), 323.

### President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Kevin W. Pearson and Rafael E. Pino of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “Let Us All Press On.”

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## Elder Kevin W. Pearson

### Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

I humbly invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we discuss a vital principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I acknowledge with deep appreciation and love great examples of true faith and faithfulness in my own life. To goodly parents, family, priesthood leaders, beloved missionaries, wonderful children, and a precious eternal companion, I express my deepest love and gratitude. I acknowledge my own need and desire for

greater faith as a disciple and witness of Christ. There has never been a greater need for faith in my own life than now.

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children “to understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God” (D&C 68:25). This requires more than merely recognizing faith as a gospel principle. “To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone” (Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669). True faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. “Faith is a principle of action and of power” (Bible

Dictionary, 670). It requires us to do, not merely to believe. Faith is a spiritual gift from God that comes through the Holy Ghost. It requires a correct understanding and knowledge of Jesus Christ, His divine attributes and perfect character, His teachings, Atonement, Resurrection, and priesthood power. Obedience to these principles develops complete trust in Him and His ordained servants and assurance of His promised blessings.

There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.

### Obedience and faith

“Faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those who have faith” (Bible Dictionary, 669; see also Romans 10:14–17). Do your children know that you know? Do they see and feel your conviction? “Strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, 669).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness*. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 264; italics in original). If we desire more faith, we must be more obedient. When we teach our children by example or precept to be casual or situational in obeying God’s commandments, we prevent them from receiving this vital spiritual gift. Faith requires an attitude of exact obedience, even in the small, simple things.

Desire is a particle of faith that develops within us as we experience divine truth. It

is like spiritual photosynthesis. The influence of the Holy Ghost, acting on the Light of Christ within every human being, produces the spiritual equivalent of a chemical reaction—a stirring, a change of heart, or a desire to know. Hope develops as particles of faith become molecules and as simple efforts to live true principles occur.

As patterns of obedience develop, the specific blessings associated with obedience are realized and belief emerges. Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power.

There is a quality of faith which develops as we focus all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is seen and felt in the eyes of a great missionary, a valiant and virtuous young woman, and righteous mothers, fathers, and grandparents. It can be seen in the lives of individuals young and old, in every land and culture, speaking every language, in every circumstance and station in life. It is the “eye of faith” spoken of by the prophet Alma (see Alma 5:15–26)—the ability to focus and be steadfast, continually holding fast to true principles, nothing wavering, even when the mist of darkness confronting us is exceedingly great. This quality of faith is exceedingly powerful.

### Faith versus doubt

However, “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. . . . The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:11, 16). And so it is with faith. It can be enticing to choose doubt and disbelief over faith.

As Jesus returned from the transcendent spiritual experience on the Mount



of Transfiguration, He was approached by a desperate father whose son needed help. The father pleaded, “If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.”

Jesus replied, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father . . . cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:22–24).

Faith and fear cannot coexist. One gives way to the other. The simple fact is we all need to constantly build faith and overcome sources of destructive disbelief. The Savior’s teaching comparing faith to a grain of mustard seed recognizes this reality (see Matthew 13:31–32). Consider it this way: our net usable faith is what we have left to exercise after we subtract our sources of doubt and disbelief. You might ask yourself this question: “Is my own net faith positive or negative?” If your faith exceeds your doubt and disbelief, the answer is likely positive. If you allow doubt and disbelief to control you, the answer might be negative.

We do have a choice. We get what we focus on consistently. Because there is an opposition in all things, there are forces that erode our faith. Some are the result of Satan’s direct influence. But for others, we have no one but ourselves to blame. These stem from personal tendencies, attitudes, and habits we can learn to change. I will refer to these influences as the “Six Destructive Ds.” As I do, consider their influence on you or your children.

### The Six Destructive Ds

First is *doubt*. Doubt is not a principle of the gospel. It does not come from the Light of Christ or the influence of the Holy Ghost. Doubt is a negative emotion related to fear. It comes from a lack of confidence in one’s self or abilities. It is inconsistent with our divine identity as children of God.

Doubt leads to *discouragement*. Discouragement comes from missed expectations. Chronic discouragement leads to lower expectations, decreased effort, weakened desire, and greater difficulty feeling and following the Spirit (see *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 10). Discouragement and despair are the very antithesis of faith.

Discouragement leads to *distraction*, a lack of focus. Distraction eliminates the very focus the eye of faith requires. Discouragement and distraction are two of Satan’s most effective tools, but they are also bad habits.

Distraction leads to a *lack of diligence*, a reduced commitment to remain true and faithful and to carry on despite hardship and disappointment. Disappointment is an inevitable part of life, but it need not lead to doubt, discouragement, distraction, or lack of diligence.

If not reversed, this path ultimately leads to *disobedience*, which undermines the very basis of faith. So often the result is disbelief, the conscious or unconscious refusal to believe.

The scriptures describe *disbelief* as the state of having chosen to harden one’s heart. It is to be past feeling.

These Six Destructive Ds—*doubt, discouragement, distraction, lack of diligence, disobedience, and disbelief*—all erode and destroy our faith. We can choose to avoid and overcome them.

### Promise of spiritual power

Challenging times require greater spiritual power. Consider carefully the Savior’s promise: “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33).

I humbly declare that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves each of us, His children. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He lives and personally leads His Church through President Monson, His anointed prophet. Because He lives,

there is always hope smiling brightly before us. In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live

by faith and not fear. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Rafael E. Pino

### Finding comfort amid tragedy

One morning some years ago, I received a telephone call from Brother Omar Alvarez, who at the time served as one of my counselors in the bishopric. His three-year-old daughter had died in a tragic accident.

He related the account of what happened that day as follows:

“As soon as we arrived at one of the beautiful Venezuelan beaches, our children begged us to let them go out and play in a small river near the beach. We allowed them to go. Then we started to get some things out of the car. Two minutes later we noticed that our children were starting to get too far from the shore.

“As we went toward them to bring them closer, we noticed that our three-year-old daughter was not with the other children. We looked for her desperately, only to find her floating near the place where the other children were. We quickly pulled her out of the water. Some people came to try to help save her, but nothing could be done. Our youngest daughter had drowned.

“The moments that followed were extremely difficult, filled with anguish and pain for the loss of our youngest daughter. That feeling soon turned into an almost unbearable torment. However, in the midst of the confusion and uncertainty, the thought that our children had been born under the covenant came to our minds, and through that covenant, our daughter belongs to us for eternity.

“What a blessing it is to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ and to have received the ordinances of His holy temple! We now feel that we are much more

committed to be faithful to the Lord and endure to the end, because we want to be worthy of the blessings that the temple provides in order to see our daughter again. At times we mourn, but ‘we do not mourn as those without hope’ (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:554).”

This faithful family came to understand that when adversity arrives in our lives, the only true source of comfort is God. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

### The light of the gospel brings peace

Several years after the difficult trial the Alvarez family faced, I witnessed how another faithful family dealt with great adversity. Several members of the Quero family had died in a terrible car accident. Brother Abraham Quero lost his parents, two sisters, his brother-in-law, and his niece in that accident.

Brother Quero showed an admirable attitude when he said the following:

“This was the time to show loyalty to God and to acknowledge that we depend on Him, that His will must be obeyed, and that we are subject to Him.

“I spoke to my brothers and gave them strength and courage to understand what President Kimball taught many years ago, that ‘there is no tragedy in death, but only in sin’ (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 101), and that the important thing is not how a man died but how he lived.

“The words of Job filled my soul: ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21). And then from Jesus: 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11:25).

"This was one of the most spiritual experiences we had as a family—to accept the will of God under such very difficult circumstances."

In both of the experiences that these good families endured, pain and sorrow left because of the light of the gospel, which filled them with peace and comfort, providing the assurance that everything would be well.

### **The Savior suffered all things**

Even when the pain of these families cannot be compared to the agony the Lord endured in Gethsemane, it has enabled me to better understand the Savior's suffering and Atonement. There is no infirmity, affliction, or adversity that Christ did not feel in Gethsemane.

The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the following in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:18–19).

The Prophet Joseph Smith, who knew a lot about the storms of life, exclaimed in anguish during one of his most difficult moments: "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (D&C 121:1).

Then, as the Prophet raised his voice, the consoling words of the Lord attended him, saying:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:7–8).

President Howard W. Hunter said: "If our lives and our faith are centered on Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and his teachings, no other success can ever be permanently right" (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1997], 40).

### **The gospel prepares us to face adversity**

The Savior said:

"Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (3 Nephi 14:24–27).

It is interesting to notice that the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew against both houses! Living the gospel does not mean that we will everlastingly escape adversity. Rather, it means that we will be prepared to face and endure adversity more confidently.

I bear solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He directs His Church through a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. If we live our lives in accordance with teachings of the Savior, we will surely find the peace and consolation that only God can give (see Philippians 4:7). I bear witness of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Plan to attend the temple

Each member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is blessed to live in a time when the Lord has inspired His prophets to provide significantly increased accessibility to the holy temples. With careful planning and some sacrifice, the majority of the members of the Church can receive the ordinances of the temple for themselves and for their ancestors and be blessed by the covenants made therein.

Because I love you, I am going to speak to you heart to heart, without mincing words. I have seen that many times individuals have made great sacrifices to go to a distant temple. But when a temple is built close by, within a short time, many do not visit it regularly. I have a suggestion: When a temple is conveniently nearby, small things may interrupt your plans to go to the temple. Set specific goals, considering your circumstances, of when you can and will participate in temple ordinances. Then do not allow anything to interfere with that plan. This pattern will guarantee that those who live in the shadow of a temple will be as blessed as are those who plan far ahead and make a long trip to the temple.

Fourteen years ago I decided to attend the temple and complete an ordinance at least once a week. When I am traveling I make up the missed visits in order to achieve that objective. I have kept that resolve, and it has changed my life profoundly. I strive to participate in all the different ordinances available in the temple.

I encourage you to establish your own goal of how frequently you will avail yourself of the ordinances offered in our operating temples. What is there that is more important than attending and participating in the ordinances of the temple? What activity could have a greater impact and

provide more joy and profound happiness for a couple than worshipping together in the temple?

### Gaining more benefit from the temple

Now I share some additional suggestions of how to gain more benefit from temple attendance.

- Understand the doctrine related to temple ordinances, especially the significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>
- While participating in temple ordinances, consider your relationship to Jesus Christ and His relationship to our Heavenly Father. This simple act will lead to greater understanding of the supernal nature of the temple ordinances.
- Always prayerfully express gratitude for the incomparable blessings that flow from temple ordinances. Live each day so as to give evidence to Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son of how very much those blessings mean to you.
- Schedule regular visits to the temple.
- Leave sufficient time to be unhurried within the temple walls.
- Rotate activities so that you can participate in all of the ordinances of the temple.
- Remove your watch when you enter a house of the Lord.
- Listen carefully to the presentation of each element of the ordinance with an open mind and heart.
- Be mindful of the individual for whom you are performing the vicarious ordinance. At times pray that he or she will recognize the vital importance of the ordinances and be worthy or prepare to be worthy to benefit from them.

- Recognize that much of the majesty of the sealing ordinance cannot be understood and remembered with one live experience. Substantial subsequent vicarious work permits one to understand much more of what is communicated in the live ordinances.
- Realize that a sealing ordinance is not enduring until after it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Both individuals must be worthy and want the sealing to be eternal.

If as a couple you have not yet been sealed in the temple, consider this scripture:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4).

### **Temple work and our ancestors**

Sometimes when I hear a choir during a temple dedicatory service, I experience a feeling so sublime that it elevates my heart and mind. I close my eyes, and more than once, in my mind, I have seen an inverted cone of individuals beginning at the temple and rising upward. I have felt that they represent many spirits waiting for the vicarious work to be done for them in that sanctuary, rejoicing because finally there is a place that can free them from the chains that hold them back in their eternal progress. In order to achieve this end, you will need to do the vicarious work. You will need to identify your ancestors. The new FamilySearch™ program makes the effort easier than before. It is necessary to identify those ancestors, qualify them, and come to the house of the Lord to perform the ordinances they are longing to receive.

What a joy it is to be able to participate in the work of a temple!

I would like to relate the experience of an ancestor of my wife, Jeanene. Her name is Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich. Her commentary shows the impact that the temple can have in our lives. When she was 31 years old, she received a calling from Brigham Young to work in the Nauvoo Temple, where all the ordinances possible were performed before the Saints had to abandon that temple. This is what she wrote:

“Many were the blessings we had received in the house of the Lord, which has caused us joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us. For if it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple by the influence and help of the Spirit of the Lord, our journey would have been like one taking a leap in the dark. To start out on such a journey in the winter as it were and in our state of poverty, it would seem like walking into the jaws of death. But we had faith in our Heavenly Father, and we put our trust in Him, feeling that we were His chosen people and had embraced His gospel, and instead of sorrow, we felt to rejoice that the day of our deliverance had come.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Temple ordinances offer assurances**

Now I would like to speak of the special meaning the temple has for me. Part of this message is going to be sensitive, so I will appreciate your prayers as I give it so that I do not become too emotional.

Fourteen years ago the Lord took my wife beyond the veil. I love her with all my heart, but I have never complained, because I know it was His will. I have never asked why but rather what is it that He wants me to learn from this experience. I believe that is a good way to face the unpleasant things in our lives, not

complaining but thanking the Lord for the trust He places in us when He gives us the opportunity to overcome difficulties.

We had the blessing of having children. A daughter, the first child, continues to be an enormous blessing in our lives. A couple of years later a son we named Richard was born. A few years later a daughter was born. She died after living only a few minutes.

Our son, Richard, was born with a heart defect. We were told that unless that could be cured, there was little probability that he would live more than two or three years. This was so long ago that techniques now used to repair such defects were unknown. We had the blessing of having a place where doctors agreed to attempt to perform the needed surgery. The surgery had to be done while his little heart was beating.

The surgery was performed just six weeks after the birth and death of our baby daughter. When the operation finished, the principal surgeon came in and said it was a success. And we thought, "How wonderful! Our son will have a strong body, be able to run and walk and grow!" We expressed deep gratitude to the Lord. Then about 10 minutes later, the same doctor came in with an ashen face and told us, "Your son has died." Apparently the shock of the operation was more than his little body could endure.

Later, during the night, I embraced my wife and said to her, "We do not need to worry, because our children were born in the covenant. We have the assurance that we will have them with us in the future. Now we have a reason to live extremely well. We have a son and a daughter who have qualified to go to the celestial kingdom because they died before the age of eight." That knowledge has given us great comfort. We rejoice in the knowledge that all seven of our children are sealed to us for time and all eternity.

That trial has not been a problem for either of us, because when we live

righteously and have received the ordinances of the temple, everything else is in the hands of the Lord. We can do the best we can, but the final outcome is up to Him. We should never complain, when we are living worthily, about what happens in our lives.

### **No reason to worry**

Fourteen years ago the Lord decided it was not necessary for my wife to live any longer on the earth, and He took her to the other side of the veil. I confess that there are times when it is difficult not to be able to turn and talk to her, but I do not complain. The Lord has allowed me, at important moments in my life, to feel her influence through the veil.

What I am trying to teach is that when we keep the temple covenants we have made and when we live righteously in order to maintain the blessings promised by those ordinances, then come what may, we have no reason to worry or to feel despondent.

I know that I will have the privilege of being with that beautiful wife, whom I love with all my heart, and with those children who are with her on the other side of the veil, because of the ordinances that are performed in the temple. What a blessing to have once again on the earth the sealing authority, not only for this mortal life but for the eternities. I am grateful that the Lord has restored His gospel in its fulness, including the ordinances that are required for us to be happy in the world and to live everlastingly happy lives in the hereafter.

This is the work of the Lord. Jesus Christ lives. This is His Church. I am a witness of Him and of His Atonement, which is the foundation that makes effective and lasting every ordinance performed in the temples. I so testify with every capacity I possess, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Sections 88, 109, 131, and 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be a good place to begin.
2. Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, "Autobiography, 1885–93," Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 66; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.

**President Uchtdorf**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from

9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Sing We Now at Parting." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy.

**Elder Russell M. Nelson**

With you, my dear brothers and sisters, I express love and admiration for Elder Neil L. Andersen. His call to the holy apostleship has come from the Lord as revealed to His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Throughout his life, President Monson has refined his ability to hearken to the will of the Lord. As the Savior submitted His will to Heavenly Father, so the prophet submits his will to the Lord. Thank you, President Monson, for developing and using that power. We congratulate you, Elder Andersen, and we pray for you!

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our prayers follow patterns and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught us how to pray. From His prayers we can learn many important lessons. We can begin with the Lord's Prayer and add lessons from other prayers He has given.<sup>1</sup>

As I recite the Lord's Prayer, listen for lessons:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

The Lord's Prayer is recorded twice in the New Testament and once in the Book of Mormon.<sup>3</sup> It is also included in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible,<sup>4</sup> where clarification is provided by these two phrases:

1. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,"<sup>5</sup> and
2. "Suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil."<sup>6</sup>

The clarification on forgiveness is supported by other statements of the Master. He said to His servants, "Inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you."<sup>7</sup> In other words, if one is to be forgiven, one must first forgive.<sup>8</sup> The clarification on

temptation is helpful, for surely we would *not* be led into temptation by Deity. The Lord said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”<sup>9</sup>

Though the four versions of the Lord’s Prayer are not identical, they all open with a salutation to “Our Father,” signifying a close relationship between God and His children. The phrase “hallowed be thy name” reflects the respect and worshipful attitude that we should feel as we pray. “Thy will be done” expresses a concept that we will discuss later.

His request for “daily bread” includes a need for spiritual nourishment as well. Jesus, who called Himself “the bread of life,” gave a promise: “He that cometh to me shall never hunger.”<sup>10</sup> And as we partake of sacramental emblems worthily, we are further promised that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>11</sup> That is spiritual sustenance that cannot be obtained in any other way.

As the Lord closes His prayer, He acknowledges God’s great power and glory, ending with “Amen.” Our prayers also close with *amen*. Though it is pronounced differently in various languages, its meaning is the same. It means “truly” or “verily.”<sup>12</sup> Adding *amen* solemnly affirms a sermon or a prayer.<sup>13</sup> Those who concur should each add an audible *amen*<sup>14</sup> to signify “that is my solemn declaration too.”<sup>15</sup>

The Lord prefaced His prayer by first asking His followers to avoid “vain repetitions”<sup>16</sup> and to pray “after this manner.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, the Lord’s Prayer serves as a pattern to follow and not as a piece to memorize and recite repetitively. The Master simply wants us to pray for God’s help while we strive constantly to resist evil and live righteously.

### Intercessory prayers

Other prayers of the Lord are also instructive, especially His intercessory prayers. They are so named because the Lord prayerfully interceded with His

Father for the benefit of His disciples. Picture in your mind the Savior of the world kneeling in prayer, as I quote from John chapter 17:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . .

“ . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

“I pray for them.”<sup>18</sup>

From this prayer of the Lord we learn how keenly He feels His responsibility as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father.<sup>19</sup> Just as keenly, we should feel our responsibility to keep His commandments and endure to the end.<sup>20</sup>

An intercessory prayer was also given by Jesus for the people of ancient America. The record states that “no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.”<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus added: “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.”<sup>22</sup>

In a later prayer, Jesus included a plea for unity. “Father,” He said, “I pray unto thee for them, . . . that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.”<sup>23</sup> We too can pray for unity. We can pray to be of one heart and one mind with the Lord’s anointed and with our loved ones. We can pray for mutual understanding and respect between ourselves and our neighbors. If we really care for others, we should pray for them.<sup>24</sup> “Pray one for another,” taught James, for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”<sup>25</sup>

### Lessons from other prayers

Other lessons about prayer were taught by the Lord. He told His disciples that “ye



must always pray unto the Father in my name.”<sup>26</sup> The Savior further emphasized, “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name.”<sup>27</sup> Obediently, we apply that lesson when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Another of the Lord’s prayers teaches a lesson repeated in three consecutive verses:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. . . .

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

“Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me.”<sup>29</sup>

If companionship of the Holy Ghost is that important, we should pray for it too. We should likewise help all converts and our children cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. As we so pray, the Holy Ghost can become a vital force for good in our lives.<sup>30</sup>

### Enhancing our prayers

The Lord has taught ways by which our prayers can be enhanced. For example, He said that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”<sup>31</sup>

Prayer can also be enhanced by fasting.<sup>32</sup> The Lord said, “I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.”<sup>33</sup> A plea for wisdom in fasting was offered by President Joseph F. Smith, who cautioned that “there is such a thing as overdoing. A man may fast and pray till he kills himself; and there isn’t any necessity for it; nor wisdom in it. . . . The Lord can hear a simple prayer, offered in faith, in half a dozen words, and he will recognize fasting that may not continue more than twenty-four hours, just as readily and as effectually as He will answer a prayer of a thousand words and fasting for a month. . . . The Lord will accept that which

is enough, with a good deal more pleasure and satisfaction than that which is too much and unnecessary.”<sup>34</sup>

The concept of “too much and unnecessary” could also apply to the length of our prayers. A closing prayer in a Church meeting need not include a summary of each message and should not become an unscheduled sermon. Private prayers can be as long as we want, but public prayers ought to be short supplications for the Spirit of the Lord to be with us or brief declarations of gratitude for what has transpired.

Our prayers can be enhanced in other ways. We can use “right words”<sup>35</sup>—special pronouns—in reference to Deity. While worldly manners of daily dress and speech are becoming more casual, we have been asked to protect the formal, proper language of prayer. In our prayers we use the respectful pronouns *Thee*, *Thou*, *Thy*, and *Thine* instead of *You*, *Your*, and *Yours*.<sup>36</sup> Doing so helps us to be humble. That can also enhance our prayers. Scripture so declares, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”<sup>37</sup>

Prayer begins with individual initiative. “Behold,” saith the Lord, “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”<sup>38</sup> That door is opened when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup>

When should we pray? Whenever we desire! Alma taught, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, . . . and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus reminded His disciples “that they should not cease to pray in their hearts.”<sup>41</sup>

### “Thy will be done”

The practice of Church members is to kneel in family prayer each morning and evening, plus having daily personal prayers and blessings on our food.<sup>42</sup> President Monson said, “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him.”<sup>43</sup> And so, in praying for temporal and spiritual blessings, we should all plead, as did Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done.”<sup>44</sup>

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world—He who ransomed us with His blood—is our Redeemer and our Exemplar.<sup>45</sup> At the close of His mortal mission, He prayed that His will—as the Beloved Son—might be swallowed up in the will of the Father.<sup>46</sup> In that crucial hour the Savior cried, “Father, . . . not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>47</sup> So we should pray to God, “Thy will be done.”

And let us ever pray “that [the Lord’s] kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants . . . may . . . be prepared for the days . . . [when] the Son of Man shall come down . . . in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.”<sup>48</sup>

In our daily lives and in our own crucial hours, may we fervently apply these precious lessons from the Lord, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. The January 1976 issue of the *Ensign* was published as a “Special Issue on Prayer.” The sincere student of prayer will gain much from a study of those articles.
2. Matthew 6:9–13.
3. See Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; 3 Nephi 13:9–13.
4. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:9–15.
5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13.
6. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:14.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 82:1.
8. See Matthew 18:23–35; Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
9. Matthew 26:41.
10. John 6:35; see also John 6:48, 51.
11. See Moroni 4:3; 5:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
12. In the Hebrew and Greek languages, *amen* means “truly,” “surely,” “verily,” or “so be it.”
13. See Revelation 1:18; 22:20–21. It is also used in confirming agreements (see 1 Kings 1:36).
14. See 1 Corinthians 14:16.
15. See Psalm 106:48; Revelation 5:13–14; 19:4; Doctrine and Covenants 88:135.
16. Matthew 6:7; 3 Nephi 13:7.
17. Matthew 6:9; 3 Nephi 13:9.
18. John 17:1, 4, 8–9.
19. See 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Doctrine and Covenants 29:5; 45:3; 110:4.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
21. 3 Nephi 17:17.
22. 3 Nephi 17:20.
23. 3 Nephi 19:23.
24. See Matthew 5:44; Alma 34:27; 3 Nephi 18:21.
25. James 5:16.
26. 3 Nephi 18:19.
27. 3 Nephi 18:21.
28. See 2 Nephi 32:9; 33:12; 3 Nephi 18:23, 30; 19:6–7; 20:31; 28:30.
29. 3 Nephi 19:20–22.
30. See John 10:27–28 (compare D&C 84:43–47); 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Alma 5:38. And we may invite the companionship of the Spirit, who will intercede and help us know what to pray about (see Romans 8:26).
31. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
32. See Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Omni 1:26; Alma 5:46; 6:6; 17:3, 9; 28:6; 45:1; 3 Nephi 27:1; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 88:76.
34. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1912, 133–34.
35. Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 17:1.
36. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 201; Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1951, 175; Bruce R. McConkie, “Why the Lord Ordained Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 12; L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 14–15; or *Ensign*,

- Nov. 1983, 13; and Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 16–20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 15–18. Details of the language of prayer are explained by Don E. Norton Jr., “The Language of Formal Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 44–47.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10; see also Psalm 24:3–4; Matthew 6:12; Helaman 3:35; Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10.
38. Revelation 3:20.
39. See 3 Nephi 18:20; Doctrine and Covenants 88:64.
40. Alma 37:37; see also Philippians 4:6; Alma 34:18–27; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5; 93:49.
41. 3 Nephi 20:1.
42. See *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11.
43. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 61.
44. See Matthew 26:42; Jacob 7:14; Ether 12:29; Doctrine and Covenants 109:44; Moses 4:2.
45. See 3 Nephi 27:13–15, 21–22.
46. See Mosiah 15:7.
47. Matthew 26:39; see also Moses 4:2, which indicates the humble attitude of our Savior from the beginning.
48. Doctrine and Covenants 65:5.

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The choir sang “Sing We Now at Parting.”

Elder Douglas L. Callister offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho provided the music. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Provo Missionary Training Center, and other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be provided by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho, under the direction of Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Sing Praise to Him.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him.”

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing “Father in Heaven.” Following the singing, we will hear from President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. He will be followed by Elder



Claudio R. M. Costa of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Father in Heaven."

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### To Aaronic Priesthood holders

Young men speak of the future because they have no past, and old men speak of the past because they have no future. I am an old man, but I will speak to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about your future.

The Aaronic Priesthood you hold was restored by an angelic messenger. "The ordination was done by the hands of an angel, who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. The angel explained that he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, the ancient apostles, who held the keys of the higher priesthood, which was called the Priesthood of Melchizedek."<sup>1</sup>

"The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments."<sup>2</sup>

You have been ordained to an office in the priesthood of God and given divine authority that is not and cannot be held by the kings and magistrates and great men of this earth unless they humble themselves and enter through the gate that leads to life eternal.

There are many accounts in the scriptures of young men serving. Samuel served in the tabernacle with Eli.<sup>3</sup> David was a young man when he faced Goliath.<sup>4</sup> Mormon's service began when he was 10.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Smith was 14 when he received the First Vision.<sup>6</sup> And Christ was 12 when

He was found in the temple teaching the wise men.<sup>7</sup>

Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth."<sup>8</sup>

### Teaching young people

When I began my teaching career, President J. Reuben Clark Jr., the First Counselor in the First Presidency, had spoken to teachers. His words went into my heart and influenced me ever since.

President Clark described youth as "hungry for things of the Spirit [and] eager to learn the gospel." He said: "They want it straight, undiluted. They want to know . . . about our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth. They are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth."

President Clark continued: "You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in [their] ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with [them]. . . . You can bring these truths to [them] openly. . . . There is no need for gradual approaches."<sup>9</sup>

Since then I have taught young people in the same way that I teach adults.

### Hope from a patriarchal blessing

There are some things you need to understand.

The priesthood is something you cannot see nor hear nor touch, but it is a real authority and a real power.

When I was five years old, I became very ill. It turned out that I had polio, a disease that was completely unknown to

the small-town doctor. I lay for several weeks on a World War I army cot in our front room beside a coal stove. Afterward, I could not walk. I remember very clearly sliding around on the linoleum floor and pulling myself up on chairs, learning to walk again. I was more fortunate than some. A friend walked with crutches and steel leg braces all of his life.

As I moved into school, I found that my muscles were weak. I was very self-conscious. I knew that I could never be an athlete.

It did not help a lot when I read about the man who went to a doctor to find a cure for his inferiority complex. After a careful examination, the doctor told him, “You don’t have a complex. You really *are* inferior!”

With that for encouragement, I set about through life and determined to compensate in other ways.

I found hope in my patriarchal blessing. The patriarch, whom I had never met before, confirmed to me that patriarchs do have prophetic insight. He said that I had a desire to come to earth life and was willing to meet the tests that would accompany life in a mortal body. He said that I had been given a body of such physical proportion and fitness to enable my spirit to function through it unhampered by physical impediment. That encouraged me.

### **Take care of your body**

I learned that you should always take care of your body. Take nothing into your body that will harm it, such as we are counseled in the Word of Wisdom: tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco, or anything else that is habit-forming, addictive, or harmful.

Read section 89 in the Doctrine and Covenants. You will find great promises:

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”

And then this promise: “And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them.”<sup>10</sup>

You may see others who seem to have been given a more perfect body than yours. Do not fall into the trap of feeling poorly about your height or weight or your features or your skin color or race.

You are a son of God. You lived in a premortal existence as an individual spirit child of heavenly parents. At the time of your birth, you received a mortal body of flesh and blood and bone in which to experience earth life. You will be tested as you prepare yourself to return to our Heavenly Father.

I ask you the same question that Paul asked the Corinthians: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”<sup>11</sup>

### **Resist evil influences**

Your gender was determined in the premortal existence. You were born a male. You must treasure and protect the masculine part of your nature. You must have respectful, protective regard for all women and girls.

Do not abuse yourself. Never allow others to touch your body in a way that would be unworthy, and do not touch anyone else in any unworthy way.

Avoid the deadly poisons of pornography and narcotics. If these are in your life, beware! If allowed to continue, they can destroy you. Talk to your parents; talk to your bishop. They will know how to help you.

Do not decorate your body with tattoos or by piercing it to add jewels. Stay away from that.

Do not run with friends that worry your parents.

Everywhere present is the influence of Lucifer and his legion of angels. They tempt you to do those things and say those things and think those things that would destroy. Resist every impulse that will trouble your spirit.<sup>12</sup>

You are not to be fearful. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”<sup>13</sup> And Lehi taught that all “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”<sup>14</sup> Remember, the prayerful power of your spirit will protect you.

### **The power of the Atonement**

I remember when I was “[baptized] by immersion for the remission of sins.”<sup>15</sup> That was appealing. I assumed that all my past mistakes were now washed away, and if I never made any more mistakes in my life, I would be clean. This I resolved to do. Somehow it did not turn out that way. I found that I made mistakes, not intentionally, but I made them. I once foolishly thought maybe I was baptized too soon. I did not understand that the ordinance of the sacrament, administered by you of the Aaronic Priesthood, is in fact a renewing of the covenant of baptism and the reinstating of the blessings connected with it. I did not see, as the revelations tell us, that I could “retain a remission of [my] sins.”<sup>16</sup>

If you have been guilty of sin or mischief, you must learn about the power of the Atonement, how it works. And with deeply sincere repentance, you can unleash that power. It can rinse out all the small things, and with deep soaking and scrubbing, it will wash away serious transgression. There is nothing from which you cannot be made clean.

With you always is the Holy Ghost, which was conferred upon you at the time of your baptism and confirmation.

### **The value of learning**

I was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood when World War II exploded upon the world. I was ordained an elder when we were all marched away to war.

I had dreams of following an older brother, Leon, who at that time was flying B-24 bombers in the Battle of Britain. I volunteered for air force pilot training.

I failed the written test by one point. Then the sergeant remembered that there were several two-point questions, and if I got half right on two of them, I could pass.

Part of the test was multiple choice. One question was “What is ethylene glycol used for?” If I had not worked in my dad’s service station, I would not have known that it is used for automobile anti-freeze. And so I passed, barely.

I prayed about the physical. It turned out to be fairly routine.

You young men should not complain about schooling. Do not immerse yourself so much in the technical that you fail to learn things that are practical. Everything you can learn that is practical—in the house, in the kitchen cooking, in the yard—will be of benefit to you. Never complain about schooling. Study well, and attend always.

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.”<sup>17</sup>

“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.”<sup>18</sup>

We are to learn about “things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.”<sup>19</sup>

You can learn about fixing things and painting things and even sewing things and whatever else is practical. That is worth doing. If it is not of particular benefit to you, it will help you when you are serving other people.

## The truth will see you through

I ended up in the Orient, flying the same kind of bombers that my brother flew in England. My mission, as it turned out, was in teaching the gospel in Japan as a serviceman.

Perhaps the hardest challenge of war is living with uncertainties, not knowing how it will end or if we can go ahead with our lives.

I was issued a small serviceman's Book of Mormon that would fit into my pocket. I carried it everywhere; I read it; and it became part of me. Things that had been a question became certain to me.

The certainties of the gospel, the truth, once you understand it, will see you through these difficult times.

It was four years before we could return to our lives. But I had learned and had a sure testimony that God is our Father, that we are His children, and that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

Your generation is filled with uncertainties. A life of fun and games and expensive toys has come to an abrupt end. We move from a generation of ease and entertainment to a generation of hard work and responsibility. We do not know how long that will last.

The reality of life is now part of your priesthood responsibilities. It will not hurt you to want something and not have it. There is a maturing and disciplining that will be good for you. It will ensure that you can have a happy life and raise a happy family. These trials come with responsibility in the priesthood.

Some of you live in countries where most of what you eat and some of what you wear will depend on what can be produced by the family. It may be that what you can contribute will make the difference so that the rent is paid or the family is fed and housed. Learn to work and to support.

The very foundation of human life, of all society, is the family, established by the first commandment to Adam and Eve,

our first parents: "Multiply, and replenish the earth."<sup>20</sup>

Thereafter came the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."<sup>21</sup>

Be a responsible member of your family. Take care of your possessions—your clothing, your property. Do not be wasteful. Learn to be content.

It may seem that the world is in commotion; and it is! It may seem that there are wars and rumors of wars; and there are! It may seem that the future will hold trials and difficulties for you; and it will! However, fear is the opposite of faith. Do not be afraid! I do not fear.

At noon today four young men, all grandsons, came to visit us. Three of them had young ladies on their arms—one to talk about his coming wedding, two of them to announce their engagements, and the stray to talk about his mission call to Japan. We talked to them about the fact that one day each of you will take a pure and precious daughter of our Heavenly Father to the temple to be sealed for time and for all eternity. These young grandsons must know what Alma taught: that the gospel plan is "the great plan of happiness"<sup>22</sup> and that happiness is the end of our existence. Of this I bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:20.
3. See 1 Samuel 1:24–28.
4. See 1 Samuel 17.
5. See Mormon 1:2.
6. See Joseph Smith—History 1:7.
7. See Luke 2:41–52.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education* (address delivered to seminary and institute leaders at Aspen Grove, Utah, Aug. 8, 1938, pamphlet, 2004), 3, 9.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
11. 1 Corinthians 6:19.
12. See Moroni 7:17.
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
14. 2 Nephi 2:5.
15. Articles of Faith 1:4.
16. Mosiah 4:12.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 130:18.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 101:34.
20. Genesis 1:28; Abraham 4:28.
21. Exodus 20:12.
22. Alma 42:8.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### Responding to disasters

My brethren of the priesthood, in recent years we have witnessed many emergencies and natural disasters throughout the world. Among them have been hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, and a devastating tsunami.

The Church has responded to these and many other disasters in marvelous ways. Groups of members have quickly mobilized to go and help those in need. They all felt good knowing they were blessing the lives of others through their service.

Often, individuals who are not of our faith—members of other churches, relief organizations, governments, and the news media—comment on how quickly the Church is able to mobilize so many who are willing to help. They ask, “How do you do it?” The response to this question can be simply stated as “We are prepared, we have organization, we have empathy, and we have charity.” It usually just takes a few phone calls from presiding authorities to local leaders to mobilize hundreds and sometimes thousands of individuals to go to the rescue of their fellow brothers and sisters in distress.

### Current economic challenge

Tonight I wish to speak of another challenge to which we have opportunities to respond, and brethren, *this is your phone call*. This challenge is not one of natural causes; however, its effects are real and are being felt globally. And while we are

optimistic about the future, we continue—as we have for decades—to espouse the fundamental principle that we are our brother’s keeper.

Elder Robert D. Hales has recently observed: “The economic clouds that have long threatened the world are now fully upon us. The impact of this economic storm on our Heavenly Father’s children requires a gospel vision of welfare today more than ever before.”<sup>1</sup> The unemployment and financial wakes of this storm are splashing over every stake and every ward throughout the Church. I suspect they have been felt in some way by each of us, whether personally—through members of our families or extended families—or through someone we know.

### Quorums can make a difference

Brethren, there is no organization better able to respond to the challenges of humanity than the priesthood of the Most High God. We have the organization. Stake presidents, bishops, elders quorum presidents, and high priests group leaders—we now call upon you to mobilize our priesthood quorums in response to the employment and financial challenges facing our members. *Consider this your personal phone call*. Now is the time to rally around, lift up, and help the families in our quorums who may be in distress.

Opportunities abound, and yours is the opportunity and responsibility of marshaling the Lord’s resources. Among our quorum members, you will likely find those



who know of job openings and others who are skilled at writing résumés or assisting in interview preparation. Regardless of titles or skills, you will find a brotherhood committed to bear one another's burdens.

President Monson tells the story of a retired executive named Ed who lived the example of a quorum member. On one occasion President Monson was speaking with Ed and asked him, "'Ed, what are you doing in the Church?' He replied, 'I have the best assignment in the ward. My responsibility is to help men who are unemployed find permanent employment. This year I have helped 12 of my brethren who were out of work to obtain good jobs. I have never been happier in my entire life.'" President Monson continues: "Short in stature, 'Little Ed,' as we affectionately called him, stood tall that evening as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need. He restored human dignity. He opened doors for those who knew not how to do so themselves."<sup>2</sup>

There are many ways bishops and quorum members can help to relieve the suffering and anxiety of the unemployed. Phil's Auto of Centerville, Utah, is a testament of what priesthood leadership and a quorum can accomplish. Phil was a member of an elders quorum and worked as a mechanic at a local automobile repair shop. Unfortunately, the repair shop where Phil worked experienced economic trouble and had to let Phil go from his job. He was devastated by this turn of events.

On hearing about Phil's job loss, his bishop, Leon Olson, and his elders quorum presidency prayerfully considered ways they could help Phil get back on his feet. After all, he was a fellow quorum member, a brother, and he needed help. They concluded that Phil had the skills to run his own business. One of the quorum members offered that he had an old barn that perhaps could be used as a repair shop. Other quorum members could help gather needed tools and supplies to

equip the new shop. Almost everyone in the quorum could at least help clean the old barn.

They shared their ideas with Phil; then they shared their plan with the members of their quorum. The barn was cleaned and renovated, the tools gathered, and all was put in order. Phil's Auto was a success and eventually moved to better and more permanent quarters—all because his quorum brothers offered help in a time of crisis. Priesthood quorums can and must make a difference.

### Utilizing Church resources

Many wards and stakes have called employment specialists to provide bishops and quorum leaders with additional support. Do not hesitate to call upon them for help.

In many areas of the Church, we have established employment resource centers. The staff in these centers have been trained to assist you with your quorum, ward, and stake employment needs. Their close relationships with employers will be an asset with career development and employment.

The Church's Deseret Industries thrift stores offer employment and education opportunities to people of all backgrounds. Those with special needs are given the opportunity for rehabilitation, training, and job placement. Where available, Deseret Industries can be a valuable resource.

Bishops, the sisters have a role in this effort. Because of the economy, many mothers are finding it necessary to make budget and other living adjustments. Some are even finding it necessary to leave the home to find work. The Relief Society sisters, with their specially endowed, compassionate hearts, can help. They can help identify the needy. They can teach. They can babysit, console, comfort, and encourage. They can make a difference.

Now, let me say a few words to those of you who are currently unemployed. The

responsibility for finding employment or improving your employment rests with you. Continued guidance comes from the Lord through regular fasting and prayer. Your quorum leaders, bishops, specialists, and employment resource center staff will help in your efforts. We fear, however, that often priesthood leaders are unaware of your situation. *Speak up!* Let them know you are looking for work. And bishops and priesthood leaders, *rise up* and let the brotherhood of the priesthood engage themselves in the wonderful opportunity to truly be a quorum, a brotherhood, a brother's keeper.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, while a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

"I am satisfied, my brethren, that there is enough of expertise, of knowledge, of strength, of concern in every priesthood quorum to assist the troubled members of that quorum if these resources are properly administered.

"... It is the obligation of the priesthood quorum to set in motion those forces and facilities which will equip the needy member to provide on a continuing basis for himself and his family."<sup>3</sup>

### **"Go and bring in those people"**

In October 1856, during a general conference, President Young learned that two handcart companies, the Martin company and the Willie company, were traveling late in the season and would face harsh winter weather on the plains of the western United States. He stood at the pulpit as a prophet of God and declared:

"Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, . . . and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. . . . This community is to send for them and bring them in. . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess, it is to save the people. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains."<sup>4</sup>

As a result of President Young's call to action, wagons with teams of mules, men to drive them, and flour and other supplies were immediately sent to rescue the people stranded on the plains.

Brethren, this is your phone call. This is our phone call. May the Lord bless us all with the same sense of urgency to answer the call today to bring in our people from these economic challenges as He did in the case of the handcart companies is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Robert D. Hales, "A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action," in *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* (booklet, 2009), 1.
2. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 65; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 50.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 85–86.
4. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.

## **Elder Claudio R. M. Costa**

Elder Andersen, in behalf of the Seventies, I would like to say to you that we love you and we sustain you with our hearts and faith.

### **Priesthood responsibilities**

My dear brethren, it is a sacred privilege to be part of the royal army of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> I

am humbled as I stand before you, imagining you assembled in locations throughout the world.

In the worldwide leadership training meeting held on June 21, 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us that as priesthood holders we have a fourfold responsibility. He said: "Each of us has a fourfold responsibility. First, we have a responsibility to our families. Second, we have a responsibility to our employers. Third, we have a responsibility to the Lord's work. Fourth, we have a responsibility to ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

The four areas of responsibility are vitally important.

### **Family obligations**

President Hinckley said: "It is imperative that you not neglect your families. Nothing you have is more precious."<sup>3</sup>

It is our responsibility as fathers to lead our families in daily family prayer, daily study of the scriptures, and in family home evening. We must prioritize and preserve these opportunities to build and strengthen the spiritual underpinnings of our families. President Hinckley said: "Try not to let anything interfere. Consider it sacred."<sup>4</sup>

Concerning family home evening, he said, "Keep Monday night sacred for family home evening."<sup>5</sup>

Our children, just like their parents, have time demands on them in every aspect of their lives. They have activities involving church and school and friends. Many of our children are attending schools where they are the minority. Frequently the schools schedule events on Monday evenings—activities like sports, rehearsals or practices, choirs, and other events. We need to keep Monday nights free of other commitments so that we can have our family home evenings. No other activity is more important for our family.

It is during the family home evening and in other family settings that we prepare our children to receive the blessings

of the Lord. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve said: "Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation."<sup>6</sup>

Family home evening is a very special time for us to strengthen ourselves and each family member. It is important to include the whole family in assignments for family home evening. A child could share the Primary lesson that he or she had last Sunday. Family home evening strengthened the faith and testimony of my own family.

Daily study of the scriptures is another important family activity. I remember when my son was seven years old. He was taking a shower one night during a storm when we lost the power in our home. My wife called to him and told him to hurry to finish his shower and to then take a candle and come slowly downstairs for our family prayer. She warned him to be careful to not drop the candle on the carpet because it could start a fire and the house could burn down. Several minutes later he came down the stairs struggling to hold the candle in one hand, and with his other arm he was carrying his scriptures. His mother asked him why he was bringing his scriptures. His answer to her was, "Mom, if the house burns down, I must save my scriptures!" We knew that our efforts to help him to love the scriptures had been planted in his heart forever.

### **Obligations outside the home**

Regarding our responsibility to our employers, President Hinckley said: "You have an obligation. Be honest with your employer. Do not do Church work on his time."<sup>7</sup>

He also reminded us that our employment enables us to take care of our family as well as allowing us to be effective servants in the Church.



Priesthood holders have many responsibilities and assignments. We have opportunities to visit, interview, teach, and serve people. It is our sacred responsibility to edify Church members and to help strengthen their faith and testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ. We have opportunities to take care of the families whom we serve as home teachers and to teach members to provide for themselves, their families, and the poor and needy in the Lord's way. Priesthood holders have the responsibility to motivate the youth to prepare to serve honorable full-time missions and to be married in the temple.<sup>8</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "Priesthood holders need to provide watchcare over quorum members and their families through organized home teaching."<sup>9</sup>

We need to be concerned about each member of the Church for whom we have responsibility. Home teaching is one of our great responsibilities.

### Setting an example of service

As fathers, we also have the sacred responsibility to set a worthy example for our children to help them to become better parents and leaders in their own homes. Quoting Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve: "May we ask all priesthood leaders, especially you fathers, to help prepare your sons. Prepare them both spiritually and temporally, to look and to act as servants of the Lord."<sup>10</sup>

When we receive the priesthood, we make an eternal covenant to serve others.<sup>11</sup> As priesthood holders, we can be a powerful influence in the lives of others.

President Thomas S. Monson reminded us: "How fortunate and blessed we are to be holders of the priesthood of God. . . .

"... Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are

influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come.'"<sup>12</sup>

Our example will always speak loudly. During my years as a Church member, I have been influenced by the examples of many leaders and Church members. I remember a wonderful couple who were great examples to our family and to the entire ward. They were baptized in 1982. I was their bishop.

Celso and Irene lived quite far from the chapel. They walked 40 minutes each way to the church, and they never missed a meeting. They were always present with big smiles on their faces. It was their disposition to serve others. Celso and Irene have a son, Marcos, who was born mentally and physically handicapped. I remember well how they took such loving care of their son. In 1999 Celso had a cerebral brain hemorrhage that left his lower body paralyzed. Celso continued to come to church faithfully with his family. They were faithful in the payment of their tithing and paid generous fast offerings. Our son Moroni is now their bishop, and he shared with me that Celso and Irene continue to serve faithfully. Not only do they serve in their ward callings; they also serve faithfully as ordinance workers in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They serve every Friday from early morning until night. They always contribute so willingly of their time and resources in faithfully fulfilling their Church responsibilities.

President Monson counseled: "Most service given by priesthood holders is accomplished quietly, without fanfare. A friendly smile, a warm handclasp, a sincere testimony of truth can literally lift lives, change human nature, and save precious souls."<sup>13</sup>

That is the kind of quiet service rendered by Celso and Irene.

## Spiritual growth

As we consider the wise use of our time and resources to meet the needs of our families, our employment, and our Church callings, it is important to remember that every priesthood holder needs to grow spiritually. This is a responsibility we have to ourselves. And it is important to remember that we all have helpers.<sup>14</sup> The counsel from our prophets, seers, and revelators is the most precious help that we receive.

Our Savior extended this invitation to each and every one of us individually:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>15</sup>

When we do His work and His will, rather than our own will, we will realize that the yoke is easy and the burden is light. He will be with us always. He will reveal to us the exact portion that we need for success with our families, our career, and every responsibility that we have in His Church. He will help us to grow individually and as brethren in the priesthood.

I know that the Church is true. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the living prophet on the earth today. I know that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See “Behold! A Royal Army,” *Hymns*, no. 251.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 22.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 22.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
6. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 53; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 40.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
8. See First Presidency letter, Sept. 25, 1996, “Leadership Training Emphasis.”
9. Ezra Taft Benson, “Strengthen Thy Stakes,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, 5.
10. M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 55; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 43.
11. See M. Russell Ballard, “The Greater Priesthood: Giving a Lifetime of Service in the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, 72.
12. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 65–66; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 65–66; see also N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74.
13. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 62.
14. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
15. Matthew 11:29–30.

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us. He will be followed by President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, I have known for a few months the message I want to give to you today. During that time, I have searched for a story that would illustrate what I want to say. I looked for a story about farming. I looked for a story about animals. In honor of Elder Scott, I looked for a story about nuclear engineering, and in honor of President Monson, one about raising pigeons.

In the end, one story kept coming back to me—a story that has been imprinted on my memory for many, many years. It isn't about farming, animals, nuclear engineering, or pigeons. It is—as you might have guessed—about aviation. I call it “The Story of the Lightbulb.”

### **The story of the lightbulb, or losing sight of what matters most**

On a dark December night 36 years ago, a Lockheed 1011 jumbo jet crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing over 100 people. This terrible accident was one of the deadliest crashes in the history of the United States.

A curious thing about this accident is that all vital parts and systems of the airplane were functioning perfectly—the plane could have easily landed safely at its destination in Miami, only 20 miles away.

During the final approach, however, the crew noticed that one green light had failed to illuminate—a light that indicates whether or not the nose landing gear has extended successfully. The pilots discontinued the approach, set the aircraft into a circling holding pattern over the pitch-black Everglades, and turned their attention toward investigating the problem.

They became so preoccupied with their search that they failed to realize the plane was gradually descending closer and closer toward the dark swamp below. By the time

someone noticed what was happening, it was too late to avoid the disaster.

After the accident, investigators tried to determine the cause. The landing gear had indeed lowered properly. The plane was in perfect mechanical condition. Everything was working properly—all except one thing: a single burned-out lightbulb. That tiny bulb—worth about 20 cents—started the chain of events that ultimately led to the tragic death of over 100 people.

Of course, the malfunctioning lightbulb didn't cause the accident; it happened because the crew placed its focus on something that seemed to matter at the moment while losing sight of what mattered most.

### **Set your heart on things that matter most**

The tendency to focus on the insignificant at the expense of the profound happens not only to pilots but to everyone. We are all at risk. The driver who focuses on the road has a far greater chance of arriving at his destination accident free than the driver who focuses on sending text messages on his phone.

We know what matters most in life—the Light of Christ teaches this to everyone. We as faithful Latter-day Saints have the Holy Ghost as a “constant companion”<sup>1</sup> to teach us the things of eternal value. I imagine that any priesthood holder listening to my voice today, if asked to prepare a talk on the subject “what matters most,” could and would do an excellent job. Our weakness is in failing to align our actions with our conscience.

Pause for a moment and check where your own heart and thoughts are. Are you focused on the things that matter most? How you spend your quiet time may provide a valuable clue. Where do your thoughts go when the pressure of deadlines is gone? Are your thoughts and

heart focused on those short-lived, fleeting things that matter only in the moment or on things that matter most?

What grudges do you bear? What excuses do you cling to that keep you from being the kind of husband, father, son, and priesthood holder you know you should be? What are the things that distract you from your duties or hinder you from magnifying your calling more diligently?

### **Avoid becoming distracted**

Sometimes the things that distract us are not bad in and of themselves; often they even make us feel good.

It is possible to take even good things to excess. One example can be seen in a father or grandfather who spends hours upon hours searching for his ancestors or creating a blog while neglecting or avoiding quality or meaningful time with his own children and grandchildren. Another example could be a gardener who spends his days pulling weeds from the soil while ignoring the spiritual weeds that threaten to choke his soul.

Even some programs of the Church can become a distraction if we take them to extremes and allow them to dominate our time and our attention at the expense of things that matter most. We need balance in life.

When we truly love our Heavenly Father and His children, we demonstrate that love through our actions. We forgive one another and seek to do good, for “our old [self] is crucified with [Christ].”<sup>2</sup> We “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” and we keep ourselves “unspotted from the vices of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

My dear brethren of the priesthood, we live in the latter days. The gospel of Jesus Christ is restored to the earth. The keys of the priesthood of God are given again to man. We live in an era of anticipation and preparation, entrusted by God to prepare ourselves, our families, our world for the approaching dawn—the day when the Son

of God will “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”<sup>4</sup> and usher in His millennial reign.

We have been entrusted with the holy priesthood and charged with the responsibility, power, and right to act as agents of our Heavenly King.

These are the things that matter most. These are the things of eternal value that deserve our attention.

We cannot and we must not allow ourselves to get distracted from our sacred duty. We cannot and we must not lose focus on the things that matter most.

### **Nehemiah**

Nehemiah of the Old Testament is a great example of staying focused and committed to an important task. Nehemiah was an Israelite who lived in exile in Babylon and served as cupbearer to the king. One day the king asked Nehemiah why he seemed so sad. Nehemiah replied, “Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ [graves], lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?”<sup>5</sup>

When the king heard this, his heart was softened, and he gave Nehemiah the authority to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. However, not everyone was happy with this plan. In fact, several rulers who lived near Jerusalem grieved exceedingly “that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”<sup>6</sup> These men “took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.”<sup>7</sup>

Fearless, Nehemiah did not allow the opposition to distract him. Instead, he organized his resources and manpower and moved forward rebuilding the city, “for the people had a mind to work.”<sup>8</sup>

But as the walls of the city began to rise, opposition intensified. Nehemiah’s enemies threatened, conspired, and ridiculed. Their threats were very real, and they grew so intimidating that Nehemiah

confessed, “They all made us afraid.”<sup>9</sup> In spite of the danger and the ever-present threat of invasion, the work progressed. It was a time of stress, for every builder “had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.”<sup>10</sup>

As the work continued, Nehemiah’s enemies became more desperate. Four times they entreated him to leave the safety of the city and meet with them under the pretense of resolving the conflict, but Nehemiah knew that their intent was to do him harm. Each time they approached him, he responded with the same answer: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.”<sup>11</sup>

What a remarkable response! With that clear and unchanging purpose of heart and mind, with that great resolve, the walls of Jerusalem rose until they were rebuilt in an astonishing 52 days.<sup>12</sup>

Nehemiah refused to allow distractions to prevent him from doing what the Lord wanted him to do.

### **We will not come down**

I am encouraged and inspired by the many faithful priesthood holders today who are of similar heart and mind. Like Nehemiah, you love the Lord and seek to magnify the priesthood you bear. The Lord loves you and is mindful of the purity of your hearts and the steadfastness of your resolve. He blesses you for your fidelity, guides your path, and uses your gifts and talents in building His kingdom on this earth.

Nevertheless, not all are like Nehemiah. There is room for improvement.

I wonder, my dear brethren of the priesthood, what could be accomplished if we all, like the people of Nehemiah, “had a mind to work.” I wonder what could be accomplished if we “put away childish things”<sup>13</sup> and gave ourselves, heart and soul, to becoming worthy priesthood bearers and true representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think for a moment what could be accomplished in our personal lives, in our professional lives, in our families, in our wards and branches. Think of how the kingdom of God would progress throughout the earth. Imagine how the world itself could be transformed for good if every man who bears the priesthood of God were to gird up his loins and live up to his true potential, converted in the depth of his soul, a true and faithful priesthood man, committed to building the kingdom of God.

It is easy to become distracted—to become focused on one burned-out light-bulb or the impolite acts of unkind people, whatever their motive may be. But think of the power we would have as individuals and as a body of the priesthood if, in response to every temptation to lose focus or lower our standards—the standards of God—we responded, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down.”

We live in times of great challenges and great opportunities. The Lord is seeking men like Nehemiah—faithful brethren who fulfill the oath and covenant of the priesthood. He seeks to enlist unfaltering souls who diligently go about the work of building the kingdom of God—those who, when faced with opposition and temptation, say in their hearts, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down.”

When faced with trial and suffering, they respond, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down.”

When faced with ridicule and reproach, they proclaim, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down.”

Our Heavenly Father seeks those who refuse to allow the trivial to hinder them in their pursuit of the eternal. He seeks those who will not allow the attraction of ease or the traps of the adversary to distract them from the work He has given them to perform. He seeks those whose actions conform to their words—those who say with conviction, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down.”



## A great work to do

I bear solemn testimony that God lives and is mindful of each one of us. He will stretch forth His hand and uphold those who rise up and bear the priesthood with honor, for in these latter days He has a great work for us to do.

This gospel does not come from man. The doctrine of the Church is not someone's best guess as to the meaning of ancient scripture. It is the truth of heaven revealed by God Himself. I testify that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw. He truly looked into the heavens and communed with God the Father and the Son and with angels.

I bear witness that Heavenly Father speaks to those who seek Him in spirit and in truth. I have witnessed with my own eyes and joyfully testify that in our day, God speaks through His prophet, seer, and revelator, even Thomas S. Monson.

My dear brethren, like Nehemiah, we have a great work to do. We stand overlooking the horizon of our age. It is my fervent prayer that in spite of temptations, we will

never lower our standards; that in spite of distractions, wherever they may come from, we will not lose focus on what matters most; that we will stand resolute and together, shoulder to shoulder, as we valiantly bear the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that we may be worthy of the holy priesthood of Almighty God and, to a man, lift our heads and with unwavering voice proclaim to the world, "We are doing a great work, and we will not come down." In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
2. Romans 6:6.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:27.
4. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
5. Nehemiah 2:3.
6. Nehemiah 2:10.
7. Nehemiah 4:1.
8. Nehemiah 4:6.
9. Nehemiah 6:9.
10. Nehemiah 4:18.
11. Nehemiah 6:3.
12. See Nehemiah 6:15.
13. 1 Corinthians 13:11.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### "Man down!"

I am grateful for the honor and the blessing of speaking to the priesthood of God. My purpose tonight is to help you to be brave and bold in your priesthood service.

You will need bravery and you will need boldness because you are enlisted in the Lord's army in the last dispensation. This is not a time of peace. That has been so since Satan arrayed his forces against our Heavenly Father's plan in the premortal existence. We don't know the details of the combat then. But we know one result. Satan and his followers were cast down into the earth. And since the creation of Adam and Eve, the conflict has continued.

We have seen it intensify. And the scriptures suggest that the war will become more violent and the spiritual casualties on the Lord's side will mount.

Almost all of us have seen a battlefield portrayed in a film or read the description in a story. Over the din of explosions and the shouts of soldiers, there comes a cry, "Man down!"

When that cry sounds, faithful fellow soldiers will move toward the sound. Another soldier or a medic will ignore danger and move to the injured comrade. And the man down will know that help will come. Whatever the risk, someone will run low or crawl to get there in time to protect and give aid. That is true in every

band of men joined in a difficult and dangerous mission which they are determined to fulfill at any sacrifice. The histories of such groups are full of stories of those loyal men who were determined that no man would be left behind.

Here is one instance from an official account.<sup>1</sup> During fighting in Somalia in October of 1993, two United States Army Rangers in a helicopter during the fire-fight learned that two other helicopters near them had fallen to the earth. The two rangers, in their relative safety aloft, learned by radio that no ground forces were available to rescue one of the downed aircrews. Growing numbers of the enemy were closing in on the crash site.

The two men watching from above volunteered to go down to the ground (the words they used on the radio were to “be inserted”) to protect their critically wounded comrades. Their request was denied because the situation was so dangerous. They asked a second time. Permission was again denied. Only after their third request were they put down on the ground.

Armed only with their personal weapons, they fought their way to the crashed helicopter and the injured fliers. They moved through intense small arms fire as enemies converged on the crash site. They pulled the wounded from the wreckage. They put themselves in a perimeter around the wounded, placing themselves in the most dangerous positions. They protected their comrades until their ammunition was depleted and they were fatally wounded. Their bravery and their sacrifice saved the life of a pilot who would have been lost.

They were each awarded posthumously the Medal of Honor, their nation’s highest recognition for bravery in the face of an armed enemy. The citation reads that what they did was “above and beyond the call of duty.”

But I wonder if they saw it that way as they moved to the downed airmen. Out of loyalty they felt a duty to stand by their

fellow soldiers, whatever the cost. The courage to act and their selfless service came from feeling that they were responsible for the lives, the happiness, and the safety of comrades.

### **Care for the spiritually wounded**

Such a feeling of responsibility for others is at the heart of faithful priesthood service. Our comrades are being wounded in the spiritual conflict around us. So are the people we are called to serve and protect from harm. Spiritual wounds are not easily visible, except with inspired eyes. But bishops, branch presidents, and mission presidents sitting before fellow disciples of the Savior can see the wounded and the wounds.

It has happened for years and across the earth. I remember as a bishop looking out at the face and the posture of a young man of the priesthood and having the thought come to my mind so clearly that it seemed audible: “I need to see him—and soon. Something is happening. He needs help.”

I would never put off such an impression, because I had learned that the wounds of sin are often not felt at first by the one being hurt. Satan seems sometimes to inject something to deaden the spiritual pain while inflicting the wound. Unless something happens soon to begin repentance, the wound can worsen and widen.

Consequently, as a priesthood holder responsible for the spiritual survival of some of Heavenly Father’s children, you will then move to help without waiting for a cry, “Man down!” Even a best friend or other leaders or parents may not see what you have seen.

You may have been the only one to sense by inspiration the warning cry. The others may feel, as you will be tempted to think, “Maybe the trouble I thought I saw is just my imagination. What right do I have to judge another? It’s not my responsibility. I’ll leave it alone until he asks for help.”

Only an authorized judge in Israel is given the power and the responsibility to verify that there is a serious wound, to explore it, and then, under inspiration from God, to prescribe the necessary treatment for healing to begin. Yet you are under covenant to go to a spiritually wounded child of God. You are responsible to be brave enough and bold enough not to turn away.

I need to explain, as best I can, at least two things. First, why do you have a responsibility to move to help your wounded friend? And, second, how do you meet that responsibility?

### **The responsibility to help others**

First, you are under covenant, as has been made clear to you, that when you accepted the trust from God to receive the priesthood, you accepted a responsibility for whatever you might do or fail to do for the salvation of others, however difficult and dangerous that might appear to be for you.

There are countless examples of priesthood holders who shouldered that grave responsibility as you and I must. This is how Jacob in the Book of Mormon described his sacred trust when he moved in difficult circumstances to give aid: “Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, you might object that Jacob was a prophet and you are not. But your office, whatever it is in the priesthood, brings with it an obligation to “lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees”<sup>3</sup> of those around you. You are the Lord’s servant covenanted to do for others, as best you can, what He would do.

Your great opportunity and your responsibility are described in Ecclesiastes:

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

“For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”<sup>4</sup>

From that, you will understand the true and sobering words from Joseph Smith: “None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.”<sup>5</sup> As Jacob believed, the woe of any fallen man or woman he could have helped and did not would become his own sorrow. Your happiness and that of those you are called to serve as a priesthood holder are bound together.

### **How best to help others**

Now we come to the question of how best to help those you are called to serve and rescue. That will depend on your capacities and on the nature of your priesthood relationship to the person who is in spiritual peril. Let me give three cases which may be your opportunity at times in your priesthood service.

#### *Serving as a young home teacher*

Let’s start when you are an inexperienced junior companion, a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood assigned with a seasoned companion to visit a young family. Before preparing for the visit, you will pray for strength and inspiration to see their needs and know what help you could give. If you can, you will have that prayer with your companion, naming those you will visit. As you pray, your heart will be drawn out to them personally and to God. You and your companion will agree on what you hope to accomplish. You will work out a plan for what you will do.

Whatever the plan, you will watch and listen with great intensity and humility during the visit. You are young and inexperienced. But the Lord knows their spiritual state and their needs perfectly. He loves them. And because you know He sends you to act for Him, you can



have faith that you can sense their needs and what you can do to meet your charge to help. It will come as you visit face-to-face in their home. That is why you have this priesthood charge in the Doctrine and Covenants: "Visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties."<sup>6</sup>

And then you have an added charge which takes even greater discernment:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."<sup>7</sup>

You and your companion will rarely receive inspiration to know the details of the degree to which they are meeting that standard. But I can promise you from experience that you will be given the gift to know what is well with them. And from that you will be able to encourage them. There is another promise I can make: you and your companion will be inspired to know what changes they could make to begin the spiritual healing they need. The words of what you are charged to have happen in their lives will almost certainly contain some of the most important changes the Lord would have them make.

If your companion feels an impression to urge change, watch what he does. You will likely be surprised at the way the Spirit guides him to speak. There will be the sound of love in his voice. He will find a way to tie the needed change with a blessing that will follow. If it is the father or mother who needs to make a change, he may show how it would lead to happiness for the children. He will describe the change as a move away from unhappiness to a better and safer place.

Your contribution during the visit may seem to you small, but it can be more

powerful than you may think possible. You will show by your face and manner that you care for the people. They will see that your love for them and the Lord makes you unafraid. And you will be bold enough to bear your testimony to truth. Your humble, simple, and perhaps brief testimony may touch the heart of a person more easily than that of your more experienced companion. I have seen it happen.

Whatever part you play in that priesthood visit, your desire to go to the people for the Lord to help them will bring at least two blessings. First, you will feel the love of God for the people you visit. And, second, you will feel the Savior's gratitude for your desire to give the help the Savior knew they needed.

He sent you to them because He trusted that you would go feeling responsible to urge them toward Him and toward happiness.

### *Serving fellow quorum members*

As you grow a little older, there is another opportunity which will come to you in priesthood service. You will come to know your fellow quorum members well. You may have played basketball or football or shared some youth activities and service projects. With some you will have become close friends.

You will have come to recognize when they are happy and when they are sad. Neither of you may be in a position of authority in the quorum. But you will feel responsible for your fellow member in the priesthood. He may confide in you that he is beginning to break a commandment which you know will do him spiritual harm. He may ask for advice because he trusts you.

I can tell you from experience that if you succeed in influencing him away from a dangerous path, you will never forget the joy which came from being his true friend. If you do not succeed, I promise that when his grief and sadness come, as they will,

you will feel his pain as if it were your own. Yet if you tried to help, you will still be his friend. And, in fact, for years he may talk with you about what good things there might have been and how grateful he is that you cared enough to try. You will comfort him then and invite him again, as you did in your youth, to come back to the happiness which the Atonement still makes possible for him.

### *Serving as a father*

Now, later in your life you will be a father—a priesthood father. What you have learned in your priesthood service as you helped others away from sadness and toward happiness will give you the power you will need and want. Years of being responsible for the souls of men will prepare you for helping and protecting your family, whom you will love more than you can imagine in your youth. You will know how to lead them with priesthood power to safety.

My prayer is that you will have joy in your priesthood service throughout your life and forever. I pray that you will develop the bravery and love for Heavenly Father's children that led the sons of Mosiah to plead for the chance to face death and danger to take the gospel to a hardened people. Their desire and their bravery came from feeling responsible for the eternal happiness of strangers in danger of eternal misery.<sup>8</sup>

May we have a part of the desire which Jehovah had, in the world before this one, when He asked to come down from the realms of glory to serve us and give His life for us. He asked His Father, "Send me."<sup>9</sup>

I testify that you were called of God and you are sent to serve His children. He

wants that no one be left behind. President Monson holds the keys of the priesthood in all the earth. God will give you inspiration and strength to meet your charge to help His children find their way to the happiness made possible by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I so testify to you in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See *The U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual* (2004), 28–29.
2. Jacob 2:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.
5. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:295.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:47.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.
8. See Mosiah 28:1–8.
9. See Abraham 3:27.

### **President Monson**

My dear brethren, this has been a memorable priesthood meeting. Jot down what you've heard this evening. It will help you to better honor the priesthood you hold.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho for the beautiful music they have provided and also thank the brethren who have addressed us this evening.

It will now be my pleasure to speak to you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren of the priesthood assembled here in this full Conference Center and in locations throughout the world, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address you. I endorse those messages which have already been presented and express to each of you my sincere love, as well as my appreciation for your faith and your devotion.

### **Bearing the priesthood worthily**

Brethren, our responsibilities as bearers of the priesthood are most significant, as outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants: “The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church.”<sup>1</sup> And further, “The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1958 Elder Harold B. Lee, who later served as the 11th President of the Church, described the priesthood as “the Lord’s . . . troops against the forces of evil.”<sup>3</sup>

President John Taylor stated that “the power manifested by the priesthood is simply the power of God.”<sup>4</sup>

These stirring declarations from prophets of God help us to understand that each man and each boy who holds the priesthood of God must be worthy of that great privilege and responsibility. Each must strive to learn his duty and then to do it to the best of his ability. As we do so, we provide the means by which our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, can accomplish Their work here upon the earth. It is we who are Their representatives here.

In the world today we face difficulties and challenges, some of which can

seem truly daunting. However, with God on our side we cannot fail. As we bear His holy priesthood worthily, we will be victorious.

### **Be your best self**

Now to you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, may I say that I sincerely hope each of you is aware of the significance of your priesthood ordination. Yours is a vital role in the life of every member of your ward as you participate in the administration and passing of the sacrament each Sunday.

I had the privilege to serve as the secretary of my deacons quorum. I recall the many assignments we members of that quorum had the opportunity to fill. Passing the sacred sacrament, collecting the monthly fast offerings, and looking after one another come readily to mind. The most frightening one, however, happened at the leadership session of our ward conference. The member of our stake presidency who was presiding called on a number of the ward officers to speak. They did so. Then, without the slightest warning, he stood and said, “We will now call on one of our younger ward officers, Thomas S. Monson, secretary of the deacons quorum, to give us an accounting of his service and to bear his testimony.” I don’t remember a single thing I said, but I have never forgotten the experience or the lesson that it taught me. It was the Apostle Peter who said, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”<sup>5</sup>

In an earlier generation, the Lord gave this promise to holders of the priesthood: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”<sup>6</sup>

This is not a time for fear, brethren, but rather a time for faith—a time for each of us who holds the priesthood to be his best self.

Although our journey through mortality will at times place us in harm's way, may I offer you tonight three suggestions which, when observed and followed, will lead us to safety. They are:

1. Study diligently.
2. Pray fervently.
3. Live righteously.

These suggestions are not new; they have been taught and repeated again and again. If we incorporate them into our lives, however, we will have the strength to withstand the adversary. Should we ignore them, we will be opening the door for Satan to have influence and power over us.

### **Study diligently**

First, study diligently. Every holder of the priesthood should participate in daily scripture study. Crash courses are not nearly so effective as the day-to-day reading and application of the scriptures in our lives. Become acquainted with the lessons the scriptures teach. Learn the background and setting of the Master's parables and the prophets' admonitions. Study them as though they were speaking to you, for such is the truth.

The prophet Lehi and his son Nephi were each shown in vision the importance of obtaining and then holding fast to the word of God. Concerning the rod of iron shown him, Nephi said this to his disbelieving brothers, Laman and Lemuel:

"And I said unto them that [the rod] was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.

"Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord;

yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things."<sup>7</sup>

I promise you, whether you hold the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, that if you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased.

### **Pray fervently**

Second, pray fervently. With God, all things are possible. Men of the Aaronic Priesthood, men of the Melchizedek Priesthood, remember the prayer of the Prophet Joseph, offered in that grove called sacred. Look around you and see the result of that answered prayer.

Adam prayed; Jesus prayed. We know the outcome of their prayers. He who notes the fall of a sparrow surely hears the pleadings of our hearts. Remember the promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."<sup>8</sup>

To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. Prayer is the means by which we approach our Father in Heaven, who loves us. Speak to Him in prayer and then listen for the answer. Miracles are wrought through prayer.

Sister Daisy Ogando lives in New York City, home to more than eight million people. Some years ago Sister Ogando met with the missionaries and was taught the gospel. Gradually, she and the missionaries lost contact. Time passed. Then, in 2007, the principles of the gospel she had been taught by the missionaries stirred within her heart.

One day while getting into a taxi, Daisy saw the missionaries at a distance, but she was unable to make contact with them

before they disappeared from view. She prayed fervently to our Heavenly Father and promised Him that if He would somehow direct the missionaries to her once again, she would open her door to them. She returned home that day with faith in her heart that God would hear and answer her prayer.

In the meantime, two young missionaries who had been sincerely praying and working to find people to teach were one day examining the tracting records of missionaries who had previously served in their area. As they did so, they came across the name of Daisy Ogando. When they approached her apartment the very afternoon that Sister Ogando offered that simple but fervent prayer, she opened the door and said those words that are music to every missionary who has ever heard them: "Elders, come in. I've been waiting for you!"

Two fervent prayers were answered, contact was reestablished, missionary lessons were taught, and arrangements were made for Daisy and her son Eddy to be baptized.

Remember to pray fervently.

### **Live righteously**

My final suggestion, my brethren: live righteously. Isaiah, that great prophet of the Old Testament, gave this stirring charge to holders of the priesthood: "Touch no unclean thing; . . . be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."<sup>9</sup> That's about as straight as it could be given.

Holders of the priesthood may not necessarily be eloquent in their speech. They may not hold advanced degrees in difficult fields of study. They may very well be men of humble means. But God is no respecter of persons, and He will sustain His servants in righteousness as they avoid the evils of our day and live lives of virtue and purity. May I illustrate.

Some 900 miles north of Salt Lake City is the beautiful city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, home of the famous Calgary

Stampede, one of Canada's largest annual events and the world's largest outdoor rodeo. The 10-day event features a rodeo competition, exhibits, agricultural competitions, and chuck wagon races. The Stampede Parade, which occurs on opening day, is one of the festival's oldest and largest traditions. The parade follows a nearly three-mile route in downtown Calgary, with attendance reaching 350,000 spectators, many dressed in western attire.

Several years ago, a marching band from a large high school in Utah had auditioned for and had received one of the coveted entries to march in the Calgary Stampede Parade. Months of fund-raising, early-morning practices up and down the streets, and other preparations were undertaken in order for the band to travel to Calgary and participate in the parade, where one band would be selected to receive the first-place honor.

Finally the day for departure arrived, with the eager students and their leaders boarding the buses and heading north for the long journey to Calgary.

While en route, the caravan stopped in Cardston, Alberta, Canada, where the group remained for an overnight stay. The local Relief Society sisters there prepared sack lunches for the band members to enjoy before departing again. Brad, one of the band members, who was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, was not hungry and decided to keep his lunch until later.

Brad liked to sit in the back of the bus. As he took his usual seat there in preparation for the remainder of the journey to Calgary, he tossed his sack lunch on the shelf behind the last row of seats. There the lunch sat by the rear window as the July afternoon sun shone through. Unfortunately, the sack lunch contained an egg salad sandwich. For those of you who don't understand the significance of this, may I just say that egg salad must be refrigerated. If it is not, and if it is subjected to high heat such as that which would be produced by the sun beating through a bus window on a sunny day, it becomes a rather efficient



incubator for various strains of bacteria that can result in what may commonly be referred to as food poisoning.

Sometime before arriving in Calgary, Brad grew hungry. Remembering the sack lunch, he gulped down the egg salad sandwich. As the buses arrived in Calgary and drove around the city, the members of the band grew excited—all except for Brad. Unfortunately, all that grew within him were severe stomach pains and other discomforts associated with food poisoning. You know what they are.

Upon arriving at their destination, the band members exited the bus. Brad, however, did not. Although he knew his fellow band members were counting on him to play his drum in the parade the following morning, Brad was doubled over in pain and was too sick to leave the bus. Providentially for him, two of his friends, Steve and Mike, who had recently graduated from high school and who had also recently been ordained to the office of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, found that Brad was missing and decided to look for him.

Finding Brad in the rear of the bus and learning what the problem was, Steve and Mike felt helpless. Finally it occurred to them that they were elders and held the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to bless the sick. Despite their total lack of experience in giving a priesthood blessing, these two new elders had faith in the power they held. They laid their hands on Brad's head and, invoking the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ uttered the simple words to bless Brad to be made well.

From that moment, Brad's symptoms were completely gone. The next morning he took his place with the rest of the band members and proudly marched down the streets of Calgary. The band received first-place honors and the coveted blue ribbon. Far more important, however, was that two young, inexperienced but worthy

priesthood holders had answered the call to represent the Lord in serving their fellowman. When it was necessary for them to exercise their priesthood in behalf of one who was desperately in need of their help, they were able to respond because they lived their lives righteously.

### Strength to meet challenges

Brethren, are we prepared for our journey through life? The pathway can at times be difficult. Chart your course, be cautious, and determine to study diligently, pray fervently, and live righteously.

Let us never despair, for the work in which we are engaged is the work of the Lord. It has been said, "The Lord shapes the back to bear the burden placed upon it."

The strength which we earnestly seek in order to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when, with fortitude and resolute courage, we stand and declare with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>10</sup> To this divine truth I testify and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:18.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:20.
3. Harold B. Lee, "Priesthood" (address to seminary and institute personnel, Brigham Young University, July 17, 1958), 1.
4. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 130.
5. 1 Peter 3:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
7. 1 Nephi 15:24–25.
8. James 1:5.
9. Isaiah 52:11.
10. Joshua 24:15.

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The choir sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

Elder Shirley D. Christensen offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, April 5, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists. The choir sang “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” and will now favor us with “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Daryl H. Garn of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Elder Daryl H. Garn offered the invocation.

The choir sang “You Can Make the Pathway Bright.”

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### President Monson

The choir has sung “You Can Make the Pathway Bright.”

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Neil L. Andersen, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Today is the day the Christian world traditionally calls Palm Sunday. You will remember that it was on that Sunday nearly 2,000 years ago that Jesus Christ entered the city of Jerusalem during the final week of His mortal life.<sup>1</sup> In fulfillment of Zechariah’s ancient prophecy,<sup>2</sup> He rode in on a donkey, and as He did so, a great multitude came out to greet the Master and carpeted the path before Him with palm leaves, flowering branches, and even their own garments. As He approached, they cried, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the

name of the Lord”<sup>3</sup> and “Hosanna to the Son of David.”<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the disciples thought this was a turning point—the moment when the Jewish world would finally recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. But the Savior understood that many of the shouts of praise and acclamation would be temporary. He knew that soon He would ascend to the Mount of Olives and there, alone in Gethsemane, take upon Himself the sins of the world.

## The gospel of Jesus Christ

It is fitting that during the week from Palm Sunday to Easter morning we turn our thoughts to Jesus Christ, the source of light, life, and love. The multitudes in Jerusalem may have seen Him as a great king who would give them freedom from political oppression. But in reality He gave much more than that. He gave us His gospel, a pearl beyond price, the grand key of knowledge that, once understood and applied, unlocks a life of happiness, peace, and fulfillment.

The gospel is the good news of Christ. It is the revelation that the Son of God came to earth, lived a perfect life, atoned for our sins, and conquered death. It is the path of salvation, the way of hope and joy, and the assurance that God has a plan of redemption and happiness for His children.

The gospel is the way of discipleship. As we walk in that way, we can experience confidence and joy—even during times of peril, sorrow, and uncertainty.

## The way of the world

We live in a time when many worry about their livelihood. They are concerned about the future and doubt their ability to resolve the challenges that confront them. Many have experienced personal misfortune and sadness. They hunger for meaning and purpose in life.

Because there is such great interest in these issues, the world is not bashful in offering numerous new answers to every problem we face. People run from one new idea to the next, hoping to find something that will answer the burning questions of their souls. They attend seminars and buy books, CDs, and other products. They get caught up in the excitement of looking for something new. But inevitably, the flame of each new theory fades, only to be replaced by another “new and improved” solution

that promises to do what the others before could not.

It’s not that these worldly options don’t contain elements of truth—many of them do. Nevertheless, they all fall short of the lasting change we seek in our lives. After the excitement wears off, the hollowness remains as we look for the next new idea to unlock the secrets of happiness.

In contrast, the gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to all of our problems. The gospel is not a secret. It is not complicated or hidden. It can unlock the door to true happiness. It is not someone’s theory or proposition. It does not come from man at all. It springs from the pure and everlasting waters of the Creator of the universe, who knows truths we cannot even begin to comprehend. And with that knowledge, He has given us the gospel—a divine gift, the ultimate formula for happiness and success.

## How do we become disciples of Jesus Christ?

When we hear the transcendent truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, hope and faith begin to blossom inside of us.<sup>5</sup> The more we fill our hearts and minds with the message of the risen Christ, the greater our desire is to follow Him and live His teachings. This, in turn, causes our faith to grow and allows the Light of Christ to illuminate our hearts. As it does, we recognize the imperfections in our lives, and we desire to be cleansed of the depressing burdens of sin. We yearn for freedom from guilt, and this inspires us to repent.

Faith and repentance lead to the purifying waters of baptism, where we covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and walk in His footsteps.

To uphold us in the desire to lead a purified and holy life, we are endowed with the baptism of fire—the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, a heavenly Comforter who accompanies and guides us as we walk in the path of righteousness.



The more we are filled with the Spirit of God, the more we extend ourselves to others. We become peacemakers in our homes and families, we help our fellowmen everywhere, and we reach out in merciful acts of kindness, forgiveness, grace, and long-suffering patience.

These are the first steps along the true way of life and fulfillment. This is the peaceable way of the follower of Jesus Christ.

### **The path of patience**

Nevertheless, it is not a quick fix or an overnight cure.

A friend of mine recently wrote to me, confiding that he was having a difficult time keeping his testimony strong and vibrant. He asked for counsel.

I wrote back to him and lovingly suggested a few specific things he could do that would align his life more closely with the teachings of the restored gospel. To my surprise, I heard back from him only a week later. The essence of his letter was this: “I tried what you suggested. It didn’t work. What else have you got?”

Brothers and sisters, we have to stay with it. We don’t acquire eternal life in a sprint—this is a race of endurance. We have to apply and reapply the divine gospel principles. Day after day we need to make them part of our normal life.

Too often we approach the gospel like a farmer who places a seed in the ground in the morning and expects corn on the cob by the afternoon. When Alma compared the word of God to a seed, he explained that the seed grows into a fruit-bearing tree gradually, as a result of our “faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering.”<sup>6</sup> It’s true that some blessings come right away: soon after we plant the seed in our hearts, it begins to swell and sprout and grow, and by this we know that the seed is good. From the very moment we set foot upon the pathway of disci-

ple-ship, seen and unseen blessings from God begin to attend us.

But we cannot receive the fulness of those blessings if we “neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment.”<sup>7</sup>

Knowing that the seed is good is not enough. We must “nourish it with great care, that it may get root.”<sup>8</sup> Only then can we partake of the fruit that is “sweet above all that is sweet, and . . . pure above all that is pure” and “feast upon this fruit even until [we] are filled, that [we] hunger not, neither shall [we] thirst.”<sup>9</sup>

Discipleship is a journey. We need the refining lessons of the journey to craft our character and purify our hearts. By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God’s will rather than ours.

It is not enough merely to speak of Jesus Christ or proclaim that we are His disciples. It is not enough to surround ourselves with symbols of our religion. Discipleship is not a spectator sport. We cannot expect to experience the blessings of faith by standing inactive on the sidelines any more than we can experience the benefits of health by sitting on a sofa watching sporting events on television and giving advice to the athletes. And yet for some, “spectator discipleship” is a preferred if not a primary way of worshipping.

Ours is not a secondhand religion. We cannot receive the blessings of the gospel merely by observing the good that others do. We need to get off the sidelines and practice what we preach.

### **The way is open to all**

The first step on the path of discipleship begins, luckily enough, in the exact place where we stand! We do not have to prequalify to take that first step. It doesn’t matter if we are rich or poor. There is no requirement to be educated, eloquent, or

intellectual. We do not have to be perfect or well-spoken or even well-mannered.

You and I can walk in the path of discipleship today. Let us be humble; let us pray to our Father in Heaven with all our heart and express our desire to draw close to Him and learn of Him.

Have faith. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened.<sup>10</sup> Serve the Lord by serving others. Become an active participant in your ward or branch. Strengthen your family by committing to live the principles of the gospel. Be of one heart and of one mind in your marriage and in your family.

Now is the time to adjust your lives to be able to have a temple recommend and use it. Now is the time to have meaningful family home evenings, to read the word of God, and to speak to our Heavenly Father in earnest prayer. Now is the time to fill our hearts with gratitude for the Restoration of His Church, for living prophets, the Book of Mormon, and the priesthood power that blesses our lives. Now is the time to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, become His disciples, and walk in His way.

There are some who believe that because they have made mistakes, they can no longer fully partake of the blessings of the gospel. How little they understand the purposes of the Lord. One of the great blessings of living the gospel is that it refines us and helps us learn from our mistakes. We “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”<sup>11</sup> yet the Atonement of Jesus Christ has the power to make us whole when we repent.

Our beloved friend Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught us this principle with clarity when he said:

“Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will.

“We [might] see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our Heavenly Father sees us in terms of forever. . . .

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities.”<sup>12</sup>

To those who have left the path of discipleship for whatever reason, I invite you to start where you are and come to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Walk again in the way of the Lord. I testify that the Lord will bless your life, endow you with knowledge and joy beyond comprehension, and distill upon you the supernal gifts of the Spirit. It is always the right time to walk in His way. It is never too late.

To those who feel inadequate because they have not been members of the Church all their lives, to those who feel that they can never make up for the time they have lost, I testify that the Lord needs your specific abilities, talents, and skills. The Church needs you; we need you. It is always the right time to walk in His way. It is never too late.

### **The blessings of discipleship**

Let us remember on this Palm Sunday, during this Easter season, and always that the restored gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has the power to fill any emptiness, heal any wound, and bridge any vale of sorrow. It is the way of hope, faith, and trust in the Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is taught in its fulness in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church is led by a living prophet, authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ to provide direction and guidance to help us face the challenges of our day, as serious as they may be.

I bear my solemn witness that Jesus the Christ lives. He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He is the promised Messiah. He lived a perfect life and atoned for our sins. He will ever be at our side. He will fight our battles. He is our hope; He is our salvation; He is the way. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthew 21:6–11.
2. See Zechariah 9:9.
3. Luke 19:38.
4. Matthew 21:9.
5. See Romans 10:17.
6. Alma 32:43.
7. Alma 32:38.
8. Alma 32:37.
9. Alma 32:42.
10. See Matthew 7:7.
11. Romans 3:23.
12. Joseph B. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 29–30.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

## Calling to apostleship

My dear brothers and sisters across the world, my knees are weak and my emotions close to the surface. I express my love for you and profoundly thank you for your sustaining vote. In so many dimensions, I feel inadequate and humbled.

I take solace that in one qualification for the holy apostleship where there can be no latitude extended, the Lord has deeply blessed me. I do know with perfect and certain clarity through the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Beloved Son of God.

There is no man with more love than President Thomas S. Monson. His warmth is as the sunshine at midday. Yet, as he extended to me this sacred call, you can imagine the overwhelming soberness I felt as the eyes of the prophet of God peered deeply into the chambers of my soul. Happily, you can *also* imagine the love I felt from the Lord and from His prophet as President Monson wrapped his long and loving arms around me. I love you, President Monson.

To those who know me, if ever I have been less than I should have been in your presence, I ask for your forgiveness and patience. I so very much need your faith and prayers in my behalf.

I know that I am not what I must become. I pray that I might be willing and moldable to the Lord's tutoring and correction. I take comfort from the words of

President Monson last night in the priesthood session that the Lord will shape the back to fit the burden placed upon it.

Just after my call as a General Authority 16 years ago, in a stake conference where I accompanied President Boyd K. Packer, he said something I have not forgotten. As he addressed the congregation, he said, "I know who I am." Then after a pause, he added, "I am a nobody." He then turned to me, sitting on the stand behind him, and said, "And, Brother Andersen, you are a nobody too." Then he added these words: "If you ever forget it, the Lord will remind you of it instantly, and it won't be pleasant."

I express deep gratitude for you, the faithful members of the Church. As a young missionary in France, I felt my testimony blossom as I witnessed members giving their full devotion for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During the past 20 years, we have lived 10 years outside of the United States on Church assignments. In lands and languages different from my own, I have seen the power of God at work in your lives. How wonderful you are—the great family of believers in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Gratitude for family and leaders

The Lord has blessed me in ways I could never repay. He allowed me to marry one of His angels here on earth.

My wife, Kathy, is my light and example, a precious daughter of God, full of purity and innocence. I would be nothing without her. For much of my life, I have been trying to become what she thought I already was.

Twenty years ago when our four children were young, our family was called to serve a mission in France. With this and other calls that followed, they found themselves moving from city to city, continent to continent during those years that plead for stability. The Lord has now richly blessed them with wonderful companions and choice children of their own. I want to thank them for their goodness and for their sacrifices in my behalf. I am also grateful for my faithful parents—my mother is here today—and for all those who have done so much for me throughout my life.

I express my deep respect and love for my Brethren of the Seventy. I love them as I love my own brother. Our bond and friendship is not just of this world but will move with us through the veil.

For 16 years the members of the First Presidency and the Twelve have been my examples and teachers. I have learned from their integrity and righteousness. In these many years, I have never observed any unbridled anger, any desire for private or material gain. Never have I seen any personal positioning for influence or power.

Rather, I have seen their loyalty and care for their wives and children. I have experienced their love and sure witness of our Heavenly Father and His Son. I have watched them untiringly seek first to build up the kingdom of God. I have seen the power of God rest upon them and magnify and sustain them. I have witnessed the fulfillment of their prophetic voice. I have seen the sick raised and nations blessed through their authority and have stood with them in moments too sacred to recount. I testify that they are the Lord's anointed.

I pray that my spirit might be like that of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin—whose passing brought about this call—a spirit void of any desire for personal attention, willing to go anywhere and do anything the Lord's prophets would have me do, applying my full consecration in testifying of the Savior and building the kingdom of God until my final breath.

### **We live in days long anticipated**

Our days are days long anticipated in the history of the world. The scriptures speak of things "the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world" (D&C 128:5).

The revelations tell of a great gathering that will take place (see 2 Nephi 10:7–8; 3 Nephi 16:5). Isaiah prophesied that the house of the Lord would be established in the tops of the mountains and that the voice of the Lord would go from there to the whole earth (see Isaiah 2:2–3). Daniel declared that it would be as a stone cut out of a mountain without hands (see Daniel 2:34, 44–45). Peter spoke of the restitution of all things (see Acts 3:20–21). Nephi saw that those of the Church of the Lamb would not be many in number but would be in every land and nation (see 1 Nephi 14:12, 14).

We live in these days of the Lord's "marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14; see 2 Nephi 25:17). We have been blessed to bring the gospel to our families and our posterity and to assist in preparing for the Second Coming of the Savior. The Lord described the purposes of the Restoration "to be a light to the world, . . . to be a standard for [us, His] people, . . . and to be a messenger before [His] face to prepare the way before [Him]" (D&C 45:9). Our responsibility is not trivial; it is not by chance that we are who we are; the keeping of our covenants in these days of destiny will be a badge of honor throughout all the eternities.

I have been privileged to see the Lord's hand at work across the world. While we honor those pioneers who walked across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley, there are far more pioneers living today. They don't push handcars, but they are exactly the same in so many ways: They have heard the voice of the Lord through the Book of Mormon and through their personal prayers. With faith and repentance they have stepped into the waters of baptism and firmly planted their feet in the rich gospel soil. As disciples of Christ, they have been willing to sacrifice for what is right and true. And with the gift of the Holy Ghost, they are holding steady in their course toward eternal life.

### Divine mission of the Church

We must remember, my dear brothers and sisters, who we are and what we have in our hands. We are not alone in our desire to do good; there are wonderful people of many faiths and beliefs.

We are not alone in praying to our Heavenly Father or in receiving answers to our prayers; our Father loves all of His children.

We are not alone in sacrificing for a greater cause; there are others who are unselfish.

Others share our faith in Christ. There are loyal and decent fathers and mothers in every land who love each other and love their children. There is much we can learn from the good people all around us.

Yet we must not shrink from what is *uniquely* and *singularly* found in The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Only *here* is the priesthood of God, restored to earth by heavenly messengers. Only *here* does the Book of Mormon stand with the Bible in revealing and declaring the full divinity and gospel of Christ. Only *here* are there prophets of God, bringing guidance from heaven and holding the keys that bind in heaven what is bound on earth.

Our knowledge of the divine mission of the Church should not bring feelings of superiority or arrogance but should take us to our knees, pleading for the Lord's help that we might be what we should be. But in humility we need not be timid in remembering the Lord's words: "This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it" (Mosiah 27:13).

Above all, we proclaim our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. All that we are—all that we will ever be—we owe to Him. While we gaze in awe at His majesty, He does not ask us to stay our distance but bids us to come unto Him. "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

His words echo through the centuries:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26).

Brothers and sisters, He lives. He is resurrected. He guides His holy work upon the earth. His prophet is President Thomas S. Monson. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Steven E. Snow

### Get on with our lives

During the very early years of her life, our niece Lachelle spent the mornings with her grandmother. The two shared a special bond from these hours together.

Lachelle soon turned five years old and was preparing to begin school. On their last morning together, Grandma Squire read her granddaughter a story and rocked her in the big rocking chair. "We have had so much fun together, Lachelle," she told



her, “and now it is time for you to go to school. I love you so much; what will I ever do without you?”

With wisdom beyond her five years, Lachelle looked up at her grandmother with big brown eyes. “Grandma,” she said, “I love you too, but it is time I got on with my life.”

That is good counsel for all of us. We too need to “get on with our lives.” Most of us do not seek or even welcome dramatic changes. But change is an essential part of life’s experiences.

Many of these changes come as we naturally make our way through our earthly journey. Our lives change as we progress from childhood through youth and on into adulthood and finally old age. Schooling, missions, marriage, employment, and retirement are all examples of milestones of change.

Too often we are reluctant to enter the next stage, begin the next challenge. Maybe we are too comfortable, fearful, or lacking in faith. Grandmother’s lap is often more comfortable than the trials of kindergarten. Our parents’ basement, with unlimited video games, may be more appealing than college, marriage, or a career.

### Preparing for change

How can we then best prepare for the changes we must inevitably face as we progress through life?

First, follow the prophets. Listen to and abide by the counsel of the Brethren. Prophets often raise a voice of warning but also provide steady, pragmatic counsel to help us weather the storms of life. In the opening section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reminds us, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Prophets help us confront the changes and challenges we constantly face. The popular Primary song “Follow the Prophet” reminds us of this important principle: “We can get direction all along our way, if we

heed the prophets—follow what they say” (*Children’s Songbook*, 111).

Second, keep an eternal perspective. Understand that change and challenges are part of God’s plan. By design this mortal existence is a time of testing or a time “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25). In order to test our use of our God-given agency, we as mortals undergo a series of changes, challenges, trials, and temptations as we proceed through life. Only then are we properly tested.

In 2 Nephi we read: “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11).

Life’s challenges and changes provide opportunities for us to grow as we exercise our agency in making righteous decisions.

Third, have faith. President Gordon B. Hinckley always encouraged members of the Church to move forward with faith (see “God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 4). As we daily confront a world full of negativity, doubt, fear, and even dread can creep into our hearts. President Thomas S. Monson has counseled us that “faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other” (“Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 6). In Moroni we read that “without faith there cannot be any hope” (Moroni 7:42). We must exercise faith to take on life’s challenges and changes. It is how we learn and progress.

Fourth, be of good cheer. Many of our members across the globe are facing challenges, economic and otherwise. At such times it is easy to feel despondent and forgotten. During the early, difficult days of the Church, the Lord counseled the Saints to be happy: “Be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you” (D&C 61:36).

In his last conference talk, six months ago, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught how to respond to adversity. Part of his counsel included: “The next time you’re tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 27). Laughter and a good sense of humor can soften the bumps along life’s journey.

### **Dealing with unexpected changes**

It would be nice if we could anticipate all the changes that would occur in a lifetime. Some changes we see coming. Certainly all Latter-day Saint young men are taught to prepare for a full-time mission, a life-changing experience. Every worthy young single adult understands the importance of choosing a spouse and being sealed in the holy temple. We know these changes are coming, and we can plan for them. But what about the changes which are thrust upon us rather unexpectedly? These are changes over which we seemingly have no control. Economic downturn, unemployment, debilitating sickness or injury, divorce, and death are examples of change we do not expect, anticipate, or welcome. How do we deal with such unexpected setbacks in life’s journey?

The answer is the same. By listening to the prophets, keeping an eternal perspective, having faith, and being of good cheer, we can face life’s unexpected challenges and “get on with our lives.”

### **Faith of Robert Gardner Jr.**

The lives of the early pioneers are excellent examples of how we should accept change and overcome challenges and difficulties.

Robert Gardner Jr. was baptized into the Church in January of 1845 in a frozen pond in the backwoods of eastern Canada. Faithful and industrious, he made his

way with his family to Nauvoo and, after much hardship, arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in October of 1847. After entering the valley, they camped at a place called Old Fort, located a few blocks from this Conference Center. In his handwritten history, he recorded, “I unyoked my oxen and sat down on my broken wagon tongue, and said I could not go another day’s journey” (“Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal,” Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 23).

Starting with nothing, Robert began to create a new life for himself and his family. The first years were hard, but gradually things improved as he and his brother Archibald began to develop mills on Mill Creek and the Jordan River. A few years later he suffered a reversal of fortune. The water powering his mill was taken upstream, leaving his portion of the stream dry. An attempt to build a six-mile canal to the mill failed.

Again from his history: “The canal kept breaking until it proved a failure. The failure caused me to lose all my crops and my mill would not run. My stock was all gone and I was flat broke” (“Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal,” 26).

If that was not test enough, his next entry in his history informs us he has been called on a mission to Canada. A few months later he left his family and with a contingent of missionaries traveled by handcart, steamboat, and railroad to his field of labor.

He completed this mission, returned to his family, and through hard work and diligence once again established himself and began to prosper.

Just a few years later Brother Gardner was entertaining some friends at his farm in Millcreek in the Salt Lake Valley. One remarked, “I am glad to see you so well recovered from being broke. You are nearly as well off as you were before you lost your property and went on your mission.”

Robert’s history records: “My reply was; ‘Yes I was well off once and it all

went off, and I am almost afraid of another [mission] call.' Sure enough, a few hours later some of my neighbors, who had been to a meeting in Salt Lake City called in and told me that my name was amongst a number of names who were called today to go south on a mission to make a new settlement and raise cotton. We were to start right away."

He records, *"I looked and spit, took off my hat and scratched [my head] and thought and said; 'All right'"* ("Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal," 35; italics added).

Robert Gardner knew what it meant to deal with change in his life. He followed the counsel of the Brethren, accepting calls to serve when it was not convenient. He had a great love for the Lord and demonstrated strong, unbending faith with amazing good humor and grace. Robert Gardner Jr. went on to become a leading pioneer in the colonization effort of southern Utah. It is he and countless pioneers like him who give us inspiration to carry on and confront fearlessly the many changes and challenges which come into

our lives. As we move forward and "get on with our lives," may we be obedient, faithful, and cheerful in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

I might add to Brother Snow's comments that a descendant of Brother Gardner, Hal Gardner, came to my mission in Canada. The first assignment he had was to go to the area where the original Brother Gardner joined the Church and then came to the United States. Elder Gardner who was in our mission also served as the president of a mission.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Sister Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Redeemer of Israel."

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## Barbara Thompson

### "His arm is sufficient"

Many years ago while serving on the Relief Society general board, I was on an assignment to teach and train some Relief Society and priesthood leaders. We had arrived just in time for the meeting to begin, after having spent the morning teaching in another city.

I was the first speaker, following the opening song and prayer. The opening song was announced as "The Time Is Far Spent."

I was not familiar with the title of this hymn and thought that it was odd that this was to be the opening song. I hadn't even

spoken, and already they were singing that the time was far spent!

As we began singing the song, I soon realized that it referred to the little time that is remaining to publish the gospel message and bring souls to Christ. The words of the fourth verse ran through my mind the whole evening and many times since then. It says:

Be fixed in your purpose, for Satan will  
try you;

The weight of your calling he perfectly  
knows.

Your path may be thorny, but Jesus is  
nigh you;



His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.  
His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.<sup>1</sup>

The message of that verse is that whatever happens in life, Jesus Christ has the power to save. Through His divine sacrifice, He has provided the way for us to gain eternal life. Truly, His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>2</sup> He has asked for our assistance in helping one another do the things that will lead to eternal life.

Last September in the general Relief Society meeting, Sister Beck outlined three things to help us in our goal to obtain eternal life. They are:

1. “Increase in faith and personal righteousness.”
  2. “Strengthen families and homes.”
  3. “Serve the Lord and His children.”<sup>3</sup>
- This also means to seek out and care for the poor and needy.

We know Satan will tempt and try us as we seek to do these things, but the Lord has promised that He will strengthen us. He will help us.<sup>4</sup>

### **Increase in faith and personal righteousness**

As a child I was taught by my parents that my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me. I was taught that “I am a child of God.”<sup>5</sup> I can’t remember when I didn’t know this. They taught me that Jesus Christ is our Savior and only through Him can we be saved.<sup>6</sup>

I was also taught that in order for my faith to increase, I needed to pray every day. In fact, I needed to pray always.<sup>7</sup> I was taught that as I read and studied the scriptures, my knowledge and testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel would grow. I was taught to love God and that I could show my love by keeping His commandments.<sup>8</sup> I also learned as a child about the importance of the temple. In my

youth I learned that making and keeping sacred temple covenants would keep me on course to eternal life.

Each of us must follow these principles throughout our lives to increase our faith and personal righteousness.

### **Strengthen families and homes**

It is the responsibility and blessing of each of us to strengthen our families and homes. Each of us is in a different family situation. Some families have a mother and father with children at home. Some couples no longer have children at home. Many members of the Church are single, and some are single parents. Others are widows or widowers living alone.

No matter what our family looks like, each of us can work to strengthen our own families or help in strengthening others.

Some ways to strengthen families are illustrated by the following example. I had an assignment in the Boise, Idaho, area. After training on Saturday afternoon, I stayed in the home of my niece and her family. That evening before the children went to bed, we had a short family home evening and a scripture story. Their father told about the family of Lehi and how he taught his children that they must hold fast to the iron rod, which is the word of God.<sup>9</sup> Holding fast to the iron rod would keep them safe and lead them to joy and happiness. If they should let go of the iron rod, there was danger of drowning in the river of dirty water.

To demonstrate this to the children, their mother became the “iron rod” that they must cling to, and their father played the role of the devil, trying to pull the children away from safety and happiness. The children loved the story and learned how important it is to hold fast to the iron rod.

After the scripture story it was time for family prayer. Their mother reminded the children to pray for the bishop, who was having serious eye problems. Three-year-old Brooklyn offered the prayer that

evening. She thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings, and then she fervently asked Him to “bless the bishop because his eyes are broken.”

The next morning we got to sacrament meeting and got seated. Brooklyn and her five-year-old sister, Kennedy, looked up on the stand and saw the bishop standing there. The girls pointed to the bishop and excitedly said to their mother, “Look, there’s the bishop.” Then a knowing look passed between these two little girls that seemed to say “We prayed for the bishop, and now he is better.” They prayed in faith, knowing that Heavenly Father would hear their humble prayers.

Scriptures, family home evening, and family prayer will strengthen families. We need to take every opportunity to strengthen families and support one another to stay on the right path.

### **Serve the Lord and His children, and seek out and care for the poor and needy**

Throughout His mortal life the Savior taught that we should care for one another and help one another. He healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, restored sight to the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He taught the people the gospel. He blessed the people and performed many mighty miracles.<sup>10</sup>

There are opportunities everywhere to help those in need. I submit to you that at some time in our lives, each of us will be poor in some way and will need the help of another person. For “are we not all beggars?”<sup>11</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other.”<sup>12</sup>

Last summer when I was away from home, a fierce wind and rainstorm blew through our neighborhood. A huge tree had fallen from my neighbor’s yard, filling my yard and knocking down power lines.

The tree needed to be removed before the damage could be repaired and power restored to my home.

Early in the morning I called my brother, who planned to find some equipment and come as soon as he could. I also called my bishop. Within minutes my bishop, home teacher, former stake president, and 10 men from my ward were there with their chain saws and made quick work of this disaster. My visiting teachers brought in dinner that evening. Many more men from the high priests group, the elders quorum, and the neighborhood came on subsequent evenings to assist me and my family in cleaning up the mess.

I was needy on that occasion. I needed help from others. My discouragement turned into joy and gratitude. I felt loved and cared for. These people were quick to recognize one in need. They lived their testimony and demonstrated the reality of their covenants.

At Church headquarters we often receive thank-you notes from people not of our Church who have been served by you after a flood, hurricane, earthquake, or other disaster. Thank you for always being willing to serve, love, give, and thus be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

We must be “fixed in [our] purpose”<sup>13</sup> as we seek to increase in faith and personal righteousness, strengthen our families and homes, and serve the Lord and His children. Though Satan may oppose our efforts, I testify of Jesus Christ and the power of His atoning sacrifice, enabling us to do His will and magnifying our efforts in the process. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. “The Time Is Far Spent,” *Hymns*, no. 266.
2. Moses 1:39.
3. See Julie B. Beck, “Fulfilling the Purpose of Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 109–11.
4. See Isaiah 41:10–14.

5. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
6. See Mosiah 3:17.
7. See 3 Nephi 18:15, 18–19; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
8. See John 14:15.
9. See 1 Nephi 8:2–37.
10. See Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 4:40; John 2:23; Mosiah 3:5; 3 Nephi 17:7–9; 26:15; Doctrine and Covenants 35:9.
11. Mosiah 4:19.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 4.
13. "The Time Is Far Spent," *Hymns*, no. 266.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Thank you, Sister Thompson, and thanks to the remarkable women of this Church.

### The Savior's solitary task

Brothers and sisters, my Easter-season message today is intended for everyone, but it is directed in a special way to those who are alone or feel alone or, worse yet, feel abandoned. These might include those longing to be married, those who have lost a spouse, and those who have lost—or have never been blessed with—children. Our empathy embraces wives forsaken by their husbands, husbands whose wives have walked away, and children bereft of one or the other of their parents—or both. This group can find within its broad circumference a soldier far from home, a missionary in those first weeks of homesickness, or a father out of work, afraid the fear in his eyes will be visible to his family. In short, it can include all of us at various times in our lives.

To all such, I speak of the loneliest journey ever made and the unending blessings it brought to all in the human family. I speak of the Savior's solitary task of shouldering alone the burden of our salvation. Rightly He would say: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me. . . . I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold [me]."<sup>1</sup>

### Rejection and betrayal

As President Uchtdorf so beautifully noted earlier, we know from scripture that Jesus's messianic arrival in Jerusalem on the Sunday preceding Passover, a day directly analogous to this very morning, was a great public moment. But eagerness to continue walking with Him would quickly begin to wane.

Soon enough He was arraigned before the Israelite leaders of the day—first Annas, the former high priest, then Caiaphas, the current high priest. In their rush to judgment these men and their councils declared their verdict quickly and angrily. "What further need have we of witnesses?" they cried. "He is [worthy] of death."<sup>2</sup>

With that, He was brought before the gentile rulers in the land. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, interrogated Him once, and Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea, did so twice, the second time declaring to the crowd, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man."<sup>3</sup> Then, in an act as unconscionable as it was illogical, Pilate "scourged Jesus, [and] delivered him to be crucified."<sup>4</sup> Pilate's freshly washed hands could not have been more stained or more unclean.

Such ecclesiastical and political rejection became more personal when the citizenry in the street turned against Jesus as well. It is one of the ironies of history

that sitting with Jesus in prison was a *real* blasphemer, a murderer and revolutionary known as Barabbas, a name or title in Aramaic meaning “son of the father.”<sup>5</sup> Free to release one prisoner in the spirit of the Passover tradition, Pilate asked the people, “Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?” They said, “Barabbas.”<sup>6</sup> So one godless “son of the father” was set free, while a truly divine Son of His Heavenly Father moved on to crucifixion.

This was also a telling time among those who knew Jesus more personally. The most difficult to understand in this group is Judas Iscariot. We know the divine plan required Jesus to be crucified, but it is wrenching to think that one of His special witnesses who sat at His feet, heard Him pray, watched Him heal, and felt His touch could betray Him and all that He was for 30 pieces of silver. Never in the history of this world has so little money purchased so much infamy. We are not the ones to judge Judas’s fate, but Jesus said of His betrayer, “Good [were it] for that man if he had not been born.”<sup>7</sup>

### A decreasing circle of support

Of course others among the believers had their difficult moments as well. Following the Last Supper, Jesus left Peter, James, and John to wait while He ventured into the Garden of Gethsemane alone. Falling on His face in prayer, “sorrowful . . . unto death,”<sup>8</sup> the record says, His sweat came as great drops of blood<sup>9</sup> as He pled with the Father to let this crushing, brutal cup pass from Him. But, of course, it could not pass. Returning from such anguished prayer, He found His three chief disciples asleep, prompting Him to ask, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?”<sup>10</sup> So it happens two more times until on His third return He says compassionately, “Sleep on now, and take your rest,”<sup>11</sup> though there would be no rest for Him.

Later, after Jesus’s arrest and appearance at trial, Peter, accused of knowing

Jesus and being one of His confidants, denies that accusation not once but three times. We don’t know all that was going on here, nor do we know of protective counsel which the Savior may have given to His Apostles privately,<sup>12</sup> but we do know Jesus was aware that even these precious ones would not stand with Him in the end, and He had warned Peter accordingly.<sup>13</sup> Then, with the crowing of the cock, “the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord. . . . And [he] went out, and wept bitterly.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, of divine necessity, the supporting circle around Jesus gets smaller and smaller and smaller, giving significance to Matthew’s words: “All the disciples [left] him, and fled.”<sup>15</sup> Peter stayed near enough to be recognized and confronted. John stood at the foot of the cross with Jesus’s mother. Especially and always the blessed women in the Savior’s life stayed as close to Him as they could. But essentially His lonely journey back to His Father continued without comfort or companionship.

### The withdrawal of the Father

Now I speak very carefully, even reverently, of what may have been the most difficult moment in all of this solitary journey to atonement. I speak of those final moments for which Jesus must have been prepared intellectually and physically but which He may not have fully anticipated emotionally and spiritually—that concluding descent into the paralyzing despair of divine withdrawal when He cries in *ultimate* loneliness, “My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?”<sup>16</sup>

The loss of mortal support He had anticipated, but apparently He had not comprehended *this*. Had He not said to His disciples, “Behold, the hour . . . is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” and “The Father hath not left

me alone; for I do always those things that please him”?<sup>17</sup>

With all the conviction of my soul I testify that He *did* please His Father perfectly and that a perfect Father did *not* forsake His Son in that hour. Indeed, it is my personal belief that in all of Christ’s mortal ministry the Father may never have been closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering. Nevertheless, that the supreme sacrifice of His Son might be as complete as it was voluntary and solitary, the Father briefly withdrew from Jesus the comfort of His Spirit, the support of His personal presence. It was required, indeed it was central to the significance of the Atonement, that this perfect Son who had never spoken ill nor done wrong nor touched an unclean thing had to know how the rest of humankind—us, all of us—would feel when we did commit such sins. For His Atonement to be infinite and eternal, He had to feel what it was like to die not only physically but spiritually, to sense what it was like to have the divine Spirit withdraw, leaving one feeling totally, abjectly, hopelessly alone.

But Jesus held on. He pressed on. The goodness in Him allowed faith to triumph even in a state of complete anguish. The trust He lived by told Him in spite of His feelings that divine compassion is never absent, that God is always faithful, that He never flees nor fails us. When the uttermost farthing had then been paid, when Christ’s determination to be faithful was as obvious as it was utterly invincible, finally and mercifully, it was “finished.”<sup>18</sup> Against all odds and with none to help or uphold Him, Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God, restored physical life where death had held sway and brought joyful, spiritual redemption out of sin, hellish darkness, and despair. With faith in the God He *knew* was there, He could say in triumph, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”<sup>19</sup>

### **We will never be left alone**

Brothers and sisters, one of the great consolations of this Easter season is that because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so. His solitary journey brought great company for our little version of that path—the merciful care of our Father in Heaven, the unfailing companionship of this Beloved Son, the consummate gift of the Holy Ghost, angels in heaven, family members on both sides of the veil, prophets and apostles, teachers, leaders, friends. All of these and more have been given as companions for our mortal journey because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel. Trumpeted from the summit of Calvary is the truth that we will never be left alone nor unaided, even if sometimes we may feel that we are. Truly the Redeemer of us all said, “I will not leave you comfortless: [My Father and] I will come to you [and abide with you].”<sup>20</sup>

My other plea at Easter time is that these scenes of Christ’s lonely sacrifice, laced with moments of denial and abandonment and, at least once, outright betrayal, must *never* be reenacted by us. He has walked alone once. Now, may I ask that never again will He have to confront sin without our aid and assistance, that never again will He find only unresponsive onlookers when He sees you and me along His *Via Dolorosa* in our present day. As we approach this holy week—Passover Thursday with its Paschal Lamb, atoning Friday with its cross, Resurrection Sunday with its empty tomb—may we declare ourselves to be more fully disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in word only and not only in the flush of comfortable times but in deed and in courage and in faith, including when the path is lonely and when our cross is difficult to bear. This Easter week and always, may we stand by Jesus Christ “at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until



death,”<sup>21</sup> for surely that is how He stood by us when it *was* unto death and when He had to stand entirely and utterly alone. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Isaiah 63:3, 5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:107; 88:106; 133:50.
2. Matthew 26:65–66; see footnote 66*b*.
3. Luke 23:14.
4. Matthew 27:26.
5. See Bible Dictionary, “Barabbas,” 619.
6. Matthew 27:21.
7. Matthew 26:24.
8. Matthew 26:38.
9. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
10. Matthew 26:40.
11. Matthew 26:45.
12. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Peter, My Brother*; Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (July 13, 1971), 5.
13. See Mark 14:27–31.
14. Luke 22:61–62.
15. Matthew 26:56.
16. Matthew 27:46; italics added.
17. John 16:32; 8:29.
18. See John 19:30.

19. Luke 23:46.

20. John 14:18; see also verse 23.

21. Mosiah 18:9.

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The choir sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

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## President Monson

The choir just sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to those who have spoken to us in this session of the conference.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy. The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, I express my love to you. I am humbled by the responsibility to address you, and yet I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

### Be of good cheer

Since last we met together in a general conference six months ago, there have been continuing signs that circumstances in the world aren’t necessarily as we would wish. The global economy, which six months ago appeared to be sagging, seems to have taken a nosedive, and for many weeks now the financial outlook has been somewhat grim. In addition, the moral footings of society continue to slip, while those who attempt to safeguard

those footings are often ridiculed and, at times, picketed and persecuted. Wars, natural disasters, and personal misfortunes continue to occur.

It would be easy to become discouraged and cynical about the future—or even fearful of what might come—if we allowed ourselves to dwell only on that which is wrong in the world and in our lives. Today, however, I’d like us to turn our thoughts and our attitudes away from the troubles around us and to focus instead on our blessings as members of the Church. The Apostle Paul declared, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”<sup>1</sup>

None of us makes it through this life without problems and challenges—and sometimes tragedies and misfortunes. After all, in large part we are here to learn and grow from such events in our lives. We know that there are times when we will suffer, when we will grieve, and when we will be saddened. However, we are told, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”<sup>2</sup>

How might we have joy in our lives, despite all that we may face? Again from the scriptures: “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”<sup>3</sup>

The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer as they have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This attitude is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. It will not remove our troubles from us but rather will enable us to face our challenges, to meet them head on, and to emerge victorious.

Too numerous to mention are the examples of all the individuals who have faced difficult circumstances and yet who have persevered and prevailed because their faith in the gospel and in the Savior has given them the strength they have needed. This morning, however, I’d like to share with you three such examples.

### **Pioneer journey of Condie family**

First, from my own family, I mention a touching experience that has always been an inspiration to me.

My maternal great-grandparents Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie lived in Clackmannan, Scotland. Their families were engaged in coal mining. They were at peace with the world, surrounded by relatives and friends, and were housed in fairly comfortable quarters in a land they loved. Then they listened to the message of the missionaries from The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and, to the depths of their very souls, were converted. They heard the call to gather to Zion and knew they must answer that call.

Sometime around 1848, they sold their possessions and prepared for the hazardous voyage across the mighty Atlantic Ocean. With five small children, they boarded a sailing vessel, all their worldly possessions in one tiny trunk. They traveled 3,000 miles across the waters—eight long, weary weeks on a treacherous sea, watching and waiting, with poor food, poor water, and no help beyond the length and breadth of that small ship.

In the midst of this soul-trying situation, one of their young sons became ill. There were no doctors, no stores at which they might purchase medicine to ease his suffering. They watched, they prayed, they waited, and they wept as day by day his condition deteriorated. When his eyes were at last closed in death, their hearts were torn asunder. To add to their grief, the laws of the sea must be obeyed. Wrapped in a canvas weighed down with iron, the little body was consigned to a watery grave. As they sailed away, only those parents knew the crushing blow dealt to wounded hearts.<sup>4</sup> However, with a faith born of their deep conviction of the truth and their love of the Lord, Gibson and Cecelia held on. They were comforted by the words of the Lord: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”<sup>5</sup>

How grateful I am for ancestors who had the faith to leave hearth and home and to journey to Zion, who made sacrifices I can scarcely imagine. I thank my Heavenly Father for the example of faith, of courage, and of determination Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie provide for me and for all their posterity.

### **A blind man’s gratitude for gospel light**

I introduce next a gentle, faith-filled man who epitomized the peace and joy

which the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring into one's life.

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a small boat slipped silently to its berth at the crude pier. Two Polynesian women helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and guided him to the well-worn pathway leading to the village road. The women marveled at the bright stars, which twinkled in the midnight sky. The moonlight guided them along their way. However, Meli Mulipola could not appreciate these delights of nature—the moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

Brother Mulipola's vision had been normal until a fateful day when, while working on a pineapple plantation, light turned suddenly to darkness and day became perpetual night. He was depressed and despondent until he learned the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life was brought into compliance with the teachings of the Church, and he once again felt hope and joy.

Brother Mulipola and his loved ones had made a long voyage, having learned that one who held the priesthood of God was visiting among the islands of the Pacific. He sought a blessing, and it was my privilege, along with another who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, to provide that blessing to him. As we finished, I noted that tears were streaming from his sightless eyes, coursing down his brown cheeks, and tumbling finally upon his native dress. He dropped to his knees and prayed:

"O God, Thou knowest I am blind. Thy servants have blessed me that my sight might return. Whether in Thy wisdom I see light or whether I see darkness all the days of my life, I will be eternally grateful for the truth of Thy gospel, which I now see and which provides the light of my life."

He rose to his feet and, smiling, thanked us for providing the blessing. He then disappeared into the still of the night. Silently he came; silently he departed. But his

presence I shall never forget. I reflected upon the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>6</sup>

My brothers and sisters, each of us has that light in his or her life. We are not left to walk alone, no matter how dark our pathway.

I love the words penned by M. Louise Haskins:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than [a] light and safer than a known way."<sup>7</sup>

### A woman's postwar ordeal

The setting for my final example of one who persevered and ultimately prevailed, despite overwhelmingly difficult circumstances, begins in East Prussia following World War II.

In about March 1946, less than a year after the end of the war, Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, accompanied by Frederick W. Babbel, was assigned a special postwar tour of Europe for the express purpose of meeting with the Saints, assessing their needs, and providing assistance to them. Elder Benson and Brother Babbel later recounted, from a testimony they heard, the experience of a Church member who found herself in an area no longer controlled by the government under which she had resided.

She and her husband had lived an idyllic life in East Prussia. Then had come the second great world war within their lifetimes. Her beloved young husband was killed during the final days of the frightful battles in their homeland, leaving her alone to care for their four children.



The occupying forces determined that the Germans in East Prussia must go to Western Germany to seek a new home. The woman was German, and so it was necessary for her to go. The journey was over a thousand miles, and she had no way to accomplish it but on foot. She was allowed to take only such bare necessities as she could load into her small wooden-wheeled wagon. Besides her children and these meager possessions, she took with her a strong faith in God and in the gospel as revealed to the latter-day prophet Joseph Smith.

She and the children began the journey in late summer. Having neither food nor money among her few possessions, she was forced to gather a daily subsistence from the fields and forests along the way. She was constantly faced with dangers from panic-stricken refugees and plundering troops.

As the days turned into weeks and the weeks to months, the temperatures dropped below freezing. Each day, she stumbled over the frozen ground, her smallest child—a baby—in her arms. Her three other children struggled along behind her, with the oldest—seven years old—pulling the tiny wooden wagon containing their belongings. Ragged and torn burlap was wrapped around their feet, providing the only protection for them, since their shoes had long since disintegrated. Their thin, tattered jackets covered their thin, tattered clothing, providing their only protection against the cold.

Soon the snows came, and the days and nights became a nightmare. In the evenings she and the children would try to find some kind of shelter—a barn or a shed—and would huddle together for warmth, with a few thin blankets from the wagon on top of them.

She constantly struggled to force from her mind overwhelming fears that they would perish before reaching their destination.

And then one morning the unthinkable happened. As she awakened, she felt a chill in her heart. The tiny form of her three-year-old daughter was cold and still, and she realized that death had claimed the child. Though overwhelmed with grief, she knew that she must take the other children and travel on. First, however, she used the only implement she had—a tablespoon—to dig a grave in the frozen ground for her tiny, precious child.

Death, however, was to be her companion again and again on the journey. Her seven-year-old son died, either from starvation or from freezing or both. Again her only shovel was the tablespoon, and again she dug hour after hour to lay his mortal remains gently into the earth. Next, her five-year-old son died, and again she used her tablespoon as a shovel.

Her despair was all-consuming. She had only her tiny baby daughter left, and the poor thing was failing. Finally, as she was reaching the end of her journey, the baby died in her arms. The spoon was gone now, so hour after hour she dug a grave in the frozen earth with her bare fingers. Her grief became unbearable. How could she possibly be kneeling in the snow at the graveside of her last child? She had lost her husband and all her children. She had given up her earthly goods, her home, and even her homeland.

In this moment of overwhelming sorrow and complete bewilderment, she felt her heart would literally break. In despair she contemplated how she might end her own life, as so many of her fellow countrymen were doing. How easy it would be to jump off a nearby bridge, she thought, or to throw herself in front of an oncoming train.

And then, as these thoughts assailed her, something within her said, “Get down on your knees and pray.” She ignored the prompting until she could resist it no longer. She knelt and prayed more fervently than she had in her entire life:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I do not know how I can go on. I have nothing left—except my faith in Thee. I feel, Father, amidst the desolation of my soul, an overwhelming gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. I cannot express adequately my love for Him. I know that because He suffered and died, I shall live again with my family; that because He broke the chains of death, I shall see my children again and will have the joy of raising them. Though I do not at this moment wish to live, I will do so, that we may be reunited as a family and return—together—to Thee.”

When she finally reached her destination of Karlsruhe, Germany, she was emaciated. Brother Babbel said that her face was a purple-gray, her eyes red and swollen, her joints protruding. She was literally in the advanced stages of starvation. In a Church meeting shortly thereafter, she bore a glorious testimony, stating that of all the ailing people in her saddened land, she was one of the happiest because she knew that God lived, that Jesus is the Christ, and that He died and was resurrected so that we might live again. She testified that she knew if she continued faithful and true to the end, she would be reunited with those she had lost and would be saved in the celestial kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

### “Their joy shall be full forever”

From the holy scriptures we read, “Behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in [Him], they who have endured the crosses of the world, . . . they shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever.”<sup>9</sup>

I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith.

I declare that God lives and that He hears and answers our prayers. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and our Redeemer. Heaven’s blessings await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 1:7.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
4. Adapted from Thomas A. Condie, “History of Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie” (1937); unpublished.
5. John 16:33.
6. John 8:12.
7. From “The Gate of the Year,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.
8. From personal conversations and from Frederick W. Babbel, *On Wings of Faith* (1972), 40–42.
9. 2 Nephi 9:18.

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The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday,

April 5, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists. President Eyring made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Henry B. Eyring**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Eyring, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under

the direction of Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Now We’ll Sing with One Accord.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer V. Jones of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Now We’ll Sing with One Accord.”

Elder Spencer V. Jones offered the invocation.

The choir sang “O My Father.”

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### **President Eyring**

The choir has sung “O My Father.”

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Seventy.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

### **Unselfish service**

Our Savior gave Himself in unselfish service. He taught that each of us should follow Him by denying ourselves of selfish interests in order to serve others.

“If any man will come after me [He said], let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24–25; see also Matthew 10:39).

### **Latter-day Saint commitment to service**

As a group, Latter-day Saints are unique in following that teaching—unique in the extent of their unselfish service.

Each year tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints submit their papers for full-time missionary service. Seniors put aside the diversions of retirement, the comforts of home, and the loving companionship of children and grandchildren and go forth to serve strangers in unfamiliar places. Young men and women put work and education on hold and make themselves available to serve wherever they are assigned. Hundreds of thousands of faithful members participate in the unselfish service we call “temple work,” which has no motive other than love and service for our fellowmen, living and dead. The same unselfish service is given by legions of officers and teachers in our stakes and wards and branches. All are uncompensated in worldly terms but committed to Christlike service to their fellowmen.

It is not easy to give up our personal priorities and desires. Many years ago a new missionary in England was frustrated and discouraged. He wrote home saying he felt he was wasting his time. His wise father replied, “Forget yourself and go to work.”<sup>1</sup> Young Elder Gordon B. Hinckley went to his knees and covenanted with the Lord that he would try to forget himself and lose himself in the Lord’s service.<sup>2</sup> Years later, as a mature servant of the Lord, Elder Hinckley would say, “He who lives only unto himself withers and dies, while he who forgets himself in the service of others grows and blossoms in this life and in eternity.”<sup>3</sup>

Last January, President Thomas S. Monson taught Brigham Young University students that their student days should include “the matter of spiritual preparation,” including service to others. “An attitude of love characterized the mission of the Master,” President Monson said. “He gave sight to the blind, legs to the lame, and life to the dead. Perhaps when we [face] our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold?’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’ In reality,” President Monson concluded, “you can never love the Lord until you serve Him by serving His people.”<sup>4</sup>

A familiar example of losing ourselves in the service of others—this one not unique to Latter-day Saints—is the sacrifice parents make for their children. Mothers suffer pain and loss of personal priorities and comforts to bear and rear each child. Fathers adjust their lives and priorities to support a family. The gap between those who are and those who are not willing to do this is widening in today’s world. One of our family members recently overheard a young couple on an airline flight explaining that they chose to have a dog instead of children. “Dogs are less trouble,” they declared. “Dogs don’t talk back, and we never have to ground them.”

We rejoice that so many Latter-day Saint couples are among that unselfish

group who are willing to surrender their personal priorities and serve the Lord by bearing and rearing the children our Heavenly Father sends to their care. We also rejoice in those who care for disabled family members and aged parents. None of this service asks, what’s in it for me? All of it requires setting aside personal convenience for unselfish service. All of it stands in contrast to the fame, fortune, and other immediate gratification that are the worldly ways of so many in our day.

Latter-day Saints are uniquely committed to sacrifice. In partaking of the sacrament each week, we witness our commitment to serve the Lord and our fellowmen. In sacred temple ceremonies we covenant to sacrifice and consecrate our time and talents for the welfare of others.

### **Cooperative efforts**

Latter-day Saints are also renowned for their ability to unite in cooperative efforts. The Mormon pioneers who colonized the Intermountain West established our honored tradition of unselfish cooperation for the common good. Following in this tradition are our modern “Helping Hands” projects in many nations.<sup>5</sup> In recent elections Latter-day Saints have united with other like-minded persons in efforts to defend marriage. For some, that service has involved great sacrifice and continuing personal pain.

Our members’ religious faith and Church service have taught them how to work in cooperative efforts to benefit the larger community. Because of this, Latter-day Saint volunteers are in great demand in education, local government, charitable causes, and countless other efforts that call for high skills in cooperative efforts and unselfish sacrifice of time and means.

Some attribute our members’ willingness to sacrifice and their skills in cooperative efforts to our effective Church organization or to what skeptics mistakenly call “blind obedience.” Neither

explanation is correct. No outside copying of our organization and no application of blind obedience could duplicate the record of this Church or the performance of its members. Our willingness to sacrifice and our skills in cooperative efforts come from our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, from the inspired teachings of our leaders, and from the commitments and covenants we knowingly make.

### Some seek praise of the world

Unfortunately, some Latter-day Saints seem to forgo unselfish service to others, choosing instead to fix their priorities on the standards and values of the world. Jesus cautioned that Satan desires to sift us like wheat (see Luke 22:31; 3 Nephi 18:18), which means to make us common like all those around us. But Jesus taught that we who follow Him should be precious and unique, “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13) and “the light of the world” to shine forth to all men (Matthew 5:14, 16; see also 3 Nephi 18:24).

We do not serve our Savior well if we fear man more than God. He rebuked some leaders in His restored Church for seeking the praise of the world and for having their minds on the things of the earth more than on the things of the Lord (see D&C 30:2; 58:39). Those chastisements remind us that we are called to establish the Lord’s standards, not to follow the world’s. Elder John A. Widtsoe declared, “We cannot walk as other men, or talk as other men, or do as other men, for we have a different destiny, obligation, and responsibility placed upon us, and we must fit ourselves [to it].”<sup>6</sup> That reality has current application to every trendy action, including immodest dress. As a wise friend observed, “You can’t be a life saver if you look like all the other swimmers on the beach.”<sup>7</sup>

Those who are caught up in trying to save their lives by seeking the praise of the world are actually rejecting the Savior’s teaching that the only way to save our eter-

nal life is to love one another and lose our lives in service.

C. S. Lewis explained this teaching of the Savior: “The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first—wanting to be the centre—wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan: and that was the sin he taught the human race. Some people think the fall of man had something to do with sex, but that is a mistake. . . . *What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could ‘be like gods’—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God.* And out of that hopeless attempt has come . . . the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.”<sup>8</sup>

A selfish person is more interested in pleasing man—especially himself—than in pleasing God. He looks only to his own needs and desires. He walks “in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world” (D&C 1:16). Such a person becomes disconnected from the covenant promises of God (see D&C 1:15) and from the mortal friendship and assistance we all need in these tumultuous times. In contrast, if we love and serve one another as the Savior taught, we remain connected to our covenants and to our associates.

### We live in a time of selfishness

We live in a time when sacrifice is definitely out of fashion, when the outside forces that taught our ancestors the need for unselfish cooperative service have diminished. Someone has called this the “me” generation—a selfish time when everyone seems to be asking, what’s in it for me? Even some who should know better seem to be straining to win the praise of those who mock and scoff from the “great and spacious building” identified in vision



as the pride of the world (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28; 11:35–36).

The worldly aspiration of our day is to get something for nothing. The ancient evil of greed shows its face in the assertion of entitlement: I am entitled to this or that because of who I am—a son or a daughter, a citizen, a victim, or a member of some other group. Entitlement is generally selfish. It demands much, and it gives little or nothing. Its very concept causes us to seek to elevate ourselves above those around us. This separates us from the divine, evenhanded standard of reward that when anyone obtains any blessing from God, it is by obedience to the law on which that blessing is predicated (see D&C 130:21).

The effects of greed and entitlement are evident in the multimillion-dollar bonuses of some corporate executives. But the examples are more widespread than that. Greed and ideas of entitlement have also fueled the careless and widespread borrowing and excessive consumerism behind the financial crises that threaten to engulf the world.

Gambling is another example of greed and selfishness. The gambler ventures a minimum amount in the hope of a huge return that comes by taking it away from others. No matter how it is disguised, getting something for nothing is contrary to the gospel law of the harvest: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7; see also 2 Corinthians 9:6).

The values of the world wrongly teach that “it’s all about me.” That corrupting attitude produces no change and no growth. It is contrary to eternal progress toward the destiny God has identified in His great plan for His children. The plan of the gospel of Jesus Christ lifts us above our selfish desires and teaches us that this life is all about what we can become.

### **Losing ourselves in service**

A great example of unselfish service is the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose vow committed herself and her fellow

workers to “wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor.”<sup>9</sup> She taught that “one thing will always secure heaven for us—the acts of charity and kindness with which we have filled our lives.”<sup>10</sup> “We can do no great things,” Mother Teresa maintained, “only small things with great love.”<sup>11</sup> When this wonderful Catholic servant died, the First Presidency’s message of condolence declared, “Her life of unselfish service is an inspiration to all the world, and her acts of Christian goodness will stand as a memorial for generations to come.”<sup>12</sup> That is what the Savior called losing our lives in service to others.

Each of us should apply that principle to our attitudes in attending church. Some say “I didn’t learn anything today” or “No one was friendly to me” or “I was offended” or “The Church is not filling my needs.” All those answers are self-centered, and all retard spiritual growth.

In contrast, a wise friend wrote:

“Years ago, I changed my attitude about going to church. No longer do I go to church for my sake, but to think of others. I make a point of saying hello to people who sit alone, to welcome visitors, . . . to volunteer for an assignment. . . .

“In short, I go to church each week with the intent of being active, not passive, and making a positive difference in people’s lives. Consequently, my attendance at Church meetings is so much more enjoyable and fulfilling.”<sup>13</sup>

All of this illustrates the eternal principle that we are happier and more fulfilled when we act and serve for what we give, not for what we get.

Our Savior teaches us to follow Him by making the sacrifices necessary to lose ourselves in unselfish service to others. If we do, He promises us eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7), the glory and joy of living in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I testify of Them and of Their great plan for the salvation of Their children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain: A Declaration of Vision, Faith, Courage, and Truth," *Ensign*, July 1987, 7.
2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain," 7.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 588.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Great Expectations" (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Jan. 11, 2009), [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org).
5. See "Mormon Helping Hands Completes First Decade of Service," *Ensign*, Jan. 2009, 74–75.
6. John A. Widtsoe, in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 36.
7. Ardeth Greene Kapp, *I Walk by Faith* (1987), 97.
8. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1980), 49; italics added.
9. In *The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Living with Mother Teresa*, comp. Jaya Chaliha and Edward Le Joly (1996), 15.
10. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Life in the Spirit*, ed. Kathryn Spink (1983), 42.
11. Mother Teresa, *Life in the Spirit*, 45.
12. First Presidency statement, in "News of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 110.
13. Mark Skousen to Dallin H. Oaks, Feb. 15, 2009.

## Elder David A. Bednar

## A focus on the temple

Shortly after I was called to serve as a stake president in 1987, I talked with a good friend who recently had been released as a stake president. During our conversation I asked him what he would teach me about becoming an effective stake president. His answer to my question had a profound impact upon my subsequent service and ministry.

My friend indicated he had been called to serve as a temple worker soon after his release. He then said: "I wish I had been a temple worker before I was a stake president. If I had served in the temple before my call to serve as a stake president, I would have been a very different stake president."

I was intrigued by his answer and asked him to explain further. He responded: "I believe I was a good stake president. The programs in our stake ran well, and our statistics were above average. But serving in the temple has expanded my vision. If I were called today to serve as a stake president, my primary focus would be on worthiness to receive and honor temple

covenants. I would strive to make temple preparation the center of all that we did. I would do a better job of shepherding the Saints to the house of the Lord."

That brief conversation with my friend helped me as a stake president to teach relentlessly about and testify of the eternal importance of temple ordinances, temple covenants, and temple worship. The deepest desire of our presidency was for every member of the stake to receive the blessings of the temple, to be worthy of and to use frequently a temple recommend.

My message today focuses upon the blessings of the temple, and I pray the Holy Ghost will illuminate our minds, penetrate our hearts, and bear witness of truth to each of us.

## The divine purpose of gathering

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that in all ages the divine purpose of gathering the people of God is to build temples so His children can receive the highest ordinances and thereby gain eternal life (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 415–17).

This essential relationship between the principle of gathering and the building of temples is highlighted in the Book of Mormon:

“Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted” (Alma 26:5).

The sheaves in this analogy represent newly baptized members of the Church. The garners are the holy temples. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: “Clearly, when we baptize, our eyes should gaze beyond the baptismal font to the holy temple. The great garner into which the sheaves should be gathered is the holy temple” (in John L. Hart, “Make Calling Focus of Your Mission,” *Church News*, Sept. 17, 1994, 4). This instruction clarifies and emphasizes the importance of sacred temple ordinances and covenants—that the sheaves may not be wasted.

“Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them” (Alma 26:6).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has explained that in renewing our baptismal covenants by partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, “we do not witness that we *take upon us* the name of Jesus Christ. [Rather,] we witness that we are *willing* to do so. (See D&C 20:77.) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the [ultimate and] most important sense” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 102; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 81; italics in original). The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future

event or events and looks forward to the temple.

In modern revelations the Lord refers to temples as houses “built unto my name” (D&C 105:33; see also D&C 109:2–5; 124:39). In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Father “that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them” (D&C 109:22). He also asked for a blessing “over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” (verse 26). And as the Lord appeared in and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house, He declared, “For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house” (D&C 110:7).

These scriptures help us understand that the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.

“And this greater [or Melchizedek] priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:19–21).



**No combination of wickedness  
shall prevail over thy people**

We live in a great day of temple building around the world. And the adversary surely is mindful of the increasing number of temples that now dot the earth. As always, the building and dedicating of these sacred structures are accompanied by opposition from enemies of the Church as well as by ill-advised criticism from some within the Church.

Such antagonism is not new. In 1861, while the Salt Lake Temple was under construction, Brigham Young encouraged the Saints: "If you wish this Temple built, go to work and do all you can. . . . Some say, 'I do not like to do it, for we never began to build a Temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring.' I want to hear them ring again. All the tribes of hell will be on the move, . . . but what do you think it will amount to? You have all the time seen what it has amounted to" (*Deseret News*, Apr. 10, 1861, 41).

We as faithful Saints have been strengthened by adversity and are the recipients of the Lord's tender mercies. We have moved forward under the promise of the Lord: "I will not suffer that [mine enemies] shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43).

For many years Sister Bednar and I hosted faithful men and women as devotional speakers at Brigham Young University–Idaho. Many of these speakers were emeritus or released members of the Seventy who had served as temple presidents following their service as General Authorities. As we talked with these stalwart leaders, I always asked this question: "What have you learned as a temple president that you wish you had better understood when you were a General Authority?"

As I listened to their answers, I discovered a consistent theme that I would summarize as follows: "I have come to

understand better the protection available through our temple covenants and what it means to make an acceptable offering of temple worship. There is a difference between church-attending, tithe-paying members who occasionally rush into the temple to go through a session and those members who faithfully and consistently worship in the temple."

The similarity of their answers impressed me greatly. Each response to my question focused upon the protecting power of the ordinances and covenants available in the house of the Lord. Their answers precisely paralleled the promises contained in the dedicatory prayer offered upon the Kirtland Temple in 1836:

"We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

"That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

"That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house;

"And if any people shall rise against this people, that thine anger be kindled against them;

"And if they shall smite this people thou wilt smite them; thou wilt fight for thy people as thou didst in the day of battle, that they may be delivered from the hands of all their enemies" (D&C 109:24–28).

Please consider these verses in light of the current raging of the adversary and what we have discussed about our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and the blessing of protection promised to those who honorably hold a name and standing in the holy temple. Significantly, these covenant blessings are to all generations and for all eternity. I invite you to study repeatedly and ponder prayerfully the implications of these scriptures in your life and for your family.

We should not be surprised by Satan's efforts to thwart or discredit temple worship and work. The devil despises the purity in and the power of the Lord's house. And the protection available to each of us in and through temple ordinances and covenants stands as a great obstacle to the evil designs of Lucifer.

### **The fire of the covenant**

The exodus from Nauvoo in September of 1846 caused unimaginable hardship for the faithful Latter-day Saints. Many sought shelter in camps along the Mississippi River. When word reached Brigham Young at Winter Quarters about the condition of these refugees, he immediately sent a letter across the river to Council Point encouraging the brethren to help—reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple. He counseled: “Now is the time for labor. Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable” (in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Sept. 28, 1846, 5). Within days, wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the struggling Saints.

What was it that gave those early Saints such strength? It was the fire of the temple covenant that burned in their hearts. It was their commitment to worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the house of the Lord.

We do now and will yet face great challenges to the work of the Lord. But like the pioneers who found the place which God for them prepared, so we will fresh courage take, knowing our God will never us forsake (see “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30). Today temples dot the earth as sacred places of ordinances and covenants, of edification, and of refuge from the storm.

### **Invitations and commendation**

The Lord declared, “I must gather together my people, . . . that the wheat may be secured in the garner to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory” (D&C 101:65).

Within the sound of my voice are many young women, young men, and children. I plead with you to be worthy, to be steadfast, and to look forward with great anticipation to the day you will receive the ordinances and blessings of the temple.

Within the sound of my voice are individuals who should have but have not yet received the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Whatever the reason, however long the delay, I invite you to begin making the spiritual preparations so you can receive the blessings available only in the holy temple. Please cast away the things in your life that stand in the way. Please seek after the things that are of eternal consequence.

Within the sound of my voice are individuals who have received the ordinances of the temple and for various reasons have not returned to the house of the Lord in quite some time. Please repent, prepare, and do whatever needs to be done so you can again worship in the temple and more fully remember and honor your sacred covenants.

Within the sound of my voice are many individuals who hold current temple recommendations and strive worthily to use them. I commend you for your faithfulness and devotion.

I bear solemn witness that the fire of the covenant will burn in the heart of every faithful member of this Church who shall worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the Lord's holy house. Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer and Savior. He lives, and He directs the affairs of His Church through revelation to His anointed servants. Of these things I bear witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gary E. Stevenson

What a wonderful conference it has been. How blessed we are to hear the counsel of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

### The temple provides direction

I remember a warm, sunny afternoon when spring was trying to nudge its way through a long winter in Cache Valley, Utah. My father, whose Saturdays were always filled with chores for his grandsons, stopped by our home with an offer to “go for a ride.” Always happy to ride in Grandpa’s truck, our four- and six-year-old sons scurried into the back jump seat, and I joined my father in the front. Our drive took us through the streets of downtown Logan, which wrap around the Logan Temple, prominently situated on a hill, centered beautifully in the city. As we moved further away from the city, we turned from paved, busy streets to seldom-used dirt roads, where we crossed old bridges and weaved through trees far into the country. We were far from any other traffic and all alone.

Realizing his grandsons were in a place they had not been before, my father stopped the truck. “Do you think we are lost?” he asked the wide-eyed boys as they gazed out the windshield across the valley. Followed by a moment of silent assessment came the profound reply of a young child. “Look,” he said, pointing his finger. “Grandpa, you are never lost when you can see the temple.” Our eyes turned, focusing with his, seeing the sun glistening off the spires of the Logan Temple, far across the valley.

You are never lost when you can see the temple. The temple will provide direction for you and your family in a world filled with chaos. It is an eternal guidepost which will help you from getting lost in the “mist

of darkness.”<sup>1</sup> It is the house of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> It is a place where covenants are made and eternal ordinances are performed.

### Turning to the temple

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin directed the Saints of his time and place to gather, “every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple.”<sup>3</sup> As Church members, we have recently received counsel from modern-day prophets which, if followed, will turn the doors of our homes more fully towards the temple.

The First Presidency has invited “adult members to have a current temple recommend and visit the temple more often” where time and circumstance permit and encouraged members “to replace some leisure activities with temple service.” They also encouraged “newer members and youth of the Church who are 12 years of age and older to live worthy to assist in this great work by serving as proxies for baptisms and confirmations.”<sup>4</sup> Even our young children have been encouraged to visit the temple grounds and touch the temple.<sup>5</sup> President Thomas S. Monson once counseled, “As we touch the temple, the temple will touch us.”<sup>6</sup>

We are blessed to live in a temple-building dispensation in which 146 temples have been dedicated or announced.<sup>7</sup> Under the definition of “Temple” in the Bible Dictionary, we read the following: “It is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth,” followed by this insightful statement: “Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”<sup>8</sup> For me, this suggests a sacred relationship between the temple and the home. Not only can we turn the doors of our homes to the temple, or the house of the Lord; we can make our homes a “house of the Lord.”

## The temple and the home

Recently in a stake conference, all present were invited by the visiting authority, Elder Glen Jensen, an Area Seventy, to take a virtual tour of their homes using their spiritual eyes. I would like to invite each of you to do this also. Wherever your home may be and whatever its configuration, the application of eternal gospel principles within its walls is universal. Let's begin. Imagine that you are opening your front door and walking inside your home. What do you see, and how do you feel? Is it a place of love, peace, and refuge from the world, as is the temple? Is it clean and orderly? As you walk through the rooms of your home, do you see uplifting images which include appropriate pictures of the temple and the Savior? Is your bedroom or sleeping area a place for personal prayer? Is your gathering area or kitchen a place where food is prepared and enjoyed together, allowing uplifting conversation and family time? Are scriptures found in a room where the family can study, pray, and learn together? Can you find your personal gospel study space? Does the music you hear or the entertainment you see, online or otherwise, offend the Spirit? Is the conversation uplifting and without contention? That concludes our tour. Perhaps you, as I, found a few spots that need some "home improvement"—hopefully not an "extreme home makeover."

Whether our living space is large or small, humble or extravagant, there is a place for each of these gospel priorities in each of our homes.

In order to keep the temple and those who attend it sacred and worthy, the Lord has established standards through His servants, the prophets. We may be well advised to consider together, in family council, standards for our homes to keep them sacred and to allow them to be a "house of the Lord." The admonition to "establish . . . a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house

of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God"<sup>9</sup> provides divine insight into the type of home the Lord would have us build. Doing such begins the construction of a "spiritual mansion" in which we all may reside regardless of our worldly circumstance—a home filled with treasure that "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."<sup>10</sup>

There exists a righteous unity between the temple and the home. Understanding the eternal nature of the temple will draw you to your family; understanding the eternal nature of the family will draw you to the temple. President Howard W. Hunter stated, "In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place."<sup>11</sup>

President Boyd K. Packer counseled: "Say the word *temple*. Say it quietly and reverently. Say it over and over again. *Temple. Temple. Temple*. Add the word *holy*. *Holy Temple*. Say it as though it were capitalized, no matter where it appears in the sentence.

"Temple. One other word is equal in importance to a Latter-day Saint. *Home*. Put the words *holy temple* and *home* together, and you have described the house of the Lord!"<sup>12</sup>

## Preparing for eternal blessings

Last year Primary children gathered, thousands of them, from around the world in each of their wards and branches, singing to their families and ward members as part of the Primary sacrament meeting presentation. They sang of desire, promises, and preparation. The things of which they sang begin in sacred homes and continue in sacred temples. I think you will hear the tune in your hearts as I read the words:

I love to see the temple.  
I'm going there someday  
To feel the Holy Spirit,  
To listen and to pray.

For the temple is a house of God,  
A place of love and beauty.  
I'll prepare myself while I am young;  
This is my sacred duty.

I love to see the temple.  
I'll go inside someday.  
I'll cov'nant with my Father;  
I'll promise to obey.  
For the temple is a holy place  
Where we are sealed together.  
As a child of God, I've learned this  
truth:  
A fam'ly is forever.<sup>13</sup>

President Boyd K. Packer stated, "The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father."<sup>14</sup>

I testify to you that the application of these principles will help turn the doors of your home to the temple, or house of the Lord, and more fully allow you to make your sacred home a house of the Lord.

I conclude where I began, with the words of an innocent child: "You are never lost when you can see the temple." And I add my testimony of the sacred nature of our homes and of the Lord's temples. I know that God is our loving Heavenly Father. I bear witness of Jesus Christ and of His role as our Savior and Redeemer and of living prophets authorized to exercise all priesthood keys from Joseph Smith to Thomas S. Monson. I do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 8:24.
2. See Topical Guide, "Temple, House of the Lord," 519; "Temple, House of the Lord," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
3. Mosiah 2:6.
4. First Presidency letter, Mar. 11, 2003.
5. See Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Peace," *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 5–6.
6. In JoAnn Jolley, "A Shining Beacon on a Hill: Jordan River Temple Is Dedicated," *Ensign*, Jan. 1982, 77: "Early in the week, Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Quorum of the Twelve suggested deep spiritual meaning in the physical presence of the temple. He recounted the late Elder Matthew Cowley's story about a grandfather who took his small granddaughter on a birthday visit to the Salt Lake Temple grounds. With permission of the groundskeeper, they walked to the large doors of the temple. He suggested that she place her hand on the temple wall and then on the door, saying tenderly to her, 'Remember that this day you touched the temple. One day you will enter this door.' His special gift to his granddaughter was an appreciation for the House of the Lord. Likewise, counseled Elder Monson, 'As we touch the temple, the temple will touch us.'"
7. See "Temples around the World," at temples.lds.org. Click on "Chronological."
8. Bible Dictionary, "Temple," 781.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
10. See Matthew 6:19–20; 3 Nephi 13:19–20.
11. Howard W. Hunter, "A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 2.
12. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 20–21.
13. "I Love to See the Temple," *Children's Songbook*, 95.
14. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8.

## President Eyring

The choir and congregation will now sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders José A. Teixeira and F. Michael Watson of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

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## Elder José A. Teixeira

### Gifts to help us navigate our life

Our Heavenly Father has a plan for us, a plan of happiness. His plan is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Following the teachings and example of Jesus Christ will enable us to understand more fully our part in that plan.

In the first chapter of the book of Moses, we find a short but precious statement that simply outlines God's work—namely, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>1</sup>

In our life's journey to return to and become more like our Father, we are not left alone. God has given us the necessary gifts to help us in our mortal experience.

“Spiritual gifts are blessings or abilities given by God to His children.”<sup>2</sup> These gifts help us navigate our lives toward eternal goals.

What a comfort it is to know that there is a plan providing us with a Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> His sacrifice makes it possible for all people who comply with His gospel teachings to be forgiven through repentance. What a comfort it is to know that help is available for us to succeed in our endeavors to return to live with our Father in Heaven. What a comfort it is to know that we are not alone sailing uncharted waters as we go through life's experiences.

### The power to choose

One gift that will help us navigate our lives is the gift He has given to all, *the ability and power to choose*.

Our choices have the undeniable power of transforming our lives. This gift is an extraordinary sign of trust in us and simultaneously a cherished personal responsibility to use wisely. Our Father in Heaven respects our freedom to choose and will never force us to do what is right, nor will He impede us from making mediocre

choices.<sup>4</sup> His invitation, however, concerning this important and vital gift is clearly expressed in the scriptures: “But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”<sup>5</sup>

The words “to do good continually” depict well the standard we need to apply as we use our agency.

Choices have consequences attached, which may or may not be manifested immediately after our decisions. Using the spiritual gifts we have been given is paramount in order to remain on the right course.

### GPS receivers and our consciences

Recently I used a pocket-size GPS receiver; this is an incredible device which consists of an antenna tuned to the frequencies transmitted by satellites high above the earth, along with a screen indicating my current position on earth.

In the last few decades these kinds of devices have become widely used for scientific purposes, mapmaking, land surveying, and more recently to keep people from getting lost when driving!

Throughout history, mankind has tried to keep itself from being lost. In my home country of Portugal, for instance, during the period of the discoveries in the 15th century, navigators “from Lisbon's shore, thro' seas where sail was never spread before”<sup>6</sup> used the best possible maps and reading of the stars in the night sky, along with advanced sailing vessels for that time, to find their destination. In spite of all of this, it was not an easy task for those navigators to sail against adverse winds, and many times they wandered endlessly before finding their way in the vast sea.

In contrast, today with this GPS receiver, I can always have simultaneous answers to questions such as:

- Where am I?
- Where am I going?
- What's the best way to get there?
- When will I get there?

With this small device, I feel a great sense of security when driving, and I trust that it will take me with extraordinary precision and accuracy where I want to go.

I remember one day, however, as I drove into an underground parking lot, I was introduced to a new feature of this device—a warning voice struck me: “Lost satellite reception.” The concrete structures that surrounded me had interrupted the satellite signal and caused the device to lose connection.

As I came back again into the open air, I also realized that extra time was required while the device recaptured the needed signal.

We too have within us a “GPS” allowing us to know at all times what is right and what is wrong, as well as assisting us in making correct choices.

“We are born with a natural capacity to distinguish between right and wrong because of the Light of Christ that is given to every person (D&C 84:46). This faculty is called conscience. The possession of it makes us responsible beings.”<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, as members of the Church we have been given *the gift of the Holy Ghost to comfort, protect, and guide us*.<sup>8</sup>

However, like other faculties, our consciences may become inert through sin or misuse.<sup>9</sup> If we become desensitized to the things of God in our lives, we too lose reception of the signal needed to guide us. Keeping the commandments is our best assurance to maintain a strong signal with the Divine.

President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet, said, “Our lives will depend upon the decisions which we make—for decisions determine destiny.”<sup>10</sup>

I bear my witness that choosing good eventually leads to happiness, while wrong choices drag us down to unhappiness.<sup>11</sup> Learning to choose that which is good and keeping the commandments will create a pattern that will help us to:

- Attain fulfillment in life;
- Become more like our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ; and
- Qualify to inherit all the blessings promised to the faithful.

### Belief in the words of the prophets

Another gift that will help us navigate our lives is *the capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ*.<sup>12</sup>

Through prophets in every age, including our own, God has revealed His plan of happiness for individuals and families. Those who follow the prophets receive the blessings God has promised.

We can always trust the living prophets; their teachings reflect the word and will of the Lord. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”<sup>13</sup>

The lyrics of a Primary song admonish us to:

Follow the prophet,  
Follow the prophet; don't go astray.  
Follow the prophet, . . .  
Follow the prophet; he knows the way.

. . . We can get direction all along our way,  
If we heed the prophets—follow what they say.<sup>14</sup>

I testify that our Father in Heaven is mindful of each one of us, that He listens to and answers our prayers, and that He communicates with His prophets to guide us. As we develop our faith to believe and live the words of prophets, we will strengthen our testimony of the plan of

happiness and the central role of Jesus Christ in it.

Through the power to choose and the inherent capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ, we will be able to cross the great waters of life and reach our eternal destiny.

We have been taught this weekend by prophets, seers, and revelators. I am grateful for the guidance our Father in Heaven has extended to us and for His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that They live and love us, and as we abide by the teachings we have received, we will make good choices, we will not be lost, and we will reach our eternal home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. “Spiritual Gifts,” at [gospeltopics.lds.org](http://gospeltopics.lds.org).

3. See “God has a plan for your life,” at [www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/heavenly-father-s-plan-of-happiness/god-has-a-plan-for-your-life](http://www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/heavenly-father-s-plan-of-happiness/god-has-a-plan-for-your-life).
4. See “God has a plan for your life,” at [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org).
5. Moroni 7:13.
6. Luis de Camões, *The Lusiad*, book I, stanza 1, trans. William Julius Mickle (1776).
7. “Conscience,” in Guide to the Scriptures, at [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).
8. See Acts 2:38.
9. See “Conscience,” in Guide to the Scriptures, at [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny,” *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 4.
11. See “God has a plan for your life,” at [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org).
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:14.
13. Amos 3:7.
14. “Follow the Prophet,” *Children’s Songbook*, 110–11.

## Elder F. Michael Watson

### Guided by the wisdom of others

During my growing-up years in the small farming community of Spring City, Utah, an opportunity afforded itself each summer to be with my father alone for two weeks herding sheep in the mountain range of the Manti-La Sal. On one occasion the fog rested heavily in the area to the extent that you could not see your outstretched hand in front of you, and the evening was drawing nigh.

My father suggested that I return to camp, and he would soon follow. I remember questioning how I would be able to find the camp amidst the fog. My father simply said to me, “Give the horse the reins, and he will get you to camp.” Following this counsel, I loosened my grip on the reins, and with encouragement to the horse, the journey began. At times I would be struck in the face by a low-hanging limb

I couldn’t see or have my leg brush close to a tree. Eventually, the horse came to a complete stop, and the silhouette of the camp was in view.

Sometimes we may not always be able to immediately find the desired way before us, but the wisdom of those who have gone before, coupled with the wisdom of those who are with us still, will be our guide if we let them have the reins.

### The voice of His servants

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” was the question asked by Philip of one who was diligently searching the scriptures.

The response came in the form of a question: “How can I, except some man should guide me?”<sup>1</sup>

The answer to these searching questions comes from the prophets throughout



ages past who taught the importance of searching the scriptures, along with a promise: “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.”<sup>2</sup>

In each dispensation, the Lord has given commandments to the prophets “that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled.”<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and Covenants section 1 constitutes the Lord’s preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Of specific mention are verses 37–38:

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”

It is the voice of seven of the Lord’s servants of which I speak today. In March 1970, a long hoped-for desire to be of service to the Lord’s chosen servants commenced. From the very outset, opportunities were provided to be directly involved with the Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve and subsequently with members of the First Presidency for almost four decades. It was during these formative years that an understanding of “my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled” began to swell in my heart.

Important admonition has been given in general conferences of yesteryear and will continue to be expounded by those who have the wisdom of ages past, which allows our hearts to burn within us. It will be in following such counsel that we must be strong, never give up, and endure to the end.

Let me share the direction and counsel given by these prophets of God.

### *Joseph Fielding Smith*

For example, it was President Joseph Fielding Smith who often quoted the words set forth in the 24th chapter of Psalms, wherein a question is asked, an answer given, and a blessing promised to the faithful.

The question: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

The answer: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”

The promise: “He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Harold B. Lee*

President Harold B. Lee in general conference counseled us to give heed to the words and commandments the Lord shall give through His prophet: “You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views . . . [or] your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if [we] listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘. . . the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.’”<sup>5</sup>

Prior to his passing in December 1973, President Lee, speaking to an assembled group of Church employees and their families, posed the question after giving a history of the Church’s welfare program: “Do you believe these prophets knew what they were talking about?” Later in the same address, concerning the Brethren’s counsel to guard against the permissiveness invading the home through inappropriate literature and television, he asked, “Are you too close to the Brethren [so that you] think of them not as prophets but as men just guessing [such counsel] might be a good thing?”<sup>6</sup>

*Spencer W. Kimball*

It was President Spencer W. Kimball who in his writings provided us the comforting words that there is a miracle of forgiveness and God will forgive. In another setting, concerning the unexpected challenges which we may face, President Kimball cautioned us, if individually given the power to alter life-changing moments, would we have modified the events at Carthage Jail which resulted in the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith? And more importantly, with such uncontrolled power, what might we have done in the decisive moment of Gethsemane and the words spoken, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done”?<sup>7</sup>

*Ezra Taft Benson*

Each morning in the meeting of the First Presidency, the Brethren take turns praying. I always liked to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson pray. His prayers were almost entirely in thankfulness instead of asking for blessings. Of Another Testament of Jesus Christ, President Benson reiterated the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>8</sup> He admonished us to follow the Savior, who said, “Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.”<sup>9</sup>

*Howard W. Hunter*

During his nine-month period of service as President of the Church, we all fell in love with the innate goodness of President Howard W. Hunter, who issued invitations for members of the Church to:

“Live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ,

especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed. . . .

“ . . . Establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy.”<sup>10</sup>

*Gordon B. Hinckley*

President Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “I have not spoken face to face with all of the prophets of this dispensation. I was not acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, nor did I ever hear him speak. [However,] my grandfather, who as a young man lived in Nauvoo, did hear him and testified of his divine calling as the great prophet of this dispensation.”<sup>11</sup>

President Hinckley bore witness of the First Vision, when young Joseph Smith went to pray in a grove and received his answer through divine revelation from both the Father and the Son.

President Hinckley’s passion with the building of temples and the sacred work performed therein will be a polar star for each of us to follow.

*Thomas S. Monson*

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has reemphasized again the hoped-for desire of the First Presidency who in 1839 gave the direction we should constantly seek even today: “Upon your diligence, your perseverance and faithfulness, the soundness of the doctrines which you preach, the moral precepts that you advance and practice . . . hang the destinies of the human family.”<sup>12</sup>

It is President Monson whom we sustain as the prophet, seer, and revelator and who serves as the resounding voice to the widow, the fatherless, and to all who stand in need. He has truly exemplified in his life the pattern of the Master and the

sincere desire to always be found in His service. It is President Monson who is the Lord's mouthpiece and whose counsel and direction we are admonished to follow. In a very real sense, the Master speaks to us through His prophet. I know, and have recorded in meetings of the Brethren assembled, this to be true.

### **"His servants the prophets"**

As one who has been taught at the feet of living prophets and of these latter-day witnesses whom I have known and love, I testify in all truthfulness, as members of this Church heed the words and commandments the Lord gave to the prophets of the testaments and followed by the Lord's prophet even today, we will more fully understand that "surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."<sup>13</sup>

Of these truths and that God is in the heavens, that Jesus is the Christ, and of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has prophets, seers, and revelators to guide us, I bear solemn witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Acts 8:30–31.
2. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 1:18.
4. Psalm 24:3–5.
5. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 126.
6. Harold B. Lee, Christmas devotional for employees of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dec. 13, 1973; in *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 298.
7. Luke 22:42; see Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 100.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:461.
9. 3 Nephi 15:9.
10. Quoted in Jay M. Todd, "President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1994, 4–5.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 50.
12. *History of the Church*, 3:395; for further information on this epistle, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (1950), 48–49.
13. Amos 3:7.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### **A lost sheep**

Many years ago I was driving along University Avenue near the mouth of Provo Canyon when I saw ahead of me the traffic slowing down. Up ahead there were police cars with their lights flashing, a fire truck, and several search and rescue vehicles all huddled together, blocking the road into Provo Canyon. At first I was annoyed, since it seemed like we might be there for a long time. I was also curious—what was causing all the commotion?

As I looked up the rock face along the east side of the entrance to Provo Canyon,

I saw some men climbing. I assumed they were the search and rescue people. What were they climbing to? Eventually I saw it. Somehow a ewe, a lost sheep, had made her way about 25 feet up the rock face, and she was stranded there. She was not a mountain goat or mountain sheep, just a white ewe separated from a shepherd's flock.

As I had nothing else to do, I searched the rock face for a way up to where the ewe stood. I could not for the life of me figure out how she ever got there. Nevertheless, she was there, and all the commotion in front of me was focused on her rescue. To

this day, I don't know the end of the story, since the police figured out a way to get the traffic moving again.

As I drove away, a concern bothered me. While the search and rescue personnel were certainly well intentioned, how would the ewe react to them? I'm sure they had a plan for how they would calm her—perhaps they would shoot her with a tranquilizer dart from a close distance so they could catch her before she fell. Knowing nothing of their plan but knowing a little about how animals react to being cornered by strangers, I worried about the feasibility of their rescue effort. And then I wondered, "Where is the shepherd?" Certainly he would have the best chance of approaching the ewe without alarming her. The shepherd's calming voice and helping hand were what the situation needed, but he seemed to be missing in action.

### **Importance of member missionaries**

As members of the Church, sometimes we seem to be missing in action, just like this shepherd. Consider for a moment what President Monson told the newly called mission presidents at the 2008 seminar for new mission presidents. He said: "There is . . . no substitute for a member-oriented proselyting program. Tracting will not substitute for it. Golden questions will not substitute for it. A member-oriented program is the key to success, and it works wherever we try it" ("Motivating Missionaries," June 22, 2008, 8).

Viewed in this light, member missionaries—both you and I—are the shepherds, and the full-time missionaries, like the search and rescue team, are trying to do something almost impossible for them to do alone. Certainly the full-time missionaries will continue to do the best they can, but wouldn't it be better if you and I stepped up to do a job that is rightfully ours and for which we are better suited

since we know personally those who are lost and need to be rescued?

I would like to focus on three objectives for members of the Church found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Each of these encourages us not to be missing in action when friends, neighbors, and family members need our help. This should include those who have fallen away, the less active. All of us should be better member missionaries.

### **We must warn our neighbors**

In section 88, verse 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we read, "And it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." I have had the privilege of traveling to many of the stakes of the Church to encourage the growth and development of ward missions. It has been a very rewarding and spiritual experience for me. I have discovered in these travels, and a recent survey has confirmed the fact, that over one-half of the people in the United States and Canada have little or no awareness of our practices and beliefs. I am certain the percentage would be much larger in other parts of the world. This same survey also showed that when non-members interact with faithful members of the Church over an extended period of time or are exposed to clear and accurate information regarding Church beliefs and doctrines, their attitudes become positive and open.

The Church has over 50,000 full-time missionaries serving around the world. *Preach My Gospel* has helped make them the best teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ we have ever had in the history of the Church. Unfortunately most of our full-time missionaries spend more of their time trying to find people rather than teaching them. I view our full-time missionaries as an underutilized teaching resource. If you and I did more of the finding for the full-time missionaries and freed

them up to spend more time teaching the people we find, great things would begin to happen. We're missing a golden opportunity to grow the Church when we wait for our full-time missionaries to warn our neighbors instead of doing it ourselves.

It should be "with great earnestness" (D&C 123:14) that we bring the light of the gospel to those who are searching for answers the plan of salvation has to offer. Many are concerned for their families. Some are looking for security in a world of changing values. Our opportunity is to give them hope and courage and to invite them to come with us and join those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord's gospel is on earth and will bless their lives here and in the eternities to come.

The gospel is centered on the Atonement of our Lord and Savior. The Atonement provides the power to wash away sins, to heal, and to grant eternal life. All the imponderable blessings of the Atonement can be given only to those who live the principles and receive the ordinances of the gospel—faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. Our great missionary message to the world is that all mankind is invited to be rescued and to enter the fold of the Good Shepherd, even Jesus Christ.

Our missionary message is strengthened by the knowledge of the Restoration. We know that God speaks to His prophets today, just as He did anciently. We also know that His gospel is administered with the power and authority of the restored priesthood. No other message has such great, eternal significance to everyone living on the earth today. All of us need to teach this message to others with power and conviction. It is the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost that testifies through us of the miracle of the Restoration, but first we must open our mouths and testify. We must warn our neighbors.

## **We must open our mouths**

This leads me to the second scripture I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants. While verse 81 of section 88 teaches us that missionary work becomes the responsibility of each of us as soon as we have been warned, verses 7–10 of section 33 teach us to open our mouths.

Verse 7 leaves no doubt in anyone's mind who has memorized section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the Lord is talking to us about missionary work: "Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength."

Then comes the injunction—three times—to open our mouths:

"Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.

"Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

"Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (verses 8–10).

What would each of us say if we had to open our mouth three times? If I may, I would like to offer a suggestion. First and foremost, we should declare our belief in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. His redeeming act blesses all mankind with the gift of immortality and the potential of enjoying God's greatest gift to man, the gift of eternal life.

The second time we open our mouths, we should tell in our own words the story of the First Vision—that is, our knowledge of a boy not quite 15 years of age who went into a grove of trees and, after sincere and humble prayer, had the heavens open to him. After centuries of confusion, the



true nature of the Godhead and God's true teachings were revealed to the world.

The third time we open our mouths, let us testify of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon complements the Bible in giving us a greater understanding of the doctrines of our Savior's gospel. The Book of Mormon is the convincing evidence that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. If the Book of Mormon is true, there was a restoration of the priesthood. If the Book of Mormon is true, then with the power of that priesthood, Joseph Smith restored the Church of Jesus Christ.

### Faithful shepherds experience joy

I have just concluded the book of Alma in my current reading of the Book of Mormon. Near the close of Alma's great message to the Church in Zarahemla, he said:

"For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

"And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed" (Alma 5:59–60).

The Savior is the Good Shepherd, and we are all called to His service. The ewe on the side of the rock face along the entry to Provo Canyon and these words of Alma remind me of the question the Savior asked in the 15th chapter of Luke: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (verse 4).

Usually when I think of herding sheep, I think of the requirement, or stewardship,

of the shepherd to do *everything* he can for *all* of his sheep. This experience, however, reminded me that it is the parable of the *lost* sheep, and my thoughts turned to the precarious nature of that one lost ewe, all alone and unable to take another step up the rock face and equally unable to turn around and find her way down. How frantic and hopeless she must have felt, completely powerless to rescue herself, one step away from certain disaster.

It is important for each of us to ponder how it feels to be lost and what it means to be a "spiritual" shepherd who will leave the 99 to find the one who is lost. Such shepherds may need the expertise and assistance of the search and rescue team, but they are present, accounted for, and climbing right beside them to save those who are infinitely valued in the sight of God, for they are His children. Such shepherds respond to the final injunction to be a member missionary that I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15–16).

As the scripture also teaches, such shepherds experience inexpressible joy. I bear witness to this fact in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Eyring

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion, and the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also

extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing

"God Be with You Till We Meet Again." After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Expressions of gratitude and counsel

My beloved brothers and sisters, my heart is full and my feelings tender as we conclude this great general conference.

We have been richly blessed as we have listened to the counsel and testimonies of those who have spoken to us. I believe we are all more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I express my sincere thanks to each one who participated in the conference, including those Brethren who offered prayers.

The music has been magnificent. How grateful I am for those blessed with musical talents who are willing to share their talents with others. I am reminded of the scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants: "For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads."<sup>1</sup>

May we long remember that which we have heard during this conference. I remind you that the messages will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study the messages and to ponder their teachings and then to apply them in your life.

I want you to know how much I love and appreciate my devoted counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. They are men of wisdom and understanding. Their service is invaluable. I love and support my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. During this conference we sustained a new member

of that Quorum. He is completely dedicated to the work of the Lord, and I testify that he is the man our Heavenly Father wants to fill this position at this time.

I express my love to the members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. They serve selflessly and so effectively. Similarly, I pay tribute to the general auxiliary officers. In accordance with our policy of rotation, we have sustained new general presidencies of the Young Men and of the Sunday School. We look forward to working with them. We thank those who were released from these positions at this conference and who served so faithfully in these capacities.

My brothers and sisters, may we strive to live closer to the Lord. May we remember to "pray always lest [we] enter into temptation."<sup>2</sup>

To you parents, express your love to your children. Pray for them that they may be able to withstand the evils of the world. Pray that they may grow in faith and testimony. Pray that they may pursue lives of goodness and of service to others.

Children, let your parents know you love them. Let them know how much you appreciate all they have done and continue to do for you.

### Avoid pornography

Now, a word of caution to all—both young and old, both male and female. We live at a time when the adversary is using every means possible to ensnare us in his web of deceit, trying desperately to take us

down with him. There are many pathways along which he entices us to go—pathways that can lead to our destruction. Advances in many areas that can be used for good can also be used to speed us along those heinous pathways.

I feel to mention one in particular, and that is the Internet. On one hand, it provides nearly limitless opportunities for acquiring useful and important information. Through it we can communicate with others around the world. The Church itself has a wonderful Web site, filled with valuable and uplifting information and priceless resources.

On the other hand, however—and extremely alarming—are the reports of the number of individuals who are utilizing the Internet for evil and degrading purposes, the viewing of pornography being the most prevalent of these purposes. My brothers and sisters, involvement in such will literally destroy the spirit. Be strong. Be clean. Avoid such degrading and destructive types of content at all costs—wherever they may be! I sound this warning to everyone, everywhere. I add—particularly to the young people—that this includes pornographic images transmitted via cell phones.

My beloved friends, under no circumstances allow yourselves to become trapped in the viewing of pornography, one of the most effective of Satan's enticements. And if you have allowed yourself to become involved in this behavior, cease now. Seek the help you need to overcome and to change the direction of your life. Take the steps necessary to get back on the strait and narrow, and then stay there.

May we say, with Joshua of old, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

## **Temple work and humanitarian aid**

Now, my brothers and sisters, we have built temples throughout the world and will continue to do so. To you who are worthy and able to attend the temple, I would admonish you to go often. The temple is a place where we can find peace. There we receive a renewed dedication to the gospel and a strengthened resolve to keep the commandments.

What a privilege it is to be able to go to the temple, where we may experience the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of the Lord. Great service is given when we perform vicarious ordinances for those who have gone beyond the veil. In many cases we do not know those for whom we perform the work. We expect no thanks, nor do we have the assurance that they will accept that which we offer. However, we serve, and in that process we attain that which comes of no other effort: we literally become saviors on Mount Zion. As our Savior gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for us, so we, in some small measure, do the same when we perform proxy work in the temple for those who have no means of moving forward unless something is done for them by those of us here on the earth.

I am deeply grateful that as a church we continue to extend humanitarian aid where there is great need. We have done much in this regard and have blessed the lives of thousands upon thousands of our Father's children who are not of our faith as well as those who are. We intend to continue to help wherever such is needed. We express gratitude to you for your contributions in this regard.

## **Until we meet again**

How grateful I am, my brothers and sisters, for the Restoration of the gospel in this dispensation and for all the blessings



that have come into my life and into your lives as a result. We are a blessed people, for we have the sure knowledge that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ.

May heaven's blessings be with you. May your homes be filled with harmony and love. May you constantly nourish your testimonies that they might be a protection to you against the adversary.

As your humble servant, I desire with all my heart to do God's will and to serve Him and to serve you.

Now, my brothers and sisters, conference is over. As we return to our homes, may we do so safely.

I love you. I pray for you. I would ask that you would remember me and all the

General Authorities in your prayers. Until we meet again in six months' time, I ask the Lord's blessings to be upon all of us, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, our Savior, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
2. 3 Nephi 18:18.
3. Joshua 24:15.

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The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Robert C. Oaks offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho provided the music for the priesthood session. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**Brook P. Hales**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-ninth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**October 3 and 4, 2009**





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# Report of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 2009. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the priesthood and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, Jay E. Jensen, and Donald L. Hallstrom

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado, Mervyn B. Arnold, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Yoon Hwan Choi, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, Richard J. Maynes, Marcus B. Nash, Brent H. Nielson, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Joseph W. Sitati, Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zeballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Bruce A. Carlson, Don R. Clarke, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Bradley D. Foster, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, James B. Martino, Wolfgang H. Paul, Kent F. Richards, Gregory A. Schwitzer, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, and Kent D. Watson

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Glory to God on High.” President Eyring then made the following remarks.

### President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the first session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extend a special welcome to members and friends participating here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, wherever you may be. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a

public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “Glory to God on High” and will now favor us with “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

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### President Eyring

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Choose the Right.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, and he will be followed by Sister Vicki F. Matsumori, second counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy will address us.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, I extend my greetings to all of you as we commence this, the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

How grateful I am for the age in which we live—an age of such advanced technology that we are able to address you across

the world. As the General Authorities and auxiliary leaders stand here in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, our voices will be reaching you by various means, including radio, television, satellite transmission, and the Internet. Although we will be speaking to you in English, you will be hearing us in some 92 languages.

## Building of temples

Since last we met in April of this year, we have dedicated the beautiful Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in South Jordan, Utah. Sandwiched between the Draper Utah Temple dedication in March and this most recent dedication of the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in August, a spectacular two-night cultural event was held, featuring youth from both temple districts. The productions retraced the rich legacy of Utah through song and dance. All told, approximately 14,000 youth participated over the two nights.

We continue to build temples. We desire that as many members as possible have an opportunity to attend the temple without having to travel inordinate distances. Worldwide, 83 percent of our members live within 200 miles of a temple. That percentage will continue to increase as we construct new temples around the world. Currently there are 130 temples in operation, with 16 announced or under construction. This morning I am pleased to announce 5 additional temples for which sites are being acquired and which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Brigham City, Utah; Concepción, Chile; Fortaleza, Brazil; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Sapporo, Japan.

Millions of ordinances are performed in the temples each year in behalf of our deceased loved ones. May we continue to be faithful in performing such ordinances for those who are unable to do so for themselves. I love the words of President Joseph F. Smith as he spoke of temple service and of the spirit world beyond mortality. Said he, "Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding

them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their [people] here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."<sup>1</sup>

## Growth of the Church

Brothers and sisters, the Church continues to grow, as it has since being organized over 179 years ago. It is changing the lives of more and more people every year and is spreading far and wide over the earth as our missionary force seeks out those who are looking for the truths which are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We call upon all members of the Church to befriend the new converts, to reach out to them, to surround them with love, and to help them feel at home.

I would ask that your faith and prayers continue to be offered in behalf of those areas where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely at this time. Miracles can occur as we do so.

Now, my brothers and sisters, we are anxious to listen to the messages which will be presented to us during the next two days. Those who will address us have sought heaven's help and direction as they have prepared their messages. They have been impressed concerning that which they will share with us. That we may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord as we listen and learn is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTE

1. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 6.

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The choir sang "Choose the Right."

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## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Need for spiritual guidance

Throughout the ages, many have obtained guidance helpful to resolve challenges in their lives by following the example of respected individuals who resolved similar problems. Today, world conditions change so rapidly that such a course of action is often not available to us.

Personally, I rejoice in that reality because it creates a condition where we, of necessity, are more dependent upon the Spirit to guide us through the vicissitudes of life. Therefore, we are led to seek personal inspiration in life's important decisions.

What can you do to enhance your capacity to be led to correct decisions in your life? What are the principles upon which spiritual communication depends? What are the potential barriers to such communication that you need to avoid?

### Learning to be led by the Spirit

President John Taylor wrote: "Joseph Smith, upwards of forty years ago, said to me: 'Brother Taylor, you have received the Holy Ghost. Now follow the influence of that Spirit, and it will lead you into all truth, until by and by, it will become in you a principle of revelation.' Then he told me never to arise in the morning without bowing before the Lord, and dedicating myself to him during that day."<sup>1</sup>

Father in Heaven knew that you would face challenges and be required to make some decisions that would be beyond your own ability to decide correctly. In His plan of happiness, He included a provision for you to receive help with such challenges and decisions during your mortal life. That assistance will come to you through the Holy Ghost as spiritual guidance. It is a power, beyond your own capability, that a loving Heavenly Father wants you to use consistently for your peace and happiness.

I am convinced that there is no simple formula or technique that would immediately allow you to master the ability to be guided by the voice of the Spirit. Our Father expects you to learn how to obtain that divine help by exercising faith in Him and His Holy Son, Jesus Christ. Were you to receive inspired guidance just for the asking, you would become weak and ever more dependent on Them. They know that essential personal growth will come as you struggle to learn how to be led by the Spirit.

What may appear initially to be a daunting task will be much easier to manage over time as you consistently strive to recognize and follow feelings prompted by the Spirit. Your confidence in the direction you receive from the Holy Ghost will also become stronger. I witness that as you gain experience and success in being guided by the Spirit, your confidence in the impressions you feel can become more certain than your dependence on what you see or hear.

Spirituality yields two fruits. The first is inspiration to know what to do. The second is power, or the capacity to do it. These two capacities come together. That's why Nephi could say, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded."<sup>2</sup> He knew the spiritual laws upon which inspiration and power are based. Yes, God answers prayer and gives us spiritual direction when we live obediently and exercise the required faith in Him.

### Responding to spiritual impressions

Now I share an experience that taught me a way to gain spiritual guidance. One Sunday I attended the priesthood meeting of a Spanish branch in Mexico City. I vividly recall how a humble Mexican priesthood leader struggled to communicate the truths of the gospel in his lesson material. I noted the intense desire he had to share

those principles he strongly valued with his quorum members. He recognized that they were of great worth to the brethren present. In his manner there was an evidence of a pure love of the Savior and love of those he taught.

His sincerity, purity of intent, and love permitted a spiritual strength to envelop the room. I was deeply touched. Then I began to receive personal impressions as an extension of the principles taught by that humble instructor. They were personal and related to my assignments in the area. They came in answer to my prolonged, prayerful efforts to learn.

As each impression came, I carefully wrote it down. In the process, I was given precious truths that I greatly needed in order to be a more effective servant of the Lord. The details of the communication are sacred and, like a patriarchal blessing, were for my individual benefit. I was given specific directions, instructions, and conditioned promises that have beneficially altered the course of my life.

Subsequently, I visited the Sunday School class in our ward, where a very well-educated teacher presented his lesson. That experience was in striking contrast to the one enjoyed in the priesthood meeting. It seemed to me that the instructor had purposely chosen obscure references and unusual examples to illustrate the principles of the lesson. I had the distinct impression that this instructor was using the teaching opportunity to impress the class with his vast store of knowledge. At any rate, he certainly did not seem as intent on communicating principles as had the humble priesthood leader.

In that environment, strong impressions began to flow to me again. I wrote them down. The message included specific counsel on how to become more effective as an instrument in the hands of the Lord. I received such an outpouring of impressions that were so personal that I felt it was not appropriate to record them in the midst of a Sunday School class. I sought

a more private location, where I continued to write the feelings that flooded into my mind and heart as faithfully as possible. After each powerful impression was recorded, I pondered the feelings I had received to determine if I had accurately expressed them in writing. As a result, I made a few minor changes to what had been written. Then I studied their meaning and application in my own life.

Subsequently I prayed, reviewing with the Lord what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. When a feeling of peace came, I thanked Him for the guidance given. I was then impressed to ask, "Is there yet more to be given?" I received further impressions, and the process of writing down the impressions, pondering, and praying for confirmation was repeated. Again I was prompted to ask, "Is there more I should know?" And there was. When that last, most sacred experience was concluded, I had received some of the most precious, specific, personal direction one could hope to obtain in this life. Had I not responded to the first impressions and recorded them, I would not have received the last, most precious guidance.

What I have described is not an isolated experience. It embodies several true principles regarding communication from the Lord to His children here on earth. I believe that you can leave the most precious, personal direction of the Spirit unheard because you do not respond to, record, and apply the first promptings that come to you.

Impressions of the Spirit can come in response to urgent prayer or unsolicited when needed. Sometimes the Lord reveals truth to you when you are not actively seeking it, such as when you are in danger and do not know it. However, the Lord will not force you to learn. You must exercise your agency to authorize the Spirit to teach you. As you make this a practice in your life, you will be more perceptive to the feelings that come with spiritual guidance. Then, when that guidance comes,



sometimes when you least expect it, you will recognize it more easily.

### **Barriers to spiritual communication**

The inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit can be overcome or masked by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, passion, fear, or pride. When such influences are present, it is like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño pepper. Both flavors are present, but one completely overpowers the other. In like manner, strong emotions overcome the delicate promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Sin is addictive; self-degenerating; conducive to other strains of corruption; deadening to spirituality, conscience, and reason; blinding to reality; contagious; destructive to mind, body, and spirit. Sin is spiritually corrosive. Unrestrained it becomes all-consuming. It is overcome by repentance and righteousness.

I share a warning. Satan is extremely good at blocking spiritual communication by inducing individuals, through temptation, to violate the laws upon which spiritual communication is founded. With some, he is able to convince them that they are not able to receive such guidance from the Lord.

### **Destructive influence of pornography**

Satan has become a master at using the addictive power of pornography to limit individual capacity to be led by the Spirit. The onslaught of pornography in all of its vicious, corroding, destructive forms has caused great grief, suffering, and heartache and has destroyed marriages. It is one of the most damning influences on earth. Whether it be through the printed page, movies, television, obscene lyrics, vulgarities on the telephone, or flickering personal computer screen, pornography is overpoweringly addictive and severely damaging. This potent tool of Lucifer

degrades the mind and the heart and the soul of any who use it. All who are caught in its seductive, tantalizing web and remain so will become addicted to its immoral, destructive influence. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help. The tragic pattern is so familiar. It begins with curiosity that is fueled by its stimulation and is justified by the false premise that when done privately, it does no harm to anyone else. For those lulled by this lie, the experimentation goes deeper, with more powerful stimulations, until the trap closes and a terribly immoral, addictive habit exercises its vicious control.

Participation in pornography in any of its lurid forms is a manifestation of unbridled selfishness. How can a man, particularly a priesthood bearer, not think of the emotional and spiritual damage caused to women, especially his wife, by such abhorrent activity?

Well did inspired Nephi declare, “And [the devil] will . . . pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, . . . and thus [he] cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.”<sup>3</sup>

If you are ensnared in pornography, make a total commitment to overcome it now. Find a quiet place; pray urgently for help and support. Be patient and obedient. Don’t give up.

Parents, be aware that the addiction of pornography can begin with youth at a very early age. Take preventative action to avoid that tragedy. Stake presidents and bishops, warn of this evil. Invite anyone you consider captured by it to come to you for help.

An individual with foundation standards and an enduring commitment to obey them is not easily led astray. Someone who is increasingly repulsed by grievous sin and who exercises self-restraint outside human influence has character. Repentance will be more efficacious for such an individual. A feeling of remorse after a mistake is a fertile soil wherein repentance can flower.



### Consistently guided by the Spirit

Have patience as you are perfecting your ability to be led by the Spirit. By careful practice, through the application of correct principles, and by being sensitive to the feelings that come, you will gain spiritual guidance. I bear witness that the Lord, through the Holy Ghost, can speak to your mind and heart. Sometimes the impressions are just general feelings. Sometimes the direction comes so clearly and so unmistakably that it can be written down like spiritual dictation.<sup>4</sup>

I bear solemn witness that as you pray with all the fervor of your soul with humility and gratitude, you can learn to be

consistently guided by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of your life. I have confirmed the truthfulness of that principle in the crucible of my own life. I testify that you can personally learn to master the principles of being guided by the Spirit. That way, the Savior can guide you to resolve challenges of life and enjoy great peace and happiness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 43–44.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. 2 Nephi 28:21.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.

## Vicki F. Matsumori

### Whisperings of the Spirit

At the end of the day, a pair of missionaries starts toward home, when one suddenly turns to the other and says, “I feel we need to stop at this one last place.” A home teacher is prompted to call one of the families he visited just a few days before. A young woman plans on attending a school friend’s party yet feels impressed to stay home this time.

How did the missionaries know to knock on the door of someone who had been praying for them? or the home teacher to call a family that was in desperate need? or the young woman to stay away from a situation where her values could be compromised? In each of these situations they were guided by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Similar experiences happen repeatedly to members throughout the world on a regular basis, and there are those who desire to feel the Spirit guiding them daily in their lives. While each person can learn to recognize the whisperings of the Spirit, that learning process can be facilitated as

others help us understand about the Holy Ghost, share their personal testimonies, and provide an environment where the Spirit can be felt.

### Understanding the doctrine

The importance of helping others understand is described in the Doctrine and Covenants. Parents “in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized,” are told to help their children “understand the doctrine.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether we are in a classroom, a missionary discussion, or a family home evening, teaching the doctrine regarding the Holy Ghost can help others understand this important gift. We learn that while “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil,”<sup>2</sup> the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost comes as members are given that gift by the laying on of hands by those who have the proper authority.<sup>3</sup>

This companionship can continue to be ours if we are worthy. We are told that “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in

unholy temples”<sup>4</sup> and that as we “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly; then . . . the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion.”<sup>5</sup>

The scriptures and the prophets teach what this constant companionship feels like. The Lord tells us, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.”<sup>6</sup> Enos stated, “While I was . . . struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.”<sup>7</sup> Joseph Smith said, “When you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas.”<sup>8</sup> President Henry B. Eyring described the influence of the Holy Ghost as “peace, hope, and joy.” He added, “Almost always I have also felt a sensation of light.”<sup>9</sup>

My favorite description, though, comes from an eight-year-old boy who had just received the Holy Ghost. He said, “It felt like sunshine.”

### Share personal testimony

However, it is not always easy to discern these “sunshine” moments at first. The Book of Mormon tells us of some faithful Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.”<sup>10</sup>

We can help others become more familiar with the promptings of the Spirit when we share our testimony of the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Remember that some experiences are too sacred to relate. However, by sharing testimony of the Spirit in our lives, those who are unfamiliar with these promptings are more likely to recognize when they have similar feelings.

I was the first member of my family to join the Church. As an eight-year-old, I waited to feel somehow different because of my baptism. To be honest, the only thing I felt when I was brought out of the water was . . . well, dripping wet. I thought something more profound would

happen when I was confirmed. However, after receiving the Holy Ghost, again I felt happy but certainly no different than I had just a few minutes before.

It wasn’t until the following day at fast and testimony meeting that I experienced what I now recognize as the influence of the Holy Ghost. A brother stood to bear his testimony and tell about the blessings of his membership in the Church. I felt a flood of warmth sweep over me. Even as an eight-year-old, I recognized that this was something different. I felt a peace descend on me, and I had the distinct feeling that Heavenly Father was pleased with me.

### Provide an environment where the Spirit can be felt

There are places where it is easier to feel the Spirit. Testimony meetings and general conference are some of those places. Certainly temples are another. The challenge for each of us is in providing an environment where the Spirit can be felt daily in our homes and weekly at church.

One reason we are encouraged to pray and read the scriptures every single day is that both of these activities invite the Spirit into our homes and into the lives of our family members.

Because the Spirit is often described as a still, small voice,<sup>11</sup> it is also important to have a time of quiet in our lives as well. The Lord has counseled us to “be still, and know that I am God.”<sup>12</sup> If we provide a still and quiet time each day when we are not bombarded by television, computer, video games, or personal electronic devices, we allow that still, small voice an opportunity to provide personal revelation and to whisper sweet guidance, reassurance, and comfort to us.

Similarly, we can provide an environment at church that allows the Spirit to give divine confirmation to what is being taught. Teachers and leaders do more

than teach lessons or conduct meetings. They facilitate the whisperings of the Spirit to each member. Elder Richard G. Scott has said, "If you accomplish nothing else in your relationship with your students than to help them recognize and follow the promptings of the Spirit, you will bless their lives immeasurably and eternally."<sup>13</sup>

A Sunbeam teacher wrapped each of her class members one by one in a blanket to teach them how the Spirit feels like the comfort and security of that covering. A visiting mother also heard the lesson.

Many months later the mother thanked the teacher. She told how she had been less active when she accompanied her young daughter to Primary. Several weeks after the lesson, the mother suffered a miscarriage. She was overcome with grief, when suddenly she felt a great warmth and peace. It felt like someone had covered her with a warm blanket. She recognized the reassurance of the Spirit and knew that Heavenly Father was aware of her and that He loved her.

### Blessings of the Spirit

When we come to understand the whisperings of the Spirit, we will be able to hear Him teach us "the peaceable things of the kingdom"<sup>14</sup> and "all things what [we] should do."<sup>15</sup> We will recognize answers to our prayers and know how to live the gospel more fully each day. We will be guided and protected. And we can cultivate this gift in our lives as we follow those spiritual promptings. Most importantly, we will feel Him witness to us of the Father and of the Son.<sup>16</sup>

As a young woman attending youth conference, I felt the Spirit bear witness to me of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. In preparation for a testimony meeting, we sang "The Spirit of God." Now, I had sung that hymn many times

before in sacrament meetings. But on this occasion, from nearly the opening note, I felt the Spirit. By the time we sang, "The latter-day glory begins to come forth,"<sup>17</sup> I knew that these were more than nice lyrics; they were beautiful truths.

The Holy Ghost has confirmed to me that God the Father lives. He loves each of us. He knows us individually and personally. He hears the pleadings of our hearts, and He answers those sincere prayers.

Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He came to earth in the meridian of time to atone for our sins. And He will come again. These and all other aspects of the gospel that make up my testimony are firm in my heart because of the influence of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
2. Moroni 7:16.
3. See *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 83.
4. Helaman 4:24.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
7. Enos 1:10.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:381.
9. Henry B. Eyring, "Gifts of the Spirit for Hard Times," *Ensign*, June 2007, 18.
10. 3 Nephi 9:20.
11. See 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
12. Psalm 46:10; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
13. Richard G. Scott, "Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led" (address to religious educators, Aug. 11, 1998), 3; in *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 48.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 36:2.
15. See 2 Nephi 32:1–5.
16. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
17. "The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2.

## Elder L. Whitney Clayton

### Each of us has burdens

Many years ago I walked at dawn through the narrow cobblestone streets of Cusco, Peru, high in the Andes Mountains. I saw a man from a local indigenous group walking down one of the streets. He was not a big man physically, but he carried an immense load of firewood in a huge burlap sack on his back. The sack seemed to be as big as he was. The load must have weighed as much as he did. He steadied it with a rope that looped under the bottom of the sack and circled up around his forehead. He gripped the rope tightly on both sides of his head. He kept a rag on his forehead underneath the rope to keep it from cutting into his skin. He leaned forward under his burden and walked with deliberate, difficult steps.

The man was carrying the firewood to the marketplace, where it would be sold. In an average day he might make just two or three round-trips across the town to deliver similarly awkward, heavy loads.

The memory of him bent forward, struggling down the street has become increasingly meaningful for me with the passage of years. How long could he continue to carry such burdens?

Life presses all kinds of burdens on each of us, some light but others relentless and heavy. People struggle every day under burdens that tax their souls. Many of *us* struggle under such burdens. They can be emotionally or physically ponderous. They can be worrisome, oppressive, and exhausting. And they can continue for years.

### Sources of our burdens

In a general sense, our burdens come from three sources. Some burdens are the natural product of the conditions of the world in which we live. Illness, physical disability, hurricanes, and earthquakes

come from time to time through no fault of our own. We can prepare for these risks and sometimes we can predict them, but in the natural pattern of life we will all confront some of these challenges.

Other burdens are imposed on us by the misconduct of others. Abuse and addictions can make home anything but a heaven on earth for innocent family members. Sin, incorrect traditions, repression, and crime scatter burdened victims along the pathways of life. Even less-serious misdeeds such as gossip and unkindness can cause others genuine suffering.

Our own mistakes and shortcomings produce many of our problems and can place heavy burdens on our own shoulders. The most onerous burden we impose upon ourselves is the burden of sin. We have all known the remorse and pain which inevitably follow our failure to keep the commandments.

No matter the burdens we face in life as a consequence of natural conditions, the misconduct of others, or our own mistakes and shortcomings, we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father, who sent us to earth as part of His eternal plan for our growth and progress. Our unique, individual experiences can help us prepare to return to Him. The adversity and afflictions that are ours, however difficult to bear, last, from heaven's perspective, for "but a small moment; and then, if [we] endure it well, God shall exalt [us] on high."<sup>1</sup> We must do everything we can to bear our burdens "well" for however long our "small moment" carrying them lasts.

### Opportunities and blessings

Burdens provide opportunities to practice virtues that contribute to eventual perfection. They invite us to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man and [become] a

saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father.”<sup>2</sup> Thus burdens become blessings, though often such blessings are well disguised and may require time, effort, and faith to accept and understand. Four examples may help explain this:

- First, Adam was told, “Cursed shall be the ground for thy sake,” which meant for his benefit, and “by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”<sup>3</sup> Work is a continual burden, but it is also a continual blessing “for [our] sake,” for it teaches lessons we can learn only “by the sweat of [our] face.”
- Second, Alma observed that the poverty and “afflictions [of the poor among the Zoramites] had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.”<sup>4</sup> He added, “Because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye.”<sup>5</sup> Our economic challenges may help prepare us to hear the word of the Lord.
- Third, because of the “exceedingly great length of [their] war,” many Nephites and Lamanites “were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility.”<sup>6</sup> Political unrest, social disorder, and, in some areas of the world, modern Gadianton robbers may humble us and motivate us to seek heavenly shelter from societal storms.
- Fourth, Joseph Smith was told that the terrible things he suffered for years at the hands of his enemies would “give [him] experience, and . . . be for [his] good.”<sup>7</sup> The suffering we experience through the offenses of others is a valuable, though painful, school for improving our own behavior.

## Bearing one another’s burdens

Further, bearing up under our own burdens can help us develop a reservoir of empathy for the problems others face. The Apostle Paul taught that we should “bear . . . one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, our baptismal covenants require that we should be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and [be] willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>9</sup>

Keeping our baptismal covenants helps relieve our *own* burdens as well as those of burdened souls we serve.<sup>10</sup> Those who offer such assistance to others stand on holy ground. In explaining this, the Savior taught:

“When saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>11</sup>

## The Savior offers us help

Through it all, the Savior offers us sustaining strength and support, and in His own time and way, He offers deliverance. When Alma and his followers escaped from the armies of King Noah, they established a community named Helam. They began to till the ground, build buildings, and prosper.<sup>12</sup> Without warning, an army of the Lamanites brought them into bondage, and “none could deliver them but the Lord their God.”<sup>13</sup> That deliverance, however, did not come immediately.

Their enemies began to “put tasks upon them, and put taskmasters over them.”<sup>14</sup> Although they were threatened with death



for praying,<sup>15</sup> Alma and his people “did pour out their hearts to [God]; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts.”<sup>16</sup> Because of their goodness and their obedience to their baptismal covenants,<sup>17</sup> they were delivered in stages. The Lord said to them:

“I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

“And it came to pass that so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying: Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage.”<sup>18</sup>

Mercifully, the Son of God offers us deliverance from the bondage of our sins, which are among the heaviest of all the burdens we bear. During His Atonement He suffered “according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.”<sup>19</sup> Christ “suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”<sup>20</sup> When we repent and keep the commandments, forgiveness and relief from our burdened conscience come with the help that only the Savior offers, for “surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy.”<sup>21</sup>

I remember that man in Peru, hunched over and struggling to carry that enormous sack of firewood on his back. For me, he is an image of us all as we struggle with the burdens of life. I know that as we

keep the commandments of God and our covenants, He helps us with our burdens. He strengthens us. When we repent, He forgives us and blesses us with peace of conscience and joy.<sup>22</sup> May we then submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
2. Mosiah 3:19.
3. Moses 4:23, 25.
4. Alma 32:6.
5. Alma 32:13.
6. Alma 62:41.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
8. Galatians 6:2.
9. Mosiah 18:8–9.
10. See Matthew 10:39; 11:28–30; Mosiah 2:22.
11. See Matthew 25:35–40.
12. See Mosiah 23:5, 19–20.
13. See Mosiah 23:23–26.
14. Mosiah 24:9.
15. See Mosiah 24:10–11.
16. Mosiah 24:12.
17. See Mosiah 18:8–10; 24:13.
18. Mosiah 24:14–16.
19. Alma 7:13.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
21. Alma 32:13.
22. See Mosiah 4:3; Alma 36:19–21.

## President Eyring

The choir and the congregation will now join in singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Brother Russell T. Osguthorpe, Sunday School general president, will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

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The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Russell T. Osguthorpe

### Saving lives

One day while serving as a mission president, I was talking on the phone to our oldest son. He was on his way to the hospital where he worked as a physician. When he arrived at the hospital, he said, “Nice talking to you, Dad, but now I’ve got to get out of my car and go save some lives.”

Our son treats children with life-threatening illnesses. When he is able to diagnose a disease properly and give the right treatment, he can save a child’s life. I told our missionaries that their work is also to help save lives—the spiritual lives of those they teach.

President Joseph F. Smith said: “When [we receive] the truth [we] will be saved by it. [We] will not be saved merely because someone taught it to [us], but because [we] received and acted upon it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1902, 86; see also *Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 49; 1 Timothy 4:16).

### Elements of effective teaching

Our son saves lives by sharing his knowledge of medicine; missionaries and teachers in the Church help save lives by sharing their knowledge of the gospel. When missionaries and teachers draw upon the Spirit, they teach the appropriate principle, invite their learners to live that principle, and bear witness of the promised blessings that will certainly follow. Elder David A. Bednar shared these three simple elements of effective teaching in a recent training meeting: (1) key doctrine, (2) invitation to action, and (3) promised blessings.

The guide *Preach My Gospel* helps missionaries teach key doctrine and invite those they teach to take action and receive promised blessings. The guide *Teaching,*

*No Greater Call* helps parents and teachers do the same. It is to gospel teaching what *Preach My Gospel* is to missionary work. We use them to prepare to teach, and then we draw upon the Spirit as we teach.

President Thomas S. Monson tells of a Sunday School teacher from his youth, Lucy Gertsch. One Sunday, partway through a lesson about selfless service, Sister Gertsch invited her students to give their class party fund to the family of one of their classmates whose mother had passed away. President Monson said that in giving that invitation to action, Sister Gertsch had “closed the manual and opened our eyes and our ears and our hearts to the glory of God” (“Examples of Great Teachers” [worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 10, 2007], *Ensign*, June 2007, 108). Sister Gertsch had clearly used the manual to prepare her lesson, but when inspiration came, she closed the manual and invited her students to live the gospel principle she was teaching.

As President Monson has taught: “The goal of gospel teaching . . . is not to ‘pour information’ into the minds of class members. . . . *The aim is to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107; italics in original).

When Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph, he not only taught him key doctrines of the Restoration, but he also told him that “God had a work for [him] to do” and promised him that his name would be known throughout the world (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33). All parents and gospel teachers are messengers from God. Not all of us teach future prophets, as did Sister Gertsch and Moroni, but we are all teaching future leaders of the Church. So we teach key doctrine, invite learners to do the work God has for them, and then promise that blessings will surely come.

## Examples of inspiring teachers

I remember as a young boy feeling carefree as I walked to the church for a Primary meeting. When I arrived, I was surprised to see all of the parents there for a special program. Then it hit me. I had a part in this program, and I had forgotten to memorize my lines. When my turn came to say my part, I stood in front of my chair, but not one word came from my mouth. I could remember nothing. So I just stood there and then finally sat down and stared at the floor.

After that experience, I made a firm resolve never to speak in any Church meeting again. And I held to that resolve for some time. Then one Sunday, Sister Lydia Stillman, a Primary leader, knelt down at my side and asked me to give a short talk the following week. I said, “I don’t give talks.” She responded, “I know, but you can give this one because I’ll help you.” I continued to resist, but she expressed so much confidence in me that her invitation was hard to refuse. I gave the talk.

That good woman was a messenger from God, who had a work for me to do. She taught me that when a call comes, you accept it, no matter how inadequate you might feel. As Moroni did with Joseph, she made certain that I was prepared when the time came to give that talk. That inspired teacher helped save my life.

When I was in my teens, a recently returned missionary named Brother Peterson taught our Sunday School class. Every week he would draw a large arrow from the lower left-hand corner of the blackboard pointing to the upper right-hand corner. Then he would write at the top of the blackboard, “Aim High.”

Whatever doctrine he was teaching, he would ask us to stretch ourselves, to reach a little higher than we thought was possible. The arrow and those two words, *aim high*, were a constant invitation throughout the lesson. Brother Peterson made me want to serve a good mission, to do better

in school, to set my sights higher for my career.

Brother Peterson had a work for us to do. His goal was to help us “think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles.” His teaching helped save my life.

## Experience learning mission languages

At the age of 19, I was called to serve a mission in Tahiti, where I had to learn two foreign languages—French and Tahitian. Early in my mission, I became very discouraged at my lack of progress in either language. Every time I tried to speak French, people responded in Tahitian. When I tried to speak Tahitian, they answered in French. I was on the verge of giving up.

Then one day, as I was walking past the laundry room at the mission home, I heard a voice calling me. I turned around and saw a gray-haired Tahitian woman standing in the doorway motioning for me to come back. Her name was Tuputeata Moo. She spoke only Tahitian. And I spoke only English. I missed much of what she was trying to tell me, but I did understand that she wanted me to return to the laundry room every day so she could help me learn Tahitian.

I stopped by daily to practice with her while she ironed clothes. At first I wondered if our meetings would be of any help, but gradually I began to understand her. Each time we met, she communicated to me her complete confidence that I could learn both languages.

Sister Moo helped me learn Tahitian. But she helped me learn much more than that. She was really teaching me the first principle of the gospel—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She taught me that if I relied on the Lord, He would help me do something I thought was impossible. She not only helped save my mission—she helped save my life.



## Evaluating our teaching

Sister Stillman, Brother Peterson, and Sister Moo taught “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul” (D&C 121:41–42). They taught with virtue garnishing their thoughts, and because of that, the Holy Ghost was their constant companion (see D&C 121:45–46).

These great teachers have inspired me to ask questions about my own teaching:

1. As a teacher, do I view myself as a messenger from God?
2. Do I prepare and then teach in ways that can help save lives?
3. Do I focus on a key doctrine of the Restoration?
4. Can those I teach feel the love I have for them and for my Heavenly Father and the Savior?
5. When inspiration comes, do I close the manual and open their eyes and their ears and their hearts to the glory of God?
6. Do I invite them to do the work that God has for them to do?
7. Do I express so much confidence in them that they find the invitation hard to refuse?
8. Do I help them recognize promised blessings that come from living the doctrine I am teaching?

Learning and teaching are not optional activities in the kingdom of God. They are the very means by which the gospel has been restored to the earth and by which we will gain eternal life. They provide the pathway to personal testimony. No one can be “saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6).

I know that God lives. I testify that Jesus is the Christ. I bear witness that the Prophet Joseph opened this dispensation by learning truth and then teaching it. Joseph asked one question after another, received divine answers, and then taught what he had learned to God’s children. I know that President Monson is the Lord’s mouthpiece on the earth today and that he continues to learn and to teach us as Joseph did because teaching helps save lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David A. Bednar

### “More diligent and concerned at home”

In 1833 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that contained a strong rebuke to several leading brethren of the Church to set their families in order (see D&C 93:40–50). A specific phrase from this revelation provides the theme for my message—“more diligent and concerned at home” (verse 50). I want to suggest three ways each of us can become more diligent and concerned in our homes. I invite you to listen both with ears that hear and with hearts that feel, and I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with all of us.

### Expressing and showing love

*Suggestion number one: Express love—and show it.* We can begin to become more diligent and concerned at home by telling the people we love that we love them. Such expressions do not need to be flowery or lengthy. We simply should sincerely and frequently express love.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you took your eternal companion in your arms and said, “I love you”? Parents, when was the last time you sincerely expressed love to your children? Children, when was the last time you told your parents that you love them?

Each of us already knows we should tell the people we love that we love them. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that saying “I love you” is only a beginning. We need to say it, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to show it. We need to both express and demonstrate love.

President Thomas S. Monson recently counseled: “Often we assume that [the people around us] *must* know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. . . . We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from our relationships with those who mean the most to us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 85–86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 86; italics in original).

Sometimes in a sacrament meeting talk or testimony, we hear a statement like this: “I know I do not tell my spouse often enough how much I love her. Today I want her, my children, and all of you to know that I love her.”

Such an expression of love may be appropriate. But when I hear a statement like this, I squirm and silently exclaim that the spouse and children should not be hearing this apparently rare and private communication in public at church! Hopefully the children hear love expressed and see love demonstrated between their parents in the regular routine of daily living. If, however, the public statement of love at church is a bit surprising to the spouse or the children, then indeed there is a need to be more diligent and concerned at home.

The relationship between love and appropriate action is demonstrated repeatedly in the scriptures and is highlighted

by the Savior’s instruction to His Apostles: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Just as our love of and for the Lord is evidenced by walking ever in His ways (see Deuteronomy 19:9), so our love for spouse, parents, and children is reflected most powerfully in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds (see Mosiah 4:30).

Feeling the security and constancy of love from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such love nurtures and sustains faith in God. Such love is a source of strength and casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18). Such love is the desire of every human soul.

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we express love—and consistently show it.

### Declaring and living our testimonies

*Suggestion number two: Bear testimony—and live it.* We also can become more diligent and concerned at home by bearing testimony to those whom we love about the things we know to be true by the witness of the Holy Ghost. The bearing of testimony need not be lengthy or eloquent. And we do not need to wait until the first Sunday of the month to declare our witness of things that are true. Within the walls of our own homes, we can and should bear pure testimony of the divinity and reality of the Father and the Son, of the great plan of happiness, and of the Restoration.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you bore testimony to your eternal companion? Parents, when was the last time you declared your witness to your children about the things you know to be true? And children, when was the last time you shared your testimony with your parents and family?

Each of us already knows we should bear testimony to the people we love the most. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel

unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that bearing a heartfelt testimony is only a beginning. We need to bear testimony, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to live it. We need to both declare and live our testimonies.

The relationship between testimony and appropriate action is emphasized in the Savior's instruction to the Saints in Kirtland: "That which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do" (D&C 46:7). Our testimony of gospel truth should be reflected both in our words and in our deeds. And our testimonies are proclaimed and lived most powerfully in our own homes. Spouses, parents, and children should strive to overcome any hesitancy, reluctance, or embarrassment about bearing testimony. We should both create and look for opportunities to bear testimony of gospel truths—and live them.

A testimony is what we know to be true in our minds and in our hearts by the witness of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2). As we profess truth rather than admonish, exhort, or simply share interesting experiences, we invite the Holy Ghost to confirm the verity of our words. The power of pure testimony (see Alma 4:19) does not come from sophisticated language or effective presentation; rather, it is the result of revelation conveyed by the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost.

Feeling the power, the edification, and the constancy of testimony from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such testimony fortifies faith and provides direction. Such testimony generates light in a world that grows increasingly dark. Such testimony is the source of an eternal perspective and of enduring peace.

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we bear testimony—and consistently live it.

### Consistency

*Suggestion number three: Be consistent.* As our sons were growing up, our family did what you have done and what you now do. We had regular family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Now, I am sure what I am about to describe has never occurred in your home, but it did in ours.

Sometimes Sister Bednar and I wondered if our efforts to do these spiritually essential things were worthwhile. Now and then verses of scripture were read amid outbursts such as "He's touching me!" "Make him stop looking at me!" "Mom, he's breathing my air!" Sincere prayers occasionally were interrupted with giggling and poking. And with active, rambunctious boys, family home evening lessons did not always produce high levels of edification. At times Sister Bednar and I were exasperated because the righteous habits we worked so hard to foster did not seem to yield immediately the spiritual results we wanted and expected.

Today if you could ask our adult sons what they remember about family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening, I believe I know how they would answer. They likely would not identify a particular prayer or a specific instance of scripture study or an especially meaningful family home evening lesson as the defining moment in their spiritual development. What they would say they remember is that as a family we were consistent.

Sister Bednar and I thought helping our sons understand the content of a particular lesson or a specific scripture was the ultimate outcome. But such a result does not occur each time we study or pray or learn together. The consistency of our intent and work was perhaps the greatest lesson—a

lesson we did not fully appreciate at the time.

In my office is a beautiful painting of a wheat field. The painting is a vast collection of individual brushstrokes—none of which in isolation is very interesting or impressive. In fact, if you stand close to the canvas, all you can see is a mass of seemingly unrelated and unattractive streaks of yellow and gold and brown paint. However, as you gradually move away from the canvas, all of the individual brushstrokes combine together and produce a magnificent landscape of a wheat field. Many ordinary, individual brushstrokes work together to create a captivating and beautiful painting.

Each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study, and each family home evening is a brushstroke on the canvas of our souls. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable. But just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). Consistency is a key principle as we lay the foundation of a great work in our individual lives and as we become more diligent and concerned in our own homes.

Being consistent in our homes is important for another reason. Many of the Savior’s harshest rebukes were directed to hypocrites. Jesus warned His disciples concerning the scribes and Pharisees: “Do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). This strong admonition is sobering, given the counsel to “express love—and show it,” to “bear testimony—and live it,” and to “be consistent.”

The hypocrisy in our lives is most readily discerned and causes the greatest

destruction within our own homes. And children often are the most alert and sensitive when it comes to recognizing hypocrisy.

A public statement of love when the private actions of love are absent at home is hypocrisy—and weakens the foundation of a great work. Publicly declaring testimony when faithfulness and obedience are missing within our own homes is hypocrisy—and undermines the foundation of a great work. The commandment “Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16) applies most pointedly to the hypocrite in each of us. We need to be and become more consistent. “But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

As we seek the Lord’s help and in His strength, we can gradually reduce the disparity between what we say and what we do, between expressing love and consistently showing it, and between bearing testimony and steadfastly living it. We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we are more faithful in learning, living, and loving the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Testimony

“Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). For these and other eternally important reasons, we should be more diligent and concerned at home.

May every spouse, every child, and every parent be blessed to communicate and receive love, to bear and be edified by strong testimony, and to become more consistent in the seemingly small things that matter so much.

In these important pursuits we will never be left alone. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. They love us and know our circumstances, and They

will help us to become more diligent and concerned at home. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

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### President Eyring

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful music they have provided this

morning. The choir will now sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Uchtdorf’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

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The choir sang “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### What we are known for

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is continually growing and becoming better known throughout the world. Although there will always be those who stereotype the Church and its members in a negative way, most people think of us as honest, helpful, and hard-working. Some have images of clean-cut missionaries, loving families, and friendly neighbors who don’t smoke or drink. We might also be known as a people who attend church every Sunday for three hours, in a place where everyone is a brother or a sister, where the children sing songs about streams that talk, trees that produce popcorn, and children who want to become sunbeams.

Brothers and sisters, of all the things *we* want to be known for, are there attributes above all others that should define us as members of His Church, even as disciples of Jesus Christ? Since our last general conference six months ago, I have pondered this and similar questions. Today I would like to share with you some thoughts and impressions that have come as a result of that inquiry.

### Becoming true disciples

The first question is: *How do we become true disciples of Jesus Christ?* The Savior Himself provided the answer with this profound declaration: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>1</sup> This is the essence of what it means to be a true disciple: those who receive Christ Jesus walk with Him.<sup>2</sup>

But this may present a problem for some because there are so many “shoulds” and “should nots” that merely keeping track of them can be a challenge. Sometimes, well-meaning amplifications of divine principles—many coming from uninspired sources—complicate matters further, diluting the purity of divine truth with man-made addenda. One person’s good idea—something that may work for him or her—takes root and becomes an expectation. And gradually, eternal principles can get lost within the labyrinth of “good ideas.”

This was one of the Savior’s criticisms of the religious “experts” of His day, whom He chastised for attending to the hundreds of minor details of the law while neglecting the weightier matters.<sup>3</sup>



## Love, the great commandment

So how do we stay aligned with these weightier matters? Is there a constant compass that can help us prioritize our lives, thoughts, and actions?

Once again the Savior revealed the way. When asked to name the greatest commandment, He did not hesitate. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” He said. “This is the first and great commandment.”<sup>4</sup> Coupled with the second great commandment—to love our neighbor as ourselves<sup>5</sup>—we have a compass that provides direction not only for our lives but also for the Lord’s Church on both sides of the veil.

Because love is the great commandment, it ought to be at the *center* of all and everything we do in our own family, in our Church callings, and in our livelihood. Love is the healing balm that repairs rifts in personal and family relationships. It is the bond that unites families, communities, and nations. Love is the power that initiates friendship, tolerance, civility, and respect. It is the source that overcomes divisiveness and hate. Love is the fire that warms our lives with unparalleled joy and divine hope. Love should be our walk and our talk.

When we truly understand what it means to love as Jesus Christ loves us, the confusion clears and our priorities align. Our walk as disciples of Christ becomes more joyful. Our lives take on new meaning. Our relationship with our Heavenly Father becomes more profound. Obedience becomes a joy rather than a burden.

## Our need to love God

*Why should we love God?* God the Eternal Father did not give that first great commandment because He needs us to love Him. His power and glory are not diminished should we disregard, deny, or even defile His name. His influence and

dominion extend through time and space independent of our acceptance, approval, or admiration.

No, God does not need us to love Him. But oh, how we need to love God!

For what we love determines what we seek.

What we seek determines what we think and do.

What we think and do determines who we are—and who we will become.

We are created in the image of our heavenly parents; we are God’s spirit children. Therefore, we have a vast capacity for love—it is part of our spiritual heritage. What and how we love not only defines us as individuals; it also defines us as a church. Love is the defining characteristic of a disciple of Christ.

Since the beginning of time, love has been the source of both the highest bliss and the heaviest burdens. At the heart of misery from the days of Adam until today, you will find the love of wrong things. And at the heart of joy, you will find the love of good things.

And the greatest of all good things is God.

Our Father in Heaven has given us, His children, much more than any mortal mind can comprehend. Under His direction the Great Jehovah created this wondrous world we live in. God the Father watches over us, fills our hearts with breathtaking joy, brightens our darkest hours with blessed peace, distills upon our minds precious truths, shepherds us through times of distress, rejoices when we rejoice, and answers our righteous petitions.

He offers to His children the promise of a glorious and infinite existence and has provided a way for us to progress in knowledge and glory until we receive a fulness of joy. He has promised us all that He has.

If all that is not enough reason to love our Heavenly Father, perhaps we can learn from the words of the Apostle John, who said, “We love him, because he first loved us.”<sup>6</sup>

## God's love for us

*Why does Heavenly Father love us?* Think of the purest, most all-consuming love you can imagine. Now multiply that love by an infinite amount—that is the measure of God's love for you.<sup>7</sup>

God does not look on the outward appearance.<sup>8</sup> I believe that He doesn't care one bit if we live in a castle or a cottage, if we are handsome or homely, if we are famous or forgotten. Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely.

He loves us because He is filled with an infinite measure of holy, pure, and indescribable love. We are important to God not because of our résumé but because we are His children. He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken. God's love is so great that He loves even the proud, the selfish, the arrogant, and the wicked.

What this means is that, regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us.<sup>9</sup>

## Increasing our love of God

*How can we increase our love of God?* Since "God is love,"<sup>10</sup> the closer we approach Him, the more profoundly we experience love.<sup>11</sup> But because a veil separates this mortality from our heavenly home, we must seek in the Spirit that which is imperceptible to mortal eyes.

Heaven may seem distant at times, but the scriptures offer hope: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."<sup>12</sup>

However, seeking God with all our hearts implies much more than simply

offering a prayer or pronouncing a few words inviting God into our lives. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."<sup>13</sup> We can make a great production of saying that we know God. We can proclaim publicly that we love Him. Nevertheless, if we don't obey Him, all is in vain, for "he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."<sup>14</sup>

We increase our love for our Heavenly Father and demonstrate that love by aligning our thoughts and actions with God's word. His pure love directs and encourages us to become more pure and holy. It inspires us to walk in righteousness—not out of fear or obligation but out of an earnest desire to become even more like Him because we love Him. By doing so, we can become "born again . . . [and] cleansed by blood, even the blood of [the] Only Begotten; that [we] might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory."<sup>15</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, don't get discouraged if you stumble at times. Don't feel downcast or despair if you don't feel worthy to be a disciple of Christ at all times. The first step to walking in righteousness is simply to try. We must *try* to believe. Try to learn of God: read the scriptures; study the words of His latter-day prophets; choose to listen to the Father; and do the things He asks of us. Try and keep on trying until that which seems difficult becomes possible—and that which seems only possible becomes habit and a real part of you.

## Listening for the Father's voice

*How can we hear the Father's voice?* As you reach out to your Heavenly Father, as you pray to Him in the name of Christ, He will answer you. He speaks to us everywhere.

As you read God's word recorded in the scriptures, listen for His voice.

During this general conference and later as you study the words spoken here, listen for His voice.

As you visit the temple and attend Church meetings, listen for His voice.

Listen for the voice of the Father in the bounties and beauties of nature, in the gentle whisperings of the Spirit.

In your daily interactions with others, in the words of a hymn, in the laughter of a child, listen for His voice.

If you listen for the voice of the Father, He will lead you on a course that will allow you to experience the pure love of Christ.

As we draw near to Heavenly Father, we become more holy. And as we become more holy, we will overcome disbelief and our souls will be filled with His blessed light. As we align our lives with this supernal light, it leads us out of darkness and toward greater light. This greater light leads to the unspeakable ministrings of the Holy Spirit, and the veil between heaven and earth can become thin.

### Love is the way of the disciple

*Why is love the great commandment?* Heavenly Father's love for His children is the core message of the plan of happiness, which plan is made active through the Atonement of Jesus Christ—the greatest expression of love the world has ever known.<sup>16</sup>

How clearly the Savior spoke when He said that every other commandment hangs upon the principle of love.<sup>17</sup> If we do not neglect the great laws—if we truly learn to love our Heavenly Father and our fellowman with all our heart, soul, and mind—all else will fall into place.

The divine love of God turns ordinary acts into extraordinary service. Divine love is the motive that transports simple words into sacred scripture. Divine love is the factor that transforms reluctant compliance with God's commandments into blessed dedication and consecration.

Love is the guiding light that illuminates the disciple's path and fills our daily walk with life, meaning, and wonder.

Love is the measure of our faith, the inspiration for our obedience, and the true altitude of our discipleship.

Love is the way of the disciple.

I testify that God is in His heaven. He lives. He knows and loves you. He is mindful of you. He hears your prayers and knows the desires of your heart. He is filled with infinite love for you.

Let me conclude as I began, my dear brothers and sisters: what attribute should define us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Let us be known as a people who love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and who love our neighbor as ourselves. When we understand and practice these two great commandments in our families, in our wards and branches, in our nations, and in our daily lives, we will begin to understand what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus the Christ. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. John 14:15.
2. See Colossians 2:6.
3. See Matthew 23:23.
4. Matthew 22:37–38.
5. See Matthew 22:39.
6. 1 John 4:19.
7. See Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 31:3.
8. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
10. 1 John 4:8.
11. See Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:7, 16.
12. Jeremiah 29:13.
13. 1 John 5:3; see also 2 John 1:6.
14. 1 John 2:4; see also Isaiah 29:13.
15. Moses 6:59.
16. See John 15:13.
17. See Matthew 22:36–40.

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The choir sang “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 179th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

### President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the second session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Linda

Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free."

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### President Eyring

The choir just sang "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free."

President Monson has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote, after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following Elder Hales's remarks, Elder Jorge F. Zeballos of the Seventy will address us.

## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Henry B. Eyring

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and

revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Charles Didier, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. It is also proposed that we release Elders Douglas L. Callister, Shirley D. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, W. Douglas Shumway, and Robert S. Wood as members of the Second Quorum

of the Seventy. Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these Brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I have been impressed to speak about God's love and God's commandments. My message is that God's universal and perfect love is shown in all the blessings of His gospel plan, including the fact that His choicest blessings are reserved for those who obey His laws.<sup>1</sup> These are eternal principles that should guide parents in their love and teaching of their children.

### Confusion between love and law

I begin with four examples which illustrate some mortal confusion between love and law.

- A young adult in a cohabitation relationship tells grieving parents, "If you really loved me, you would accept me and my partner just like you accept your married children."
- A youth reacts to parental commands or pressure by declaring, "If you really loved me, you wouldn't force me."

In these examples a person violating commandments asserts that parental love should override the commandments of divine law and the teachings of parents.

The next two examples show mortal confusion about the effect of God's love.

- A person rejects the doctrine that a couple must be married for eternity to enjoy family relationships in the next life, declaring, "If God really loved us, I can't believe He would separate husbands and wives in this way."
- Another person says his faith has been destroyed by the suffering God allows to be inflicted on a person or a race, concluding, "If there was a God who loved us, He wouldn't let this happen."

These persons disbelieve eternal laws which they consider contrary to their concept of the effect of God's love. Persons who take this position do not understand the nature of God's love or the purpose of His laws and commandments. The love of God does not supersede His laws and His commandments, and the effect of God's laws and commandments does not diminish the purpose and effect of His love. The same should be true of parental love and rules.

## The love of God

First, consider the love of God, described so meaningfully this morning by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” the Apostle Paul asked. Not tribulation, not persecution, not peril or the sword (see Romans 8:35). “For I am persuaded,” he concluded, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God” (verses 38–39).

There is no greater evidence of the infinite power and perfection of God’s love than is recorded by the Apostle John: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Another Apostle wrote that God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). Think how it must have grieved our Heavenly Father to send His Son to endure incomprehensible suffering for our sins. That is the greatest evidence of His love for each of us!

God’s love for His children is an eternal reality, but why does He love us so much, and why do we desire that love? The answer is found in the relationship between God’s love and His laws.

Some seem to value God’s love because of their hope that His love is so great and so unconditional that it will mercifully excuse them from obeying His laws. In contrast, those who understand God’s plan for His children know that God’s laws are invariable, which is another great evidence of His love for His children. Mercy cannot rob justice,<sup>2</sup> and those who obtain mercy are “they who have kept the covenant and observed the commandment” (D&C 54:6).

We read again and again in the Bible and in modern scriptures of God’s anger with the wicked<sup>3</sup> and of His acting in His wrath<sup>4</sup> against those who violate His laws. How are anger and wrath evidence

of His love? Joseph Smith taught that God “institute[d] laws whereby [the spirits that He would send into the world] could have a privilege to advance like himself.”<sup>5</sup> God’s love is so perfect that He lovingly requires us to obey His commandments because He knows that only through obedience to His laws can we become perfect, as He is. For this reason, God’s anger and His wrath are not a *contradiction* of His love but an *evidence* of His love. Every parent knows that you can love a child totally and completely while still being creatively angry and disappointed at that child’s self-defeating behavior.

The love of God is so universal that His perfect plan bestows many gifts on all of His children, even those who disobey His laws. Mortality is one such gift, bestowed on all who qualified in the War in Heaven.<sup>6</sup> Another unconditional gift is the universal resurrection: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Many other mortal gifts are not tied to our personal obedience to law. As Jesus taught, our Heavenly Father “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

If only we will listen, we can know of God’s love and feel it, even when we are disobedient. A woman recently returned to Church activity gave this description in a sacrament meeting talk: “He has always been there for me, even when I rejected Him. He has always guided me and comforted me with His tender mercies all around me, but I [was] too angry to see and accept incidents and feelings as such.”<sup>7</sup>

## God’s laws

God’s choicest blessings are clearly contingent upon obedience to God’s laws and commandments. The key teaching is from modern revelation:

“There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21).

This great principle helps us understand the *why* of many things, like justice and mercy balanced by the Atonement. It also explains why God will not forestall the exercise of agency by His children. Agency—our power to choose—is fundamental to the gospel plan that brings us to earth. God does not intervene to forestall the consequences of some persons’ choices in order to protect the well-being of other persons—even when they kill, injure, or oppress one another—for this would destroy His plan for our eternal progress.<sup>8</sup> He will bless us to endure the consequences of others’ choices, but He will not prevent those choices.<sup>9</sup>

If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments. Consider these examples.

When Jesus began His ministry, His first message was repentance.<sup>10</sup>

When He exercised loving mercy by not condemning the woman taken in adultery, He nevertheless told her, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The effect of God’s commandments and laws is not changed to accommodate popular behavior or desires. If anyone thinks that godly or parental love for an individual grants the loved one license to disobey the law, he or she does not understand either love or law. The Lord declared: “That which breaketh a law, and

abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willetth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (D&C 88:35).

We read in modern revelation, “All kingdoms have a law given” (D&C 88:36). For example:

“He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory” (D&C 88:22–24).

In other words, the kingdom of glory to which the Final Judgment assigns us is not determined by love but by the law that God has invoked in His plan to qualify us for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

### Parents’ application of principles

In teaching and reacting to their children, parents have many opportunities to apply these principles. One such opportunity has to do with the gifts parents bestow on their children. Just as God has bestowed some gifts on all of His mortal children without requiring their personal obedience to His laws, parents provide many benefits like housing and food even if their children are not in total harmony with all parental requirements. But, following the example of an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father who has given laws and commandments for the benefit of His children, wise parents condition some parental gifts on obedience.

If parents have a wayward child—such as a teenager indulging in alcohol or drugs—they face a serious question. Does parental love require that these substances or their consumption be allowed in the home, or do the requirements of civil law or the

seriousness of the conduct or the interests of other children in the home require that this be forbidden?

To pose an even more serious question, if an adult child is living in cohabitation, does the seriousness of sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage require that this child feel the full weight of family disapproval by being excluded from any family contacts, or does parental love require that the fact of cohabitation be ignored? I have seen both of these extremes, and I believe that both are inappropriate.

Where do parents draw the line? That is a matter for parental wisdom, guided by the inspiration of the Lord. There is no area of parental action that is more needful of heavenly guidance or more likely to receive it than the decisions of parents in raising their children and governing their families. This is the work of eternity.

As parents grapple with these problems, they should remember the Lord's teaching that we leave the ninety and nine and go out into the wilderness to rescue the lost sheep.<sup>11</sup> President Thomas S. Monson has called for a loving crusade to rescue our brothers and sisters who are wandering in the wilderness of apathy or ignorance.<sup>12</sup> These teachings require continued loving concern, which surely requires continued loving associations.

Parents should also remember the Lord's frequent teaching that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).<sup>13</sup> In his conference talk on tolerance and love, Elder Russell M. Nelson taught that "real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructive behavior."<sup>14</sup>

Wherever the line is drawn between the power of love and the force of law, the breaking of commandments is certain to impact loving family relationships. Jesus taught:

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

"For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

"The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother" (Luke 12:51–53).

This sobering teaching reminds us that when family members are not united in striving to keep the commandments of God, there will be divisions. We do all that we can to avoid impairing loving relationships, but sometimes it happens after all we can do.

In the midst of such stress, we must endure the reality that the straying of our loved ones will detract from our happiness, but it should not detract from our love for one another or our patient efforts to be united in understanding God's love and God's laws.

I testify of the truth of these things, which are part of the plan of salvation and the doctrine of Christ, of whom I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Divine Love," *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–25.
2. See Alma 42:25.
3. See, for example, Judges 2:12–14; Psalm 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 5:8; 63:32.
4. See, for example, 2 Kings 23:26–27; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Nephi 22:16–17; Alma 12:35–36; Doctrine and Covenants 84:24.
5. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:312.
6. See Revelation 12:7–8.
7. Letter of Dec. 6, 2005, in author's possession.
8. Compare Alma 42:8.
9. Compare Mosiah 24:14–15.
10. See Matthew 4:17.
11. See Luke 15:3–7.
12. See Thomas S. Monson, "Lost Battalions," *Ensign*, Apr. 1987, 3–6.



13. See also Proverbs 3:12; Revelation 3:19; Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.
14. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 71.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Importance of belief in God

My brothers and sisters, I express gratitude for the witnesses of God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, given by living prophets during this conference and for the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

As prophesied, we live in a time when the darkness of secularism is deepening around us. Belief in God is widely questioned and even attacked in the name of political, social, and even religious causes. Atheism, or the doctrine that there is no God, is fast spreading across the world.

Even so, as members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, we declare that “we believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup>

Some wonder, why is belief in God so important? Why did the Savior say, “And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”?<sup>2</sup>

Without God, life would end at the grave and our mortal experiences would have no purpose. Growth and progress would be temporary, accomplishment without value, challenges without meaning. There would be no ultimate right and wrong and no moral responsibility to care for one another as fellow children of God. Indeed, without God, there would be no mortal or eternal life.

If you or someone you love is seeking purpose in life or a deeper conviction of God’s presence in our lives, I offer, as a friend and as an Apostle, my witness. He lives!

### Scriptural testimonies

Some may ask, how can I know this for myself? We know He lives because we believe the testimonies of His ancient and living prophets, and we have felt God’s Spirit confirm that the testimonies of these prophets are true.

From their testimonies, recorded in holy scripture, we know that “[God] created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness.”<sup>3</sup> Some people may be surprised to learn that we look like God. One prominent religious scholar has even taught that imagining God in the form of man is creating a graven image and is idolatrous and blasphemous.<sup>4</sup> But God Himself said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.”<sup>5</sup>

The use of the words *us* and *our* in this scripture also teaches us about the relationship between the Father and the Son. God further taught, “By mine Only Begotten [Son] I created these things.”<sup>6</sup> The Father and the Son are separate and distinct individuals—as any father and son always are. This may be one reason the name of God in Hebrew, *Elohim*, is not singular but plural.

From the New Testament we know that Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a physical presence. They stand in one place at one time, as the New Testament disciple Stephen testified: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>7</sup>

We also know that the Father and the Son have voices. As recorded in Genesis and the book of Moses, Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God, as they

were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.”<sup>8</sup>

We know that the Father and the Son have faces, that They stand, and that They converse. The prophet Enoch declared, “I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another.”<sup>9</sup>

We know that God and His Son have bodies, in form and parts like ours. From the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon, we read, “And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood.”<sup>10</sup> Later the Lord revealed Himself, saying, “Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and . . . I [will] appear unto my people in the flesh.”<sup>11</sup>

We know that the Father and the Son have feelings for us. The book of Moses records, “And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept.”<sup>12</sup>

And we know that God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are immortal, glorified, and perfected beings. Of the Savior Jesus Christ, the Prophet Joseph Smith recounts, “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters.”<sup>13</sup>

### The testimony of Joseph Smith

No testimony is more significant to us in our time than the witness of Joseph Smith. He was the prophet chosen to restore the ancient Church of Christ in this, the last time when the gospel will be on the earth before the return of Jesus Christ. Like all the prophets who opened the work of God in their dispensations, Joseph was given especially clear and powerful prophetic experiences to prepare the world for the Savior’s Second Coming.

As a 14-year-old boy, he sought to know which church he should join. Then, after pondering on the matter, he turned to the Bible, where he read:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him [or her] ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally . . . ; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”<sup>14</sup>

Believing those prophetic words and with unwavering, childlike faith, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and there knelt and prayed. Later he recorded:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head. . . .

“ . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air.”<sup>15</sup>

Looking up at these two beings, even Joseph could not have known who They were—for he had not yet witnessed and learned the true nature of God and Christ. But then, he records, “one of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>16</sup>

From that singular experience and others, the Prophet Joseph bore witness, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also.”<sup>17</sup>

### The Spirit versus the natural man

Prophets throughout the ages have shared witnesses like this one and continue to do so in this very conference. But each of us has agency to choose. As the eleventh article of faith states, “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our *own* conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”<sup>18</sup>

In matters of personal belief, how do we know what really is true?

I testify that the way to know the truth *about God* is through the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, is a personage of spirit. His work is to “testify of [God]”<sup>19</sup> and to “teach [us] all things.”<sup>20</sup>

However, we must be careful not to constrain His influence. When we do not do what is right or when our outlook is dominated by skepticism, cynicism, criticism, and irreverence toward others and their beliefs, the Spirit cannot be with us. We then act in a way that the prophets describe as the *natural man*.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>21</sup> This “natural man is an enemy to God, . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, . . . and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love.”<sup>22</sup>

### Korihor’s rejection of the truth

If we do not yield to the gentle influence of the Holy Ghost, we stand in jeopardy of becoming like Korihor, an anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon. Not only did Korihor disbelieve in God, but he also ridiculed the Savior, the Atonement, and the spirit of prophecy, falsely teaching that there is no God and no Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Korihor was not content merely to reject God and quietly go his own way. He mocked the believers and demanded that the prophet Alma convince him with a sign of God’s existence and power. Alma’s response is as meaningful today as it was then: “Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.”<sup>24</sup>

Eventually Korihor was given a sign. He was struck dumb. “And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote, saying: . . . I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this upon me; yea, and I always knew that there was a God.”<sup>25</sup>

### Seeking a testimony of God

Brothers and sisters, you may already know, deep in your soul, that God lives. You may not know all about Him yet and do not understand all His ways, but the light of belief is within you, waiting to be awakened and intensified by the Spirit of God and the Light of Christ, which you are born with.

So come. Believe the testimonies of the prophets. Learn of God and Christ. The pattern to do so is clearly taught by prophets of old and prophets today.

Cultivate a diligent desire to know that God lives.

This desire leads us to ponder on the things of heaven—to let the evidence of God all around us touch our hearts.

With softened hearts we are prepared to heed the Savior’s call to “search the scriptures”<sup>26</sup> and to humbly learn from them.

We are then ready to ask our Heavenly Father sincerely, in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, if the things we have learned are true. Most of us will not see God, as the prophets have, but the still, small promptings of the Spirit—the thoughts and feelings that the Holy Ghost brings into our minds and hearts—will give us an undeniable knowledge that He lives and that He loves us.

Gaining this knowledge is ultimately the quest of all God’s children on the earth. If you cannot remember believing in God or if you have ceased to believe or if you believe but without real conviction, I invite you to seek a testimony of God now. Do not be afraid of ridicule. The strength and peace that come from knowing God and having the comforting companionship of



His Spirit will make your efforts eternally worthwhile.

Even more, with your own testimony of God, you will be able to bless your family, your posterity, your friends, your own life—all those you love. Your personal knowledge of God is not only the greatest gift you will ever give, but it will bring you the greatest joy you will ever have.

As a special witness of the Only Begotten Son of our loving Heavenly Father, even Jesus Christ, I testify that God lives. I *know* He lives. I promise that if you and those you love will seek Him in all humility, sincerity, and diligence, you will know with a surety too. Your witness will come. And the blessings of knowing God will be yours and your family's forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:1.
2. John 17:3; italics added.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:18; see also Genesis 1:27; Moses 2:27.
4. See Krister Stendahl, "To Speak about God," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 2 (spring 2008): 8–9.
5. Genesis 1:26; Moses 2:26; italics added.
6. Moses 2:1.
7. Acts 7:56.
8. Moses 4:14; see also Genesis 3:8.
9. Moses 7:4.
10. Ether 3:6.
11. Ether 3:16.
12. Moses 7:28.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 110:3.
14. James 1:5–6.
15. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
16. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
18. Articles of Faith 1:11; italics added.
19. John 15:26.
20. John 14:26.
21. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
22. Mosiah 3:19.
23. See Alma 30.
24. Alma 30:44.
25. Alma 30:52.
26. John 5:39.

## Elder Jorge F. Zeballos

### The command to be perfect

When the twelve disciples were called in the Americas, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them: "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."<sup>1</sup> The Savior had recently finalized His successful, selfless, and transcendental mission on earth. This allowed Him to declare with authority that He and His Father, our Father, are the models to be followed by each one of us.

From a purely human point of view, at first this seems to be an impossible task. However, it begins to appear possible upon understanding that in order to achieve it, we are not alone. The most marvelous and powerful helps for which a human being may seek are always available. First is the

generous and loving hand of the Eternal Father, who desires that we return to His presence forever. As our Father, He is always willing and desirous to forgive our errors and weaknesses and the sins we commit, subject only to total and sincere repentance. And as a complement to that—and as the maximum manifestation of His immense love for each one of His children—He provides us with the consequences of the singular work wrought by the Savior, namely the Atonement, brought about by an obedient Son always willing to do the Father's will in benefit to each one of us.

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith the following: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."<sup>2</sup>

This divine promise is possible to achieve. Eternal life is to live with our Father and with our families forevermore.<sup>3</sup> Should not this promise be the greatest incentive to do the best within our reach and give the best of ourselves in pursuit of what has been promised to us?

### **Serving with all our being**

At the dawning of the Restoration, when this marvelous work was about to appear among the children of men, the Lord said, “Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.”<sup>4</sup> With all our heart, with all our might, with all our mind, and with all our strength—that is to say, with all our being.

President David O. McKay said that the rich rewards come only to the strenuous strugglers.<sup>5</sup> These rewards will be for those who nurture faith in Jesus Christ and comply with His will to work, sacrifice, and give all they have received to strengthen and build the kingdom of God.

The fulfillment of the divine promise to have eternal life, to achieve perfection, and to be happy forevermore in the family unit is subject to the sincere demonstration of our faith in Jesus Christ, obedience to the commandments, perseverance, and diligence throughout our lives.

### **The best of ourselves**

The Lord does not expect that we do what we cannot achieve. The command to become perfect, as He is, encourages us to achieve the best of ourselves, to discover and develop the talents and attributes with which we are blessed by a loving Eternal Father, who invites us to realize our potential as children of God. He knows us; He knows of our capacities and our limitations. The invitation and challenge to become perfect, to achieve eternal life, is for all mankind.

Immediately after teaching that “it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength,” King Benjamin indicated that “it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize.”<sup>6</sup> God will not require more than the best we can give because that would not be just, but neither can He accept less than that because that would not be just either. Therefore, let us always give the best we can in the service of God and our fellowmen. Let us serve in our families and in our callings in the Church in the best manner possible. Let us do the best we can and each day be a little better.

Salvation and eternal life would not be possible if it were not for the Atonement, brought about by our Savior, to whom we owe everything. But in order for these supreme blessings to be effective in our lives, we should first do our part, “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”<sup>7</sup> Let us with faith, enthusiasm, dedication, responsibility, and love do all that is within our reach, and we will be doing all that is possible to achieve the impossible—that is, to achieve what for the human mind is impossible but with the divine intervention of our loving Father and the infinite sacrifice brought about by our Savior becomes the greatest gift, the most glorious of realities, to live forever with God and with our families.

I pray that each one of us will remember and permanently renew, by partaking worthily of the sacrament, the commitment we made with our Heavenly Father the moment we entered the waters of baptism and when we received each one of the ordinances of the restored gospel. I pray that we will do the best we can in our roles as spouses, parents, children, brothers and sisters; in our callings; in sharing the gospel; in rescuing those who have drifted; in working for the salvation of our ancestors; in our work; and in our daily lives.

I pray that our lives allow us to declare, as the Apostle Paul, “I have fought a good

fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”<sup>8</sup>

As we do so, we will be fulfilling the requirements defined by our Father in Heaven to bless us more than ever before, in this life as much as in life in the eternities. He yearns to give us all that He has, even make us participants of His greatest gift, which is eternal life.

### **Possible to achieve the impossible**

Even when, from a purely human perspective, perfection can appear an impossible challenge to achieve, I testify that our Father and our Savior have made known to us that it is possible to achieve the impossible. Yes, it is possible to achieve eternal life. Yes, it is possible to be happy now and forever.

The author of the perfect plan that contains these glorious promises is our Father in Heaven, and He lives. His Son, Jesus Christ, took upon Himself the weight of our sins and the injustices that are committed in the world to the end that we can be free from the consequences. I know our Lord Jesus Christ lives. The gospel and the priesthood have been restored to the earth for the last time, through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Today we have the enormous blessing of apostles and prophets

called by God to direct us on the road to return to our Father. President Thomas S. Monson has been called to lead this great work in these days. He is a prophet of God. Of that I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. 3 Nephi 12:48.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
3. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Eternal Life,” scriptures.lds.org.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
5. See *The Teachings of David O. McKay*, comp. Mary Jane Woodger (2004), 300.
6. Mosiah 4:27.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23.
8. 2 Timothy 4:7.

### **President Eyring**

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Tad R. Callister and Kent D. Watson of the Seventy will speak to us. Following Elder Watson’s remarks, we shall be pleased to hear from Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## **Elder Tad R. Callister**

### **Joseph Smith chosen to restore Church**

Suppose for a moment someone told you these three facts about a New Testament personality and nothing more: first, the Savior said of this man, “O thou of little faith” (Matthew 14:31); second, this man, in a moment of anger, cut off an ear of the high priest’s servant; and third, this man denied knowing who the Savior was on three occasions, even though he had walked with Him daily. If that is all

you knew or focused upon, you might have thought this man a scoundrel or a no-good, but in the process you would have failed to come to know one of the greatest men who ever walked the earth: Peter the Apostle.

Similarly, attempts have been made by some to focus upon or magnify some minor weaknesses of the Prophet Joseph Smith, but in that process they too have missed the mark, the man, and his mission.

Joseph Smith was the Lord's anointed to restore Christ's Church to the earth. When he emerged from the grove of trees, he eventually learned four fundamental truths not then taught by the majority of the contemporary Christian world.

### Four fundamental truths

First, he learned that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate, distinct beings. The Bible confirms Joseph Smith's discovery. It tells us that the Son submitted His will to the Father (see Matthew 26:42). We are moved by the Savior's submission and find strength in His example to do likewise, but what would have been the depth and passion of Christ's submission or the motivational power of that example if the Father and the Son were the same being and in reality the Son was merely following His own will under a different name?

The scriptures give further evidence of this great truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). A father offering up his only son is the supreme demonstration of love that the human mind and heart can conceive and feel. It is symbolized by the touching story of Abraham and Isaac (see Genesis 22). But if the Father is the same being as the Son, then this sacrifice of all sacrifices is lost, and Abraham is no longer offering up Isaac—Abraham is now offering up Abraham.

The second great truth Joseph Smith discovered was that the Father and the Son have glorified bodies of flesh and bones. Following the Savior's Resurrection, He appeared to His disciples and said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Some have suggested this was a temporary physical manifestation and that when He ascended to heaven He shed His body and returned to His spirit form. But the scriptures tell us this was not possible. Paul taught, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no

more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). In other words, once Christ was resurrected, His body could never again be separated from His spirit; otherwise He would suffer death, the very consequence Paul said was no longer possible after His Resurrection.

The third truth that Joseph Smith learned was that God still speaks to man today—that the heavens are not closed. One need but ask three questions, once proposed by President Hugh B. Brown, to arrive at that conclusion (see "The Profile of a Prophet," *Ensign*, June 2006, 37). First, does God love us as much today as He loved the people to whom He spoke in New Testament times? Second, does God have the same power today as He did then? And third, do we need Him as much today as they needed Him anciently? If the answers to those questions are yes and if God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, as the scriptures so declare (see Mormon 9:9), then there is little doubt: God does speak to man today exactly as Joseph Smith testified.

The fourth truth that Joseph Smith learned was that the full and complete Church of Jesus Christ was not then upon the earth. Of course there were good people and some components of the truth, but the Apostle Paul had anciently prophesied that the Second Coming of Christ would not come "except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### "Line upon line, precept upon precept"

Following Joseph Smith's First Vision, the Restoration of Christ's Church commenced "line upon line, precept upon precept" (D&C 98:12).

Through Joseph Smith was restored the doctrine of the gospel being preached to the dead in the spirit world to those who did not have a fair chance on earth to hear it (see D&C 128:5–22; see also D&C 138:30–34). This was not the invention of a creative mind; it was the restoration of a biblical truth. Peter had long ago taught,

“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Peter 4:6). Frederic W. Farrar, the well-known Church of England author and theologian, made the following observation about this teaching of Peter: “Every effort has been made to explain away the plain meaning of *this* passage. It is one of the most precious passages of Scripture, and it involves no ambiguity. . . . For if language have any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His Spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead” (*The Early Days of Christianity* [1883], 78; italics in original).

Many teach that there is one heaven and one hell. Joseph Smith restored the truth that there are multiple heavens. Paul spoke of a man who was caught up into the third heaven (see 2 Corinthians 12:2). Could there be a third heaven if there was no second heaven or first heaven?

In many ways the gospel of Jesus Christ is like a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. When Joseph Smith came on the scene, perhaps 100 pieces were in place. Then Joseph Smith came along and put many of the other 900 pieces in place so that people could say, “Oh, now I understand where I came from, why I am here, and where I am going.” As for Joseph Smith’s role in the Restoration, the Lord defined it clearly: “This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).

### Angels and visions

In spite of this flood of restored biblical truths, some honest searchers have commented: “I can accept these doctrines, but what about all those angels and visions Joseph Smith claimed to have? It seems so hard to believe in modern times.”

To those honest searchers, we lovingly respond: “Were there not angels and visions in Christ’s Church in New Testament times? Did not an angel appear to Mary

and to Joseph? Did not angels appear to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did not an angel rescue Peter and John from prison? Did not an angel appear to Cornelius, then to Paul before he was shipwrecked and to John on the Isle of Patmos? Did not Peter have a vision of the gospel going to the Gentiles, Paul a vision of the third heaven, John a vision of the latter days, and Stephen a vision of the Father and Son?”

Yes, Joseph Smith did see angels and visions—because he was the instrument in God’s hands to restore the same Church of Jesus Christ as existed in primitive times—all of its powers as well as all of its doctrines.

### Salvation found in one place alone

Yet sorrowfully, on occasion, some are willing to set aside the precious gospel truths restored by Joseph Smith because they get diverted on some historical issue or some scientific hypothesis not central to their exaltation, and in so doing they trade their spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. They exchange the absolute certainty of the Restoration for a doubt, and in that process they fall into the trap of losing faith in the many things they *do* know because of a few things they do not know. There will always be some seemingly intellectual crisis looming on the horizon as long as faith is required and our minds are finite, but likewise there will always be the sure and solid doctrines of the Restoration to cling to, which will provide the rock foundation upon which our testimonies may be built.

When many of Christ’s followers turned from Him, He asked His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?”

Peter then responded with an answer that should be engraved on every heart: “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:67–68).

If someone turns from these restored doctrines, where will he go to learn the true nature of God as taught in the grove



of trees? Where will he go to find the doctrines of the premortal existence, baptism for the dead, and eternal marriage? And where will he go to find the sealing powers that can bind husbands and wives and children beyond the grave?

Through Joseph Smith have been restored all the powers, keys, teachings, and ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation. You cannot go anywhere else in the world and get that. It is not to be found in any other church. It is not to be found in any philosophy of man or scientific digest

or individual pilgrimage, however intellectual it may seem. Salvation is to be found in one place alone, as so designated by the Lord Himself when He said that this is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30).

I bear my witness that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration, just as he claimed to be. I echo the strains of that stirring hymn: “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!” (“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Kent D. Watson

### Being temperate in all things

In response to the Prophet Joseph Smith’s inquiry, the Lord instructed, “And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.”<sup>1</sup>

The instruction on being temperate in all things applies to each of us. What is temperance, and why would the Lord want us to be temperate? A narrow definition might be “exercising restraint when it comes to food and drink.” Indeed, this meaning of temperance could be a good prescription for keeping the Word of Wisdom. Sometimes temperance might be defined as “refraining from anger or not losing one’s temper.” These definitions, however, are a subset of the scriptural usage of the word.

In a spiritual sense, temperance is a divine attribute of Jesus Christ. He desires for each of us to develop this attribute. Learning to be temperate in all things is a spiritual gift available through the Holy Ghost.

When the Apostle Paul described certain fruits of the Spirit in his Epistle to the

Galatians, he talked of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”<sup>2</sup>

When Paul wrote Titus, describing the attributes necessary for a bishop to assist in this work, he said a bishop must “not [be] selfwilled, not soon angry, . . . [but] temperate.”<sup>3</sup> Being temperate is to use moderation in all things or to exercise self-control.

When Alma the Younger taught in the land of Gideon, he said:

“I trust that ye are not lifted up in the pride of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon riches and the vain things of the world. . . .

“I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things.”<sup>4</sup>

In a later message, Alma instructed his son Shiblon, and by extension instructs all of us, to “see that ye are not lifted up unto pride.”<sup>5</sup> Rather, we should “be diligent and temperate in all things.”<sup>6</sup> Being temperate means to carefully examine our expectations and desires, to be diligent and patient in seeking righteous goals.

## Temperance increases our strength

A few years ago, I was driving home from work when a large semitruck, traveling in the opposite direction, lost one of its dual tires. The tire flew over the median separating our lanes. It came bouncing down my side of the freeway. Cars were swerving in both directions, drivers not knowing which direction the tire would bounce next. I dodged left when I should have dodged right, and the tire took its final bounce right on the corner of my windshield.

A friend called my wife to inform her of the accident. She told me later that her first thought was of lacerations from shattered glass. Indeed, I was covered with beads of broken glass but did not suffer a single scratch. It was definitely not because of my driving skills; rather, it was because the windshield of my little car was made of tempered glass.

Tempered glass, like tempered steel, undergoes a well-controlled heating process which increases strength. Thus, when tempered glass is under stress, it will not easily break into jagged shards that can injure.

Likewise, a temperate soul—one who is humble and full of love—is also a person of increased spiritual strength. With increased spiritual strength, we are able to develop self-mastery and to live with moderation. We learn to control, or temper, our anger, vanity, and pride. With increased spiritual strength, we can protect ourselves from the dangerous excesses and destructive addictions of today's world.

We all seek peace of mind, and we all desire security and happiness for our families. If we look for silver linings in this past year's economic downturn, perhaps the trials some have faced have taught us that peace of mind, security, and happiness do not come from buying a home or accumulating possessions for which the debt incurred is larger than our savings or income can afford.

We live in an impatient and intemperate world full of uncertainty and contention. It is like the community of converts to various religions where Joseph Smith lived when he was a 14-year-old boy seeking answers to his questions. Young Joseph said, "All their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions."<sup>7</sup>

Security for our families comes from learning self-control, avoiding the excesses of this world, and being temperate in all things. Peace of mind comes from strengthened faith in Jesus Christ. Happiness comes from being diligent in keeping covenants made at baptism and in the holy temples of the Lord.

## The Savior's example of temperance

What better example do we have of temperance than our Savior, Jesus Christ?

When our hearts are stirred to anger by disputation and contention, the Savior taught that we should "repent, and become as a little child."<sup>8</sup> We should be reconciled with our brother and come to the Savior with full purpose of heart.<sup>9</sup>

When others are unkind, Jesus taught that "my kindness shall not depart from thee."<sup>10</sup>

When we are confronted with affliction, He said: "Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast."<sup>11</sup>

When we are oppressed, we can be comforted in knowing "he was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."<sup>12</sup> "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."<sup>13</sup>

When Jesus Christ, the greatest of all, suffered for us to the extent that He bled from every pore, He did not express anger or revile in suffering. With unsurpassed self-restraint, or temperance, His thoughts were not of Himself but of you and of me. And then, in humility and full of love, He said, "Nevertheless, glory be to the Father,

and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”<sup>14</sup>

### Example of Saints in Asia

During this past year, it has been my privilege to bear testimony of the reality of our Savior and the Restoration of the gospel to Saints and friends throughout Asia. Most are first-generation Latter-day Saints who live on the frontier of the Church. This latter-day journey in their realm is reminiscent of that experienced by the first Latter-day Saints of yesteryear.

In this marvelous world of diversity in Asia, where members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a mere fraction of one percent of the vast population, I have gained a better appreciation for the Christlike attribute of temperance. I love and honor these Saints, who have taught me by example what it means to be humble and full of love, “being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be

entrusted to [their] care.”<sup>15</sup> Through them I have come to better understand God’s love for all of His children.

I leave my witness that our Redeemer lives and His divine gift of temperance is available to each of God’s children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
2. Galatians 5:22–23.
3. Titus 1:7–8.
4. Alma 7:6, 23.
5. Alma 38:11.
6. Alma 38:10.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:6.
8. 3 Nephi 11:37.
9. See 3 Nephi 12:24.
10. 3 Nephi 22:10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 31:9.
12. Mosiah 14:7.
13. Mosiah 14:4.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

My brothers and sisters, it has been six months since my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To now serve with men who have long been my examples and teachers remains a very humbling experience. I deeply appreciate your prayers and sustaining vote. For me, this has been a time of fervent prayer, of earnestly seeking the acceptance of the Lord. I have felt His love in sacred and unforgettable ways. I testify that He lives and that this is His holy work.

### Arms of mercy

We love President Thomas S. Monson, the Lord’s prophet. I will forever remember his kindness as he extended my call last April. At the conclusion of our interview, he opened his arms to embrace me. President Monson is a tall man. As

he wrapped his long arms around me and pulled me close, I felt like a little boy being held in the protective arms of a loving father.

In the months since that experience, I have thought of the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him and to spiritually be wrapped in His arms. He said, “Behold, [my arms] of mercy [are] extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.”<sup>1</sup>

The scriptures speak of His arms being open,<sup>2</sup> extended,<sup>3</sup> stretched out,<sup>4</sup> and encircling.<sup>5</sup> They are described as mighty<sup>6</sup> and holy,<sup>7</sup> arms of mercy,<sup>8</sup> arms of safety,<sup>9</sup> arms of love,<sup>10</sup> “lengthened out all the day long.”<sup>11</sup>

We have each felt to some extent these spiritual arms around us. We have felt His forgiveness, His love and comfort. The



Lord has said, "I am he [who] comforteth you."<sup>12</sup>

### Invitation to repent

The Lord's desire that we come unto Him and be wrapped in His arms is often an invitation to repent. "Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you."<sup>13</sup>

When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to "re-turn" toward God.<sup>14</sup> It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.

Among the tens of thousands listening to this conference, there are many degrees of personal worthiness and righteousness. Yet repentance is a blessing to all of us. We each need to feel the Savior's arms of mercy through the forgiveness of our sins.

Years ago, I was asked to meet with a man who, long before our visit, had had a period of riotous living. As a result of his bad choices, he lost his membership in the Church. He had long since returned to the Church and was faithfully keeping the commandments, but his previous actions haunted him. Meeting with him, I felt his shame and his deep remorse at having set his covenants aside. Following our interview, I placed my hands upon his head to give him a priesthood blessing. Before speaking a word, I felt an overpowering sense of the Savior's love and forgiveness for him. Following the blessing, we embraced and the man wept openly.

I am amazed at the Savior's encircling arms of mercy and love for the repentant, no matter how selfish the forsaken sin. I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven.<sup>15</sup> What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience. Jesus declares, "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?"<sup>16</sup>

### The process of repentance

Some listening today may need "a mighty change [of] heart"<sup>17</sup> to confront serious sins. The help of a priesthood leader might be necessary. For most, repenting is quiet and quite private, daily seeking the Lord's help to make needed changes.

For most, repentance is more a journey than a one-time event. It is not easy. To change is difficult. It requires running into the wind, swimming upstream. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."<sup>18</sup> Repentance is turning away from some things, such as dishonesty, pride, anger, and impure thoughts, and turning toward other things, such as kindness, unselfishness, patience, and spirituality. It is "re-turning" toward God.

How do we decide where our repentance should be focused? When a loved one or friend suggests things we need to change, the natural man in us sometimes pops up his head and responds, "Oh, you think I should change? Well, let me tell you about some of your problems." A better approach is to humbly petition the Lord: "Father, what wouldst Thou have me do?" The answers come. We feel the

changes we need to make. The Lord tells us in our mind and in our heart.<sup>19</sup>

We then are allowed to choose: will we repent, or will we pull the shades down over our open window into heaven?

Alma warned, “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point.”<sup>20</sup> When we “pull the shades down,” we stop believing that spiritual voice inviting us to change. We pray but we listen less. Our prayers lack that faith that leads to repentance.<sup>21</sup>

At this very moment, someone is saying, “Brother Andersen, you don’t understand. You can’t feel what I have felt. It is too difficult to change.”

You are correct; I don’t fully understand. But there is One who does. He knows. He has felt your pain. He has declared, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”<sup>22</sup> The Savior is there, reaching out to each of us, bidding us: “Come unto me.”<sup>23</sup> We can repent. We can!

Realizing where we need to change, we sorrow for the sadness we have caused. This leads to sincere and heartfelt confession to the Lord and, when needed, to others.<sup>24</sup> When possible, we restore what we have wrongly harmed or taken.

Repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament is so important—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and to renew us, and promising to always remember Him.

Sometimes in our repentance, in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. As if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain, at times we don’t see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don’t be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.

As we improve, we see life more clearly and feel the Holy Ghost working more strongly within us.

## Remembering our sins

Sometimes we wonder why we remember our sins long after we have forsaken them. Why does the sadness for our mistakes at times continue following our repentance?

You will remember a tender story told by President James E. Faust. “As a small boy on the farm . . . , I remember my grandmother . . . cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently pick up the box, go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house.”

President Faust’s voice then filled with emotion as he continued: “I was so insensitive . . . I sat there and let my beloved grandmother refill the kitchen wood box. I feel ashamed of myself and have regretted my [sin of] omission for all of my life. I hope someday to ask for her forgiveness.”<sup>25</sup>

More than 65 years had passed. If President Faust still remembered and regretted not helping his grandmother after all those years, should we be surprised with some of the things we still remember and regret?

The scriptures do not say that we will forget our forsaken sins in mortality. Rather, they declare that the Lord will forget.<sup>26</sup>

The forsaking of sins implies never returning. Forsaking requires time. To help us, the Lord at times allows the residue of our mistakes to rest in our memory.<sup>27</sup> It is a vital part of our mortal learning.

As we honestly confess our sins, restore what we can to the offended, and forsake our sins by keeping the commandments, we are in the process of receiving forgiveness. With time, we will feel the anguish of our sorrow subside, taking “away the guilt from our hearts”<sup>28</sup> and bringing “peace of conscience.”<sup>29</sup>

For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief: continue keeping the commandments. I promise you, relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing also requires time.

If you are concerned, counsel with your bishop. A bishop has the power of discernment.<sup>30</sup> He will help you.

### It is never too late

The scriptures warn us, “Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.”<sup>31</sup> But, in this life, it is never too late to repent.

Once I was asked to meet an older couple returning to the Church. They had been taught the gospel by their parents. After their marriage, they left the Church. Now, 50 years later, they were returning. I remember the husband coming into the office pulling an oxygen tank. They expressed regret at not having remained faithful. I told them of our happiness because of their return, assuring them of the Lord’s welcoming arms to those who repent. The elderly man responded, “We know this, Brother Andersen. But our sadness is that our children and grandchildren do not have the blessings of the gospel. We are back, but we are back alone.”

They were not back alone. Repentance not only changes us, but it also blesses our families and those we love. With our righteous repentance, in the timetable of the Lord, the lengthened-out arms of the Savior will not only encircle us but will also extend into the lives of our children and posterity. Repentance always means that there is greater happiness ahead.

I bear witness that our Savior can deliver us from our sins. I have personally felt His redeeming power. I have unmistakably seen His healing hand upon thousands in nations throughout the world. I testify that His divine gift removes guilt from our heart and brings peace to our conscience.

He loves us. We are members of His Church. He invites each of us to repent,

turn away from our sins, and come unto Him. I witness that He is there in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 9:14.
2. See Mormon 6:17.
3. See Alma 19:36.
4. See 2 Kings 17:36; Psalm 136:12.
5. See 2 Nephi 1:15.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 123:6.
7. See 3 Nephi 20:35.
8. See Alma 5:33.
9. See Alma 34:16.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:20.
11. 2 Nephi 28:32.
12. 2 Nephi 8:12.
13. Alma 5:33.
14. See Helaman 7:17.
15. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19.
16. 3 Nephi 9:13.
17. Alma 5:12.
18. Matthew 16:24.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
20. Alma 42:30.
21. See Alma 34:17–18.
22. Isaiah 49:16.
23. 3 Nephi 9:14.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.
25. James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 59.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43; see also Alma 36:17–19.
27. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Apr. 2007, 101–2; or *Ensign*, May 2007, 101.
28. Alma 24:10.
29. Mosiah 4:3. The scriptures link our happiness in this life and the next with peace of conscience. Note Alma’s teaching that the opposite of joy is remorse of conscience (see Alma 29:5). Other prophets tie the torment of the wicked following this life to the guilt they feel (see 2 Nephi 9:14, 46; Mosiah 2:38; 3:24–25; Mormon 9:5). Joseph Smith said: “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind

of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone” (in *History of the Church*, 6:314).

30. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:27.

31. Alma 34:33.

### President Eyring

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from

9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood, who was released as a member of the Seventy this afternoon.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Means of protection and communication

No Father would send His children off to a distant, dangerous land for a lifetime of testing where Lucifer was known to roam free without first providing them with a personal power of protection. He would also supply them with means to communicate with Him from Father to child and from child to Father. Every child of our Father sent to earth is provided with the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Christ.<sup>1</sup> We are, none of us, left here alone without hope of guidance and redemption.

The Restoration began with the prayer of a 14-year-old boy and a vision of the Father and the Son. The dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in.

The Restoration of the gospel brought knowledge of the premortal existence. From the scriptures, we know of the Council in Heaven and the decision to send the sons and daughters of God into mortality to receive a body and to be tested.<sup>2</sup> We are children of God. We have a spirit body housed, for now, in an earthly tabernacle of flesh. The scriptures say, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

As children of God, we learn we are part of His “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8).

We know that there was a War in Heaven and Lucifer and those who followed him were cast out without bodies:

“Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, . . . rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—

“Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about” (D&C 76:28–29).

We were given our agency.<sup>3</sup> We must use it wisely and remain close to the Spirit; otherwise, we foolishly find ourselves yielding to the enticements of the adversary. We know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ our mistakes can be washed clean, and our mortal body will be restored to its perfect frame.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

There is a perfect manner of communication through the Spirit, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Following baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there comes a second ordinance: “Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4).

That sweet, quiet voice of inspiration comes more as a feeling than it does as a sound. Pure intelligence can be spoken into the mind. The Holy Ghost communicates with our spirits through the mind more than through the physical senses.<sup>4</sup> This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings through promptings and impressions.<sup>5</sup> We may *feel* the words of spiritual communication more than *hear* them and *see* with spiritual rather than with mortal eyes.<sup>6</sup>

### Wilford Woodruff's experience

I served for many years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles with Elder LeGrand Richards. He died at the age of 96. He told us that as a boy of 12 he attended a great general conference in the Tabernacle. There he heard President Wilford Woodruff.

President Woodruff told of an experience of being prompted by the Spirit. He was sent by the First Presidency to “gather all the Saints of God in New England and Canada and bring them to Zion.”<sup>7</sup>

He stopped at the home of one of the brethren in Indiana and put his carriage in the yard, where he and his wife and one child went to bed while the rest of the family slept in the house. Shortly after he had retired for the night, the Spirit whispered, warning him, “Get up, and move your carriage.” He got up and moved the carriage a distance from where it had stood. As he was returning to bed, the Spirit spoke to him again: “Go and move your mules away from that oak tree.” He did this and then retired once again to bed.

Not more than 30 minutes later, a whirlwind caught the tree to which his

mules had been tied and broke it off at the ground. It was carried 100 yards through two fences. The enormous tree, which had a trunk five feet in circumference, fell exactly upon the spot where his carriage had been parked. By listening to the promptings of the Spirit, Elder Woodruff had saved his life and the lives of his wife and child.<sup>8</sup>

That same Spirit can prompt you and protect you.

### Prayer of a child

When I was first called as a General Authority nearly 50 years ago, we lived on a very small plot of ground in Utah Valley that we called our farm. We had a cow and a horse and chickens and lots of children.

One Saturday, I was to drive to the airport for a flight to a stake conference in California. But the cow was expecting a calf and in trouble. The calf was born, but the cow could not get up. We called the veterinarian, who soon came. He said the cow had swallowed a wire and would not live through the day.

I copied the telephone number of the animal by-products company so my wife could call them to come and get the cow as soon as she died.

Before I left, we had our family prayer. Our little boy said our prayer. After he had asked Heavenly Father to “bless Daddy in his travels and bless us all,” he then started an earnest plea. He said, “Heavenly Father, please bless Bossy cow so that she will get to be all right.”

In California, I told of the incident and said, “He must learn that we do not get everything we pray for just that easily.”

There was a lesson to be learned, but it was I who learned it, not my son. When I returned Sunday night, Bossy had “got to be all right.”

This process is not reserved for the prophets alone. The gift of the Holy Ghost operates equally with men, women, and even little children. It is within this



wondrous gift and power that the spiritual remedy to any problem can be found.

“And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned” (Alma 32:23).

### “Bud’s in trouble!”

The Lord has many ways of pouring knowledge into our minds to prompt us, to guide us, to teach us, to correct us, to warn us. The Lord said, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:2).

And Enos recorded, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again” (Enos 1:10).

You can know the things you need to know. Pray that you will learn to receive that inspiration and remain worthy to receive it. Keep that channel—your mind—clean and free from the clutter of the world.

Elder Graham W. Doxey, who once served in the Second Quorum of the Seventy, told me of an experience. His mother, who was later a counselor in the Primary general presidency, also told me of this experience.

During World War II, he was in the navy posted to China. He and several others went by train to the city of Tientsin to look around.

Later they boarded a train to return to their base, but after more than an hour, the train turned north. They were on the wrong train! They spoke no Chinese. They pulled the emergency cord and stopped the train. They were put off somewhere in the countryside with nothing to do but walk back to the city.

After walking for some time, they found a small pump-handle car, the kind that the railroad workers use. They set it

in the rails and began to pump their way along the tracks. It would coast downhill, but it had to be pushed uphill.

As they came to one steep downhill slope, they scrambled aboard the car and began to coast. Graham was the last to get aboard. The only place left for him was in the front of the car. He ran alongside and finally climbed aboard. As he did so, he slipped and fell. He was bouncing on his back with his feet against the car to keep from being run over. As the car quickly gained speed, he heard his mother’s voice say, “Bud, you be careful!”

He wore heavy military boots. His foot slipped, and the thick sole of his boot caught in a gear of a wheel and stopped the car just one foot from his hand.

His parents, who were presiding over the East Central States Mission at the time, were sleeping in a hotel room. His mother sat up at about 2:00 in the morning and awakened her husband: “Bud’s in trouble!” They knelt by the bed and prayed for the safety of their boy.

The next letter he received said, “Bud, what’s wrong? What happened to you?”

He then wrote to tell them what had happened. When they compared times, at the very time he was bouncing along that track, his parents were on their knees in the hotel room half a world away, praying for his safety.

These experiences of prompting and prayer are not uncommon in the Church. They are part of the revelation our Heavenly Father has provided for us.

### Prayer, a personal key to heaven

One of the adversary’s sharpest tools is to convince us that we are no longer worthy to pray. No matter who you are or what you may have done, you can always pray.

The Prophet Joseph Smith promised that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”<sup>9</sup>

When temptation comes, you can invent a delete key in your mind—perhaps the words from a favorite hymn. Your mind is in charge; your body is the instrument of your mind. When some unworthy thought pushes into your mind, replace it with your delete key. Worthy music is powerful and can help you control your thoughts.<sup>10</sup>

When Oliver Cowdery failed in an attempt to translate, the Lord told him:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings” (D&C 9:7–9).

That principle is illustrated by the story of a little girl. She was upset with her brother, who built a trap to catch sparrows.

Unable to get help, she said to herself, “Well, I’ll pray about it.”

After her prayer, the little girl told her mother, “I know he is not going to catch any sparrows in his trap because I prayed about it. I’m *positive* he won’t catch any sparrows!”

Her mother said, “How can you be so sure?”

She said, “After I prayed about it, I went out and kicked that old trap all to pieces!”

Pray even if you are young and wayward like the prophet Alma or have a closed mind like Amulek, who “knew concerning these things, yet . . . would not know” (Alma 10:6).

Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees. Prayer is your personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil. And I have learned to conclude all my prayers with

“Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10; see also Luke 11:2; 3 Nephi 13:10).

### Enduring life’s troubles

Do not expect to be free entirely from trouble and disappointment and pain and discouragement, for these are the things that we were sent to earth to endure.

Someone wrote:

With thoughtless and impatient hands  
We tangle up the plans  
The Lord hath wrought.  
And when we cry in pain He saith,  
“Be quiet, man, while I untie the knot.”<sup>11</sup>

The scriptures promise, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Savior said, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63).

### Witness concerning President Monson

We began this session of conference with the sustaining of the authorities. The first one sustained was Thomas S. Monson as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know President Monson, I think, as well as any man on earth knows him, and I want to bear a special witness that he was “called of God, by prophecy” (Articles of Faith 1:5). He needs our prayers—and his wife, Frances, and their family—in the tremendous load that is upon him.

I pray that he will be sustained in body and in mind and in spirit and that it will be obvious to the Church, as it is obvious to those who are very close to him, that he was “called of God, by prophecy.”

Then, “by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (Articles of Faith 1:5), he was installed in his office.

May the Lord bless us and sustain President Monson and his family in every way that will be needful to carry on the great work that is upon his shoulders. I bear that witness and invoke that blessing as a servant of the Lord and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:56; see also Romans 8:16.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
4. See 1 Corinthians 2:14; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; 9:8–9.

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:13; 100:5.
6. See 1 Nephi 17:45.
7. See Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 30; see also *Deseret Weekly*, Sept. 5, 1891, 323.
8. See Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (1881), 88.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
11. Author unknown, in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 304.

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The choir sang “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, provided the music. Neil Hendriksen directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

President Uchtdorf opened the meeting with the following remarks.

#### President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides, has asked that I conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the

Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, under the direction of Neil Hendriksen, with Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “High on the Mountain Top.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the invocation.

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## President Uchtdorf

The choir will now sing “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” Following the singing, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder Walter F.

González of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Yoon Hwan Choi of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Father-son relationships

It is a wonderful sight to see all of you fathers sitting shoulder to shoulder with your sons to listen to the teachings of the Lord and receive counsel from the General Authorities of the Church. It is always a joy to be united with men and young men of the priesthood, but there is something special about seeing fathers and sons here together. It is a visual reminder of two of the most powerful elements of our theology: priesthood and family. The priesthood is the divine power through which families are sealed together forever. Everything in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, including the ordinances of the holy temple, is focused on the possibilities of families becoming part of the eternal family of God.

Tonight I want to talk to you fathers and sons about how you talk to each other. There is no other relationship quite like that which can and should exist between a boy and his dad. It can be one of the most nurturing, joyful relationships in life, one that can have a profound impact on who boys become and also on who dads become. Now, I understand that some of you young men do not have fathers with whom you can have these kinds of conversations. And some of you men do not have sons or have lost your sons to accident or illness. But much of what I say tonight will apply to uncles and grandfathers and priesthood leaders and other mentors who sometimes fill the gaps for these significant father-son relationships.

You see, we’re all on a journey. Dads are a little further down the road, but none of us has yet arrived at our final destination. We are all in the process of becoming who we will one day be. Fathers and sons can play a critical role in helping each other become the best that they can be.

I know that father-son relationships are never perfect, but everything I am going to suggest to you tonight is possible if you will put in the effort to make it happen.

Young men, you are your father’s pride and joy. In you they see a promising future and their hope for a better, improved version of themselves. Your accomplishments are a joy to them. Your worries and problems are their worries and problems.

Fathers, you are the primary model of manhood for your sons. You are their most meaningful mentor, and believe it or not, you are their hero in countless ways. Your words and your example are a great influence on them.

Tonight I want to give you young men *three* simple suggestions on how to take full advantage of your relationship with your dad. And then I want to give you fathers *three* suggestions about relating to and communicating with your sons.

### Counsel for sons

To you Aaronic Priesthood holders, I believe that by doing these three simple things you can make your relationship with your father even better than it is right now.

### *Trust your father*

*First*, trust your father. He is not perfect, but he loves you and would never do anything he didn't think was in your best interest. So talk to him. Share your thoughts and feelings, your dreams and your fears. The more he knows about your life, the better chance he has to understand your concerns and to give you good counsel. When you put your trust in your dad, he will feel the responsibility of that trust and try harder than ever to understand and to help. As your father, he is entitled to inspiration on your behalf. His advice to you will be the heartfelt expressions of someone who knows and loves you. Your dad wants more than anything for you to be happy and successful, so why would you not want to trust someone like that? Boys, trust your dad.

### *Be interested in your father's life*

*Second*, take an interest in your father's life. Ask about his job, his interests, his goals. How did he decide to do the work that he does? What was he like when he was your age? How did he meet your mother? And as you learn more about him, you may find that his experiences help you to better understand why he responds the way that he does. Watch your dad. Watch how he treats your mother. Watch how he performs his Church callings. Watch how he interacts with other people. You will be surprised what you learn about him just by watching him and listening to him. Think about what you don't know about him and find out. Your love, admiration, and understanding will increase by what you learn. Boys, be interested in your dad's life.

### *Ask your father for advice*

And *third*, ask your father for advice. Let's be honest: he is probably going to give you his advice whether you ask for it or not, but it just works so much better when you ask! Ask for his advice on

Church activity, on classes, on friends, on school, on dating, on sports or other hobbies. Ask for his counsel on your Church assignments, on preparing for your mission, on decisions or choices you have to make. Nothing shows respect for another person as much as asking for his advice, because what you are really saying when you ask for advice is, "I appreciate what you know and the experiences you have had, and I value your ideas and suggestions." Those are nice things for a father to hear from his son.

In my experience, fathers who are asked for advice try harder to give good, sound, useful counsel. By asking your father for advice, you not only receive the benefit of his input, but you also provide him with a little extra motivation to strive to be a better father and a better man. He will think more carefully about whatever it is that he advises, and he will work harder to "walk the talk." Young men, ask your dad for advice!

### **Counsel for fathers**

OK, fathers, now it's your turn. Let's talk about some things you can do to enhance your relationship with your sons. You will notice that there is some linkage between the three suggestions I am going to give you and the suggestions I just gave your sons. That isn't coincidental.

### *Listen to your sons*

*First*, fathers, listen to your sons—really listen to them. Ask the right kind of questions, and listen to what your sons have to say each time you have a few minutes together. You need to know—not to guess but to know—what is going on in your son's life. Don't assume that you know how he feels just because you were young once. Your sons live in a very different world from the one in which you grew up. As they share with you what's going on, you will have to listen very carefully and without being judgmental in order to

understand what they are thinking and experiencing.

Find your own best way to connect. Some fathers like to take their sons fishing or to a sporting event. Others like to go on a quiet drive or work side by side in the yard. Some find their sons enjoy conversations at night just before going to bed. Do whatever works best for you. A one-on-one relationship should be a routine part of your stewardship with your sons. Every father needs at least one focused, quality conversation with his sons every month during which they talk about specific things such as school, friends, feelings, video games, text messaging, worthiness, faith, and testimony. Where or when this happens isn't nearly as important as the fact that it happens.

And oh, how fathers need to listen! Remember, conversation where you do 90 percent of the talking is not a conversation. Use the word *feel* as often as you comfortably can in your discussions with your sons. Ask: "How do you feel about what you're learning in that class?" "How do you feel about what your friend said?" "How do you feel about your priesthood and the Church?"

Don't think you have to try to fix everything or solve everything during these visits. Most of the time, the best thing you can do is just listen. Fathers who listen more than they talk find that their sons share more about what is really going on in their lives. Dads, listen to your sons.

#### *Pray with and for your sons*

*Second*, pray with and for your sons. Give them priesthood blessings. A son who is worried about a big exam or a special event will surely benefit from a father's priesthood blessing. Occasions like the start of a new school year, a birthday, or as he begins to date may be opportune times to call upon the Lord to bless your son. One-on-one prayer and the sharing of testimonies can draw you closer to each other as well as closer to the Lord.

I am mindful that many of you fathers suffer heartache over sons who have strayed and are being captured by the world, just as Alma and Mosiah worried about their sons. Continue to do all you can to maintain strong family relationships. Never give up, even when fervent prayer in their behalf is all you can do. These precious sons of yours are your sons forever! Fathers, pray with and bless your sons.

#### *Have the "big talks" with your sons*

*Third*, dare to have the "big talks" with your sons. You know what I mean: talks about drugs and drinking, about the dangers of today's media—the Internet, cyber technologies, and pornography—and about priesthood worthiness, respect for girls, and moral cleanliness. While these should not be the only subjects you talk about with your sons, please don't shy away from them. Your boys need your counsel, guidance, and input on these subjects. As you talk about these very important matters, you will find that the trust between you will flourish.

I am especially concerned that we communicate openly and clearly with our sons about sexual matters. Your sons are growing up in a world that openly embraces and flaunts early, casual, and thoughtless promiscuity. Your sons simply cannot avoid the blatant sexual imagery, messages, and enticements that are all around them. Fathers and Church leaders need to have open and frequent discussions that teach and clarify how young men of the priesthood handle this issue. Be positive about how wonderful and beautiful physical intimacy can be when it happens within the bounds the Lord has set, including temple covenants and commitments of eternal marriage. Studies show that the biggest deterrent to casual sexual activity is a wholesome attitude that connects such personal relationships with genuine commitment and mature love. Fathers, if you have not had this "big talk" with your sons, please do so, and do it soon.

## Returned missionary sons

Now, in closing, I want to talk to all of you returned missionaries. Everything that I have said tonight also applies to you. Trust your father. You can be closer to him now than ever before, regardless of what your relationship was like before your mission. During the next few years, you will make the most important decisions of your life. Along with prayer to your Heavenly Father, advice from your earthly father can help you make those decisions concerning your education, career choice, and marriage. The most important decision you will make in this life is the decision to marry the right girl in the temple! While no one should rush this significant decision, all returned missionaries should be working on it. Be where you can meet the right kind of friends. And go on dates. Hanging out is not the way, nor is it enough! Courting seems to be a lost art. Rediscover it. It really works! Ask

your fathers—they know! Do not drift to the ways of the world. Rather, maintain the dignity and the Spirit you enjoyed on your mission. The Church will need your leadership in the future.

And fathers, the three suggestions I made to you moments ago absolutely apply to your relationships with your returned missionary sons. Listen to them, and connect with them in regular, focused conversation. Talk with them in depth about their feelings and desires. Pray with them, and give them blessings as they face the important decisions in their future.

I'm grateful for my sons and my sons-in-law, who have taught me so much, and I pray now that our Heavenly Father will bless all of us as fathers and sons that we will honor our priesthood and that we will love one another by making relationships with each other one of the great, eternal priorities of our lives. I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Walter F. González

### Powerful priesthood holders

Many years ago a certain group of worthy priesthood holders taught with great power and authority. One of them was so powerful that it was impossible not to believe his words.<sup>1</sup> These priesthood holders helped the people learn about the Savior and His doctrine and helped them find happiness. Their teachings and examples provided a means whereby the people experienced a mighty change of heart. We learn that thousands were led by them to be baptized and make covenants to endure to the end.<sup>2</sup> I am speaking about the great Book of Mormon missionaries who were powerful priesthood holders.

We can learn a great deal from these children of Lehi. By doing what they did, we can become more powerful in blessing

the lives of our Heavenly Father's sons and daughters, more powerful in serving others, more powerful in rescuing others, and more powerful in becoming more Christlike men.

### Power of the Book of Mormon

Alma the Younger teaches us one of the things they did to become so successful: they used the records from which the Book of Mormon was taken. When he gave the record that would eventually become the Book of Mormon to his son Helaman, he taught that without these plates, "Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands . . . ; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance."<sup>3</sup>

God showed His power through the plates by fulfilling one purpose, “even . . . the restoration of many thousands . . . to the knowledge of the truth.” Alma then prophesied that God would “still show forth his power in them unto future generations.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the records were preserved, and you and I are part of those future generations. Just as in the days of old, we can be more powerful priesthood holders by using the Book of Mormon.

The process of bringing to light the Book of Mormon cannot be compared to any literary work by any author in human history. We could say that it is a book that was shepherded by the very finger of our God. During His visit to the ancient Americas, the Lord asked Nephi to bring the records that they were keeping and place them before Him. Jesus then looked at them and commanded that certain events and passages be added.<sup>5</sup> “And [the Savior] saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations.”<sup>6</sup> I feel everlasting gratitude to belong to those future generations. I am a member of the Church thanks to the Book of Mormon. I will never forget my feelings when, as a young boy in Uruguay, I read this sacred book for the very first time. I did not have to read much in 1 Nephi to experience such a joy that it cannot be expressed with words. It was as if the book was permeated with the Spirit of the Lord and made me feel closer to God.

This experience added meaning to the statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith about this book when he declared that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>7</sup> I also recognize the relevance of President Thomas S. Monson’s promise when he said that “as we read the Book of Mormon and the other standard works, as we put the teachings to the test, then we will know of the doctrine, for this is our

promise; we will know whether it be of man or whether it be of God.”<sup>8</sup>

These promises bring us joy now and in our future. Once I received a testimony of the Book of Mormon, the natural feeling that followed was a desire to apply the teachings of the book by making covenants. I made covenants by being baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. These covenants, made through priesthood ordinances, along with knowledge gained from the Book of Mormon changed my life.

It is not surprising that when the Savior visited the ancient Americas, besides teaching doctrine, He gave Nephi and others the power to baptize.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the doctrine and the ordinances stood side by side. The full application of the teachings of the Book of Mormon does require priesthood ordinances with their associated covenants.

### **Best-read and best-applied book**

There are books that are released to the market and quickly become best sellers. Sometimes they generate so much interest that people eagerly await their release. Such books seem to flood the market right away, and you can see people reading them everywhere. God, in His infinite wisdom, reserved the Book of Mormon for our benefit. Its purpose is not to become a best seller. Nevertheless, we can turn this sacred book into a best-read and best-applied book in our life. Let me suggest three activities that can help us turn the Book of Mormon into the best-read and best-applied book, which will empower us today to become more powerful priesthood holders, even as those in ancient times.

First, feast upon the words of Christ. We must read the Book of Mormon in order to “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”<sup>10</sup> Feasting upon the words of Christ is a unique experience.



When we read and look for principles and doctrines that will help us in our daily lives, we will have a renewed enthusiasm. For example, when the rising generation faces challenges in coping with peer pressure, we can read the book looking specifically for teachings that will help them with this kind of challenge. One of those teachings could be taken from Lemuel's experience. Lemuel made some wrong choices because he yielded to Laman's pressure.<sup>11</sup> He did not do the right thing, because he "knew not the dealings of that God who had created them."<sup>12</sup> A principle that we can draw from this incident is that learning doctrine about how God deals with us will help us to cope with peer pressure. The Book of Mormon has more teachings and examples about this topic, and we are the generations who can benefit from the teachings of this book.

Second, apply in our lives all that we learn about Christ. Reading the Book of Mormon and looking for attributes of Christ is a great, edifying experience. For instance, the brother of Jared recognized that the Lord was a God of truth; therefore, He could not lie.<sup>13</sup> What great hope this attribute brings to my soul! All the promises in the Book of Mormon and the promises given by the living prophets today will be fulfilled because He is God and cannot lie. Even in these turbulent times, we know that things will be OK if we follow the teachings learned from the Book of Mormon and the living prophets. Once we learn about an attribute of Christ, such as the one recognized by the brother of Jared, we should work to implement it in our own life. This will help us to become more powerful priesthood holders.

Third, teach the doctrine and principles found in the sacred pages of the Book of Mormon. We can teach anyone from this book. Can you imagine the additional "convincing power of God"<sup>14</sup> when missionaries and family members quote, read, or repeat by heart the book's very words?

## A golden instrument

I remember a mission in Ecuador whose missionaries used the Book of Mormon in all their comings and goings. Because of them, thousands experienced a mighty change of heart and decided to enter into covenants through sacred priesthood ordinances. The Book of Mormon is a golden instrument in finding and converting the honest seekers of truth and in rescuing many of our brothers and sisters back into gospel activity.

I know that families will be fortified by implementing the teachings of this great book in their lives. Many of our children will be saved because they will remember, as Enos did, the words which he had often heard his father speak concerning eternal life, and because of this, he came to know that his sins were forgiven through the Atonement of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

You and I, as part of those future generations spoken about, can be more powerful priesthood holders by using the Book of Mormon and honoring our priesthood covenants. The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ, of whom I also testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 7:18.
2. See Alma 23:5–6.
3. Alma 37:9.
4. Alma 37:19.
5. See 3 Nephi 23:6–14.
6. 3 Nephi 26:2.
7. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
8. Thomas S. Monson, "Decisions Determine Destiny," *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 5.
9. See 3 Nephi 11:18–22.
10. 2 Nephi 32:3.
11. See 1 Nephi 3:28.
12. 1 Nephi 2:12.
13. See Ether 3:12.
14. 3 Nephi 28:29.
15. See Enos 1:3–8.

## Elder Yoon Hwan Choi

### A group of loud boys

I would like to tell you about a group of loud young men who came into my life when I was a young bishop in Seoul, Korea, many years ago. These were boys who lived in the neighborhood. Only one or two of them were members of the Church at the time. The boys who were members were the only members in their family. They were all friends, and they came to the church to play and to be together. They liked to play Ping-Pong during the weekdays, and they liked to have fun activities on Saturdays. Most of them were not good students in school and were considered by many to be troublemakers.

I was a young father of two sons, who were seven and nine years old at the time. I did not know what I could do for these young men. They were so rowdy that once my wife, Bon-Kyoung, asked me if we could move to another ward so that our sons could see good examples from other young men. I pondered and prayed to Heavenly Father to help me to find the way to help these young men. Finally I made the decision to try and teach them how they could change their lives.

A vision came upon my mind very clearly. I felt that if they were to become missionaries, their lives would be changed. From that moment on, I became very excited, and I tried to spend as much time as possible with them, teaching them the importance of missionary service and how to prepare for a mission.

### The Hanaro Quartet

At that time, Elder Seo, a full-time missionary, was transferred to our ward. He was one who had grown up in the Church and as an Aaronic Priesthood youth had participated in a young men's singing group with his friends. He met those boisterous boys in our ward. Elder Seo taught those who were not members the

missionary discussions, and he also taught them the songs he used to sing. He made a triple quartet with those loud boys and named them the Hanaro Quartet, which means "be as one." They were happy to sing together, but we all needed "big" patience when we listened to their singing.

Our home was open to the members anytime they wanted to visit. The boys visited our home almost every weekend and even on some weekdays. We fed them and taught them. We taught them the principles of the gospel as well as the application of the gospel in their lives. We tried to give them a vision of their future life.

They sang together every time they came to our home. Their loud sound hurt our ears. But we always praised them because listening to them sing was far more enjoyable than seeing them get into trouble.

Through the years these activities continued. Most of these young men matured in the gospel, and a *miracle* happened. Over time, nine of the boys who were not members were baptized. They changed from loud, rowdy boys into valiant striping warriors.<sup>1</sup>

They served missions, met beautiful young sisters in the Church, and married in the temple. Of course, there were different challenges for each of them as they served missions, attended school, and got married, but they all stayed faithful because they wanted to obey their leaders and please the Lord. Now they have happy families with children born in the covenant.

Nine loud boys have become 45 active members in the Lord's kingdom, including their wives and children. They are now leaders in their wards and stakes. One is a bishop, two serve in bishoprics, one is serving on the high council, and two are Young Men presidents. There is a ward mission leader, an executive secretary, and a seminary teacher. As a group, they still

sing together, and the *other miracle*—they actually sound good!

### Obedience and church attendance

There are two basic principles that helped these young men become like the sons of Helaman.<sup>2</sup> Even though the boys' mothers were not members of the Church and did not understand the words of the Lord, priesthood leaders became like their fathers, and leaders' wives became like their mothers.

These nine boys—I call them the “Boys of the Lord”—learned that they would be blessed when they listened to the Church leaders, even though they didn't always understand why. They became like Adam, our first father, who when he made an offering to the Lord was asked by an angel, “Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.”<sup>3</sup> They became anxious to be obedient and to serve the Lord with their whole hearts.

They also learned that attending their Church meetings was very important. President Ezra Taft Benson said in his speech entitled “To the ‘Youth of the Noble Birthright’”: “May I now direct your attention to the importance of attending all of your Church meetings. Faithful attendance at Church meetings brings blessings you can receive in *no* other way.”<sup>4</sup> As they attended their Church meetings regularly, the boys felt the great love of the Lord and learned how to apply the doctrines and principles of the Church in their own daily lives. They also learned how to participate in meetings with great joy and happiness.

### Setting a righteous example

Now, we have three of our own sons, including our youngest, who was born during the time I served as bishop. As our sons grew, those nine boys became the leaders of the ward and the stake, and they became the teachers and leaders of our sons. They

taught our boys and other boys in the same way I taught them when they were troublemakers. They loved *our* young boys in the same way *I* loved them. *These loud, rowdy boys of the past became our children's heroes.* Our sons liked to follow their great examples of becoming wonderful missionaries and getting married to righteous companions in the temple.

These young men continue to influence our family. Two months ago our ward had a missionary activity on a Saturday evening, inviting everyone, including part-member families. Our youngest son, Sun-Yoon, had just come back from a youth camp in the afternoon of that same day. He said he was not going to the missionary activity because he was not a member of a part-member family and he was so tired. He didn't come to the activity. My wife called him on the phone to explain that everyone was invited to the activity. He said, “I know, but I am not coming today,” and hung up.

Right after the meeting started that evening, Sun-Yoon came in and sat by his mother very quietly. He whispered to her, saying, “Right after I hung up the phone, I remembered asking Dad what made the Hanaro Quartet so successful in their lives. He told me that they obeyed the words of the Church leaders and that they regularly attended the meetings of the Church. That was the key that changed their lives and made them so successful.” My son continued, “All of a sudden, the words of my father came into my mind, and I decided to follow them because I want to have a happy family like theirs and to be successful in my life.”

### Loving leadership

Dear brethren, let us love our boys—although some of them are loud boys. Let us teach them to change their lives. Modern sons of Helaman come not only from our precious families within the Church but also from new and young converts who do not have parents in the



gospel. You and your wives are to be their “goodly parents”<sup>5</sup> until they become like the sons of Helaman.

I am so pleased and happy to see your constant loving leadership for our young boys. These young men are all of our sons. As we reach out to them, lift them, and help them, we will feel like John, who said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”<sup>6</sup>

Dear young men, let us obey the leaders of the Church and be like Adam, who didn’t always have to know the reason why but was just happy to be obedient. And please faithfully attend your Church meetings. If you do this, you will learn how to prepare for your future, and you will be successful. To young boys who were born in the Church and also to those who have joined the Church, *you* are the army of the Lord. You will become wonderful missionaries and righteous fathers to your families. Heavenly Father will bless you to have a happy family. You have a bright future in the gospel, and like the sons of Helaman, you will bring eternal joy to all of us.

I love you, and I know that our Heavenly Father loves all of us, so He sent His

Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer. President Thomas S. Monson is our living prophet, who leads us in the right way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Alma 53:20–22.
2. See Alma 56:10.
3. Moses 5:6.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 44; italics added.
5. 1 Nephi 1:1.
6. 3 John 1:4.

#### President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Praise to the Man.” After the singing, it will be my privilege to address you. Following my remarks, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Praise to the Man.”

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## President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Remain steadfast

In our travels visiting Church members throughout the world and by means of established priesthood channels, we receive firsthand feedback on the conditions and challenges of our members. For years many of our members have been affected by worldwide disasters, both natural and man-made. We also understand that families have had to tighten their belts and are concerned about enduring these challenging times.

Brethren, we do feel very close to you. We love you, and we pray always for you. I have seen enough ups and downs

throughout my life to know that winter will surely give way to the warmth and hope of a new spring. I am optimistic about the future. Brethren, for our part, we must remain steadfast in hope, work with all our strength, and trust in God.

### Personal growth through adversity

Lately I have been thinking of a time in my life when the weight of worry and concern over an uncertain future seemed ever present. I was 11 years old and living with my family in the attic of a farmhouse near Frankfurt, Germany. We were refugees for the second time in a period of only a few

years, and we were struggling to establish ourselves in a new place far away from our previous home. I could say that we were poor, but that would be an understatement. We all slept in one room that was so tiny there was scarcely space to walk around the beds. In the other small room, we had a few pieces of modest furniture and a stove that Mother used to cook meals on. To get from one room to the other, we had to pass through a storage area where the farmer kept his equipment and tools, along with assorted meats and sausages hanging from the rafters. The aroma always made me very hungry. We had no bathroom, but we did have an outhouse—down the stairs and some 50 feet away, though it seemed much farther during wintertime.

Because I was a refugee and because of my East German accent, other children often made fun of me and called me names that deeply hurt. Of all the times of my youth, I believe this may have been the most discouraging.

Now, decades later, I can look back on those days through the softening filter of experience. Even though I still remember the hurt and despair, I can see now what I was unable to see then: this was a period of great personal growth. During this time, our family bonded together. I watched and learned from my parents. I admired their determination and optimism. From them I learned that adversity, when confronted with faith, courage, and tenacity, could be overcome.

Knowing that some of you are experiencing your own periods of anxiety and despair, I wanted to speak today about two important principles that sustained me through this formative period of my life.

### **The value of work**

*The first principle: Work.* To this day, I am deeply impressed by the way my family worked after having lost everything following World War II! I remember my father—a civil servant by education and

experience—taking on several difficult jobs, among which were coal miner, uranium miner, mechanic, and truck driver. He left early in the morning and often returned late at night in order to support our family. My mother started a laundry and worked countless hours doing menial labor. She enlisted my sister and me in her business. With my bike I became the pickup and delivery service. It felt good to be able to help the family in a small way, and though I did not know it at the time, the physical labor turned out to be a blessing to my health as well.

It wasn't easy, but the work kept us from dwelling too much on the difficulties of our circumstances. Although our situation didn't change overnight, it did change. That's the thing about work. If we simply keep at it—steady and constant—things certainly will improve.

How I admire men, women, and children who know how to work! How the Lord loves the laborer! He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,"<sup>1</sup> and "The laborer is worthy of his hire."<sup>2</sup> He also gave a promise: "Thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you."<sup>3</sup> Those who are unafraid to roll up their sleeves and lose themselves in the pursuit of worthwhile goals are a blessing to their families, communities, nations, and to the Church.

The Lord doesn't expect us to work harder than we are able. He doesn't (nor should we) compare our efforts to those of others. Our Heavenly Father asks only that we do the best we can—that we work according to our full capacity, however great or small that may be.

Work is an antidote for anxiety, an ointment for sorrow, and a doorway to possibility. Whatever our circumstances in life, my dear brethren, let us do the best we can and cultivate a reputation for excellence in all that we do. Let us set our minds and bodies to the glorious opportunity for work that each new day presents.

When our wagon gets stuck in the mud, God is much more likely to assist the man who gets out to push than the man who merely raises his voice in prayer—no matter how eloquent the oration. President Thomas S. Monson put it this way: “It is not enough to *want* to make the effort and to *say* we’ll make the effort. . . . It’s in the *doing*, not just the *thinking*, that we accomplish our goals. If we constantly put our goals off, we will never see them fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup>

Work can be ennobling and fulfilling, but remember Jacob’s warning not to “spend . . . your labor for that which cannot satisfy.”<sup>5</sup> If we devote ourselves to the pursuit of worldly wealth and the glitter of public recognition at the expense of our families and our spiritual growth, we will discover soon enough that we have made a fool’s bargain. The righteous work we do within the walls of our homes is most sacred; its benefits are eternal in nature. It cannot be delegated. It is the foundation of our work as priesthood holders.

Remember, we are only temporary travelers in this world. Let us not devote our God-given talents and energies solely to setting earthly anchors, but rather let us spend our days growing spiritual wings. For, as sons of the Most High God, we were created to soar unto new horizons.

Now, a word to us seasoned brethren: retirement is not part of the Lord’s plan of happiness. There is no sabbatical or retirement program from priesthood responsibilities—regardless of age or physical capacity. While the phrase “been there, done that” may work as an excuse to avoid skateboarding, decline the invitation for a motorbike ride, or bypass the spicy curry at the buffet, it is not an acceptable excuse for avoiding covenant responsibilities to consecrate our time, talents, and resources in the work of the kingdom of God.

There may be those who, after many years of Church service, believe they are entitled to a period of rest while others pull the weight. To put it bluntly, brethren,

this sort of thinking is unworthy of a disciple of Christ. A great part of our work on this earth is to endure joyfully to the end—every day of our life.

Now, a word also to our younger brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood who are pursuing the righteous goals of obtaining an education and finding an eternal spouse. These are the correct goals, my brethren, but remember: working diligently in the Lord’s vineyard will greatly upgrade your résumé and increase the probability for success in both of these worthy endeavors.

Whether you are the youngest deacon or the oldest high priest, there is work to do!

### The value of learning

*The second principle: Learn.* During the difficult economic conditions of post-war Germany, opportunities for education were not as abundant as they are today. But in spite of limited options, I always felt an eagerness to learn. I remember one day, while I was out on my bike delivering laundry, I entered the home of a classmate of mine. In one of the rooms, two small desks were nestled against the wall. What a wonderful sight that was! How fortunate those children were to have desks of their own! I could imagine them sitting with open books studying their lessons and doing their homework. It seemed to me that having a desk of my own would be the most wonderful thing in the world.

I had to wait a long time before that wish was fulfilled. Years later, I got a job at a research institution that had a large library. I remember spending much of my free time in that library. There I could finally sit at a desk—by myself—and drink in the information and knowledge that books provide. How I loved to read and learn! In those days I understood firsthand the words of an old saying: Education is not so much the filling of a bucket as the lighting of a fire.

For members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea—it's a commandment. We are to learn "of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad."<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Smith loved learning, even though he had few opportunities for formal education. In his journals, he spoke happily of days spent in study and often expressed his love of learning.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph taught the Saints that knowledge was a necessary part of our mortal journey, for "a man is saved no faster than he [gains] knowledge,"<sup>8</sup> and that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain . . . in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection."<sup>9</sup> During challenging times, it is even more important to learn. The Prophet Joseph taught, "Knowledge does away with darkness, [anxiety] and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is."<sup>10</sup>

Brethren, you have a duty to learn as much as you can. Please encourage your families, your quorum members, everyone to learn and become better educated. If formal education is not available, do not allow that to prevent you from acquiring all the knowledge you can. Under such circumstances, the best books, in a sense, can become your "university"—a classroom that is always open and admits all who apply. Strive to increase your knowledge of all that is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."<sup>11</sup> Seek knowledge "by study and also by faith."<sup>12</sup> Seek with a humble spirit and contrite heart.<sup>13</sup> As you apply the spiritual dimension of faith to your study—even of temporal things—you can amplify your intellectual capacity, for "if your eye be single to [God's] glory, your whole [body] shall be filled with light, and . . . [comprehend] all things."<sup>14</sup>

In our learning, let us not neglect the fountain of revelation. The scriptures and

the words of modern-day apostles and prophets are the sources of wisdom, divine knowledge, and personal revelation to help us find answers to all the challenges in life. Let us learn of Christ; let us seek out that knowledge which leads to peace, truth, and the sublime mysteries of eternity.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

Brethren, I think back on that 11-year-old boy in Frankfurt, Germany, who worried about his future and felt the lasting sting of unkind remarks. I remember this time with a sort of sad fondness. While I would not be eager to relive those days of trial and trouble, I have little doubt that the lessons I learned were a necessary preparation for future opportunity. Now, many years later, I know this for a certainty: it is often in the trial of adversity that we learn those most critical lessons that form our character and shape our destiny.

I pray that during the coming months and years we can fill our hours and days with righteous work. I pray that we will seek to learn and improve our minds and hearts by drinking deeply from the pure fountains of truth. I leave you my love and blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Genesis 3:19.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:79.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 31:5.
4. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 63–64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 59; italics in original.
5. 2 Nephi 9:51.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:79–80.
7. See Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2008), 84, 135, 164.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:588.

9. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
10. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:340.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.

12. Doctrine and Covenants 109:7.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 136:33.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### Ready to answer the call

Wherever I am in the day or night, there is nearby a small container of olive oil. This is the one which I keep in the middle drawer of the desk where I work. There is one in my pocket when I am working outdoors or traveling. There is also one in the kitchen cabinet in my home.

The one I hold now has a date on it. It is the day when someone exercised the power of the priesthood to consecrate the pure oil for the healing of the sick. The young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and even their fathers might think that I am a little extreme in my preparation.

But the call during the day or the knock at the door at night always comes as a surprise. Someone will say, “Please, could you come quickly?” Once, years ago, it was a father calling from a hospital. His three-year-old daughter had been thrown 50 feet by a speeding car as she ran across the street to join her mother. When I arrived at the hospital, the father pled that the power of the priesthood would preserve her life. The doctors and the nurses only reluctantly let us reach through a plastic barrier to place a drop of oil on the one opening in the heavy bandages which covered her head. A doctor said to me, with irritation in his voice, “Hurry with whatever you are going to do. She is dying.”

He was wrong. She lived, and contrary to what the doctor had said, she not only lived, but she learned to walk again.

When the call came, I was ready. The preparation was far more than having consecrated oil close at hand. It must begin long before the crisis which requires

priesthood power. Those who are prepared will be ready to answer.

### Preparing to do the Lord’s will

The preparation begins in families, in Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and mostly in the private lives of young men. The quorums and the families must help, but the preparation that counts will be made by the young men making choices to rise to their great destiny as priesthood servants for God.

The destiny of the rising generation of priesthood holders is far more than to be ready to bring God’s power down to heal the sick. The preparation is to be ready to go and do whatever the Lord wants done as the world is preparing for His coming. None of us knows exactly what those errands will be. But we know what it will take to be ready, so each of us can prepare.

What you will need in the dramatic moment will be built in the steady performance of obedient service. I will tell you two of the things you will need and the preparation it takes to be ready.

### Building faith now for days ahead

The first is to have faith. The priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. It is the right to call down the powers of heaven. So you must have faith that God lives and that you have won His confidence to allow you to use His power for His purposes.

An instance from the Book of Mormon will help you see how one man made that preparation. There was a priesthood holder



named Nephi who received a hard assignment from the Lord. He was sent by God to call wicked people to repentance before it was too late for them. In their wickedness and hatred, they were killing each other. Even their sorrow had not humbled them enough to repent and obey God.

Because of Nephi's preparation, God blessed him with power to fulfill his assignment. In His loving and empowering words to Nephi, there is a guide for us:

"Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

"And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

"Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.

"Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people."<sup>1</sup>

As the account from the Book of Mormon tells us, the people did not repent. So Nephi asked God to change the seasons. He asked for a miracle to help the people choose to repent because of famine. The famine came. The people repented, and then they begged Nephi to have God send rain. He did ask God, and God honored his unshakable faith.

That faith did not come in the moment when Nephi needed it, nor did God's trust in Nephi. He earned that great faith and God's confidence by courageous and sustained labor in the Lord's service. You young men are building that faith now for the days ahead when you will need it.

It may be so small a thing as to keep careful minutes in a deacons or a teachers quorum. There were young men years ago who kept meticulous records of what was decided and what was done by boys only months older than they were. That took faith that God called even 12-year-olds into His service who were being guided by revelation. Some of those quorum secretaries of long ago now sit in the presiding councils of the Church. They now read the minutes others prepare. And revelation flows to them now as it did to the leaders they served when they were boys like you. They had been prepared to trust that God reveals His *will*, even in apparently small matters, in His kingdom.

### Following inspiration

Now, the Lord said Nephi could be trusted because he would ask nothing contrary to God's will. To have that confidence in Nephi, the Lord had to be sure that Nephi believed in revelation, sought it, and followed it. Long experience following inspiration from God was a part of Nephi's priesthood preparation. It must be part of yours.

I see that happening today. In recent months I have heard deacons, teachers, and priests give talks which are clearly as inspired and powerful as you will hear in this general conference. As I have felt the power being given to young holders of the priesthood, I have thought that the rising generation is rising around us, as if on an incoming tide. My prayer is that those of us in the generations which have come before will rise on the tide with them. The preparation of the Aaronic Priesthood is a blessing to us all as well as to those they

will serve in their generation and the generations to follow.

Yet all is not perfect in Zion. Not all of the youth choose to prepare. That choice must be their own. They are responsible for themselves. That is the Lord's way in His loving plan. But many young men have little or no support from those who could help as they prepare. Those of us who can help will be held accountable by the Lord. A father who neglects or interferes with a son's development of faith or his ability to follow inspiration will someday know sorrow. That will be true for anyone placed in a position to help these young men choose wisely and well in their days in the preparatory priesthood.

### **Leading young men by example**

Now, the second thing they will need is confidence that they can live up to the blessings and the trust which God has offered them. Most of the influences around them drag them down to doubt the existence of God, of His love for them, and of the reality of the sometimes quiet messages they receive through the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ. Their peers may urge them to choose sin. If young men choose sin, those messages from God will become more faint.

We can help them choose to prepare by loving them, warning them, and by showing confidence in them. But we can help them even more by our example of a faithful and inspired servant. In our families, in quorums, in classes, and as we associate with them in any setting, we can act as true priesthood holders who use its power as God has taught us.

For me, that instruction is most clear in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord warns us in that section to have our motives pure: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."<sup>2</sup>

As we lead and influence young men, we must never do it to gratify our pride or our ambition. We must never use compulsion in any degree of unrighteousness. That is a high standard of the example we must set for our youth.

### **Examples of righteous leadership**

I saw it done when I was a teacher and a priest. My bishop and those who served under him were determined not to lose even one of us. As nearly as I could see, their determination was motivated by love for the Lord and for us, not for any selfish purpose.

The bishop had a system. Every adviser of every quorum was to contact every young man he had not spoken to that Sunday. They were not to go to bed until they had either talked to the boy who had been missing, to his parents, or to a close friend. The bishop promised them that he would not turn out his light until he had heard a report about every boy. I don't think he gave them an order. He simply made it clear that he did not expect their lights to go out until they had given that report.

He and those who served under him were doing far more than watching over us. They were showing us by example what it means to care for the Lord's sheep. No effort was too much for him or for those who served us in our quorums. By their example, they taught us what it means to be unwearied in the Lord's service. The Lord was preparing us by example.

I have no idea whether they thought any one of us was going to be anything special. But they treated us as if they did by being willing to pay any personal price to keep us from losing faith.

I don't know how the bishop got so many people to have such high expectations. As nearly as I can tell, it was done "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned." The "no lights out" method

the bishop used would not work in some places. But the example of unwavering care for every young man and reaching out quickly brought the power of heaven into our lives. It always will. It helped young men prepare for the days when God needed them in families and in His kingdom.

My father was an example for me of what the Lord teaches in the 121st section about getting heaven's help in preparing young men. During my early years, he was sometimes disappointed by my performance. He let me know it. Hearing his voice, I could feel he thought I was better than that. But he did it in the Lord's way: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy."<sup>3</sup>

I knew, even after the most direct correction, that Dad's reproof was given in love. In fact, his love seemed to increase when he used even his strongest correction, which was a disapproving and disappointed look. He was my leader and my trainer, never using compulsory means, and I am sure that the promise given in the Doctrine and Covenants will be fulfilled for him. His influence on me will flow unto him "forever and ever."<sup>4</sup>

### Doing more to help young men prepare

Many fathers and leaders, when they hear the words of the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, will feel that they must rise higher to come up to that standard. I do. Can you remember a moment when you rebuked a child or youth with sharpness when you were moved by something other than inspiration? Can you remember a time when you told a son to do something or make a sacrifice you were not willing to do or make yourself? Those feelings of regret can spur us to repentance to become more nearly the examples we have covenanted to be.

As we meet our obligations as fathers and leaders, we will help the next generation rise to their glorious future. They will be better than we are, just as you have tried to be even better parents than your parents and better leaders than the great ones who helped you.

It is my prayer that we will be determined to do better every day to prepare the rising generation. Each time I see a bottle of consecrated oil, I will remember this night and the feeling I have now of wanting to do more to help young men prepare for their days of service and opportunity. I pray for a blessing of preparation for them. I am confident that, with the Lord's help and ours, they will be ready.

I bear you my witness that God the Father lives and that Jesus Christ lives and leads this Church. He is the perfect exemplar of the priesthood. President Thomas S. Monson holds and exercises all the keys of the priesthood on the earth. That is true. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Helaman 10:4–7.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.

### President Uchtdorf

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided and also thank the brethren who have addressed us this evening.

It will now be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.



## President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we are assembled as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. We have heard inspired messages this evening, and I express my appreciation to those brethren who have addressed us. I am honored, yet humbled, by the privilege to speak to you, and I pray that the inspiration of the Lord may attend me.

### “Cease from anger”

Recently as I watched the news on television, I realized that many of the lead stories were similar in nature in that the tragedies reported all basically traced back to one emotion: *anger*. The father of an infant had been arrested for physical abuse of the baby. It was alleged that the baby’s crying had so infuriated him that he had broken one of the child’s limbs and several ribs. Alarming was the report of growing gang violence, with the number of gang-related killings having risen sharply. Another story that night involved the shooting of a woman by her estranged husband, who was reportedly in a jealous rage after finding her with another man. Then, of course, there was the usual coverage of wars and conflicts throughout the world.

I thought of the words of the Psalmist: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath.”<sup>1</sup>

### A family tragedy

Many years ago, a young couple called my office and asked if they could come in for counseling. They indicated they had suffered a tragedy in their lives and that their marriage was in serious jeopardy. An appointment was arranged.

The tension between this husband and wife was apparent as they entered my office. Their story unfolded slowly at first as the husband spoke haltingly and the wife cried quietly and participated very little in the conversation.

The young man had returned from serving a mission and was accepted to a prestigious university in the eastern part of the United States. It was there, in a university ward, that he had met his future wife. She was also a student at the university. After a year of dating, they journeyed to Utah and were married in the Salt Lake Temple, returning east shortly afterward to finish their schooling.

By the time they graduated and returned to their home state, they were expecting their first child and the husband had employment in his chosen field. The wife gave birth to a baby boy. Life was good.

When their son was about 18 months old, they decided to take a short vacation to visit family members who lived a few hundred miles away. This was at a time when car seats for children and seat belts for adults were scarcely heard of, let alone used. The three members of the family all rode in the front seat with the toddler in the middle.

Sometime during the trip, the husband and wife had a disagreement. After all these years, I cannot recall what caused it. But I do remember that their argument escalated and became so heated that they were eventually yelling at one another. Understandably, this caused their young son to begin crying, which the husband said only added to his anger. Losing total control of his temper, he picked up a toy the child had dropped on the seat and flung it in the direction of his wife.

He missed hitting his wife. Instead, the toy struck their son, with the result that he was brain damaged and would be handicapped for the rest of his life.

This was one of the most tragic situations I had ever encountered. I counseled and encouraged them. We talked of commitment and responsibility, of acceptance and forgiveness. We spoke of the affection and respect which needed to return to their family. We read words of comfort from the

scriptures. We prayed together. Though I have not heard from them since that day so long ago, they were smiling through their tears as they left my office. All these years I've hoped they made the decision to remain together, comforted and blessed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think of them whenever I read the words: "Anger doesn't solve anything. It builds nothing, but it can destroy everything."<sup>2</sup>

### Anger is a choice

We've all felt anger. It can come when things don't turn out the way we want. It might be a reaction to something which is said of us or to us. We may experience it when people don't behave the way we want them to behave. Perhaps it comes when we have to wait for something longer than we expected. We might feel angry when others can't see things from our perspective. There seem to be countless possible reasons for anger.

There are times when we can become upset at imagined hurts or perceived injustices. President Heber J. Grant, seventh President of the Church, told of a time as a young adult when he did some work for a man who then sent him a check for \$500 with a letter apologizing for not being able to pay him more. Then President Grant did some work for another man—work which he said was 10 times more difficult, involving 10 times more labor and a great deal more time. This second man sent him a check for \$150. Young Heber felt he had been treated most unfairly. He was at first insulted and then incensed.

He recounted the experience to an older friend, who asked, "Did that man intend to insult you?"

President Grant replied, "No. He told my friends he had rewarded me handsomely."

To this the older friend replied, "A man's a fool who takes an insult that isn't intended."<sup>3</sup>

The Apostle Paul asks in Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 26 of the Joseph Smith Translation: "Can ye be angry, and not sin? let not the sun go down upon your wrath." I ask, is it possible to feel the Spirit of our Heavenly Father when we are angry? I know of no instance where such would be the case.

From 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, we read:

"There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."<sup>4</sup>

To be angry is to yield to the influence of Satan. No one can *make* us angry. It is our choice. If we desire to have a proper spirit with us at all times, we must choose to refrain from becoming angry. I testify that such is possible.

Anger, Satan's tool, is destructive in so many ways.

### Story of Thomas B. Marsh

I believe most of us are familiar with the sad account of Thomas B. Marsh and his wife, Elizabeth. Brother Marsh was one of the first modern-day Apostles called after the Church was restored to the earth. He eventually became President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

While the Saints were in Far West, Missouri, Elizabeth Marsh, Thomas's wife, and her friend Sister Harris decided they would exchange milk in order to make more cheese than they otherwise could. To be certain all was done fairly, they agreed that they should not save what were called the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. Strippings

came at the end of the milking and were richer in cream.

Sister Harris was faithful to the agreement, but Sister Marsh, desiring to make some especially delicious cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Sister Harris the milk without the strippings. This caused the two women to quarrel. When they could not settle their differences, the matter was referred to the home teachers to settle. They found Elizabeth Marsh guilty of failure to keep her agreement. She and her husband were upset with the decision, and the matter was then referred to the bishop for a Church trial. The bishop's court decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved and that Sister Marsh had violated her covenant with Sister Harris.

Thomas Marsh appealed to the high council, and the men comprising this council confirmed the bishop's decision. He then appealed to the First Presidency of the Church. Joseph Smith and his counselors considered the case and upheld the decision of the high council.

Elder Thomas B. Marsh, who sided with his wife through all of this, became angrier with each successive decision—so angry, in fact, that he went before a magistrate and swore that the Mormons were hostile toward the state of Missouri. His affidavit led to—or at least was a factor in—Governor Lilburn Boggs's cruel extermination order, which resulted in over 15,000 Saints being driven from their homes, with all the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. All of this occurred because of a disagreement over the exchange of milk and cream.<sup>5</sup>

After 19 years of rancor and loss, Thomas B. Marsh made his way to the Salt Lake Valley and asked President Brigham Young for forgiveness. Brother Marsh also wrote to Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency, of the lesson he had learned. Said Brother Marsh: "The Lord could get along very well without me and He . . . lost nothing by my falling out of

the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford."<sup>6</sup>

Apropos are the words of the poet John Greenleaf Whittier: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"<sup>7</sup>

### Refrain from anger

My brethren, we are all susceptible to those feelings which, if left unchecked, can lead to anger. We experience displeasure or irritation or antagonism, and if we so choose, we lose our temper and become angry with others. Ironically, those others are often members of our own families—the people we really love the most.

Many years ago I read the following Associated Press dispatch which appeared in the newspaper: An elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small, one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel, they had divided the room in half with a chalk line, and neither had crossed the line or spoken a word to the other since that day—62 years before. Just think of the consequence of that anger. What a tragedy!

May we make a conscious decision, each time such a decision must be made, to refrain from anger and to leave unsaid the harsh and hurtful things we may be tempted to say.

I love the words of the hymn written by Elder Charles W. Penrose, who served in the Quorum of the Twelve and in the First Presidency during the early years of the 20th century:

School thy feelings, O my brother;  
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.  
Do not its emotions smother,  
But let wisdom's voice control.  
School thy feelings; there is power  
In the cool, collected mind.  
Passion shatters reason's tower,  
Makes the clearest vision blind.<sup>8</sup>

## Oath and covenant of the priesthood

Each of us is a holder of the priesthood of God. The oath and covenant of the priesthood pertains to all of us. To those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is a declaration of our requirement to be faithful and obedient to the laws of God and to magnify the callings which come to us. To those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, it is a pronouncement concerning future duty and responsibility, that you may prepare yourselves here and now.

This oath and covenant is set forth by the Lord in these words:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”<sup>9</sup>

Brethren, great promises await us if we are true and faithful to the oath and covenant of this precious priesthood which we hold. May we be worthy sons of our Heavenly Father. May we ever be exemplary in our homes and faithful in keeping

all of the commandments, that we may harbor no animosity toward any man but rather be peacemakers, ever remembering the Savior’s admonition, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”<sup>10</sup> This is my plea tonight at the conclusion of this great priesthood meeting, and it’s also my humble and sincere prayer, for I love you, brethren, with all my heart and soul. And I pray our Heavenly Father’s blessing to attend each of you in your life, in your home, in your heart, in your soul, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Psalm 37:8.
2. Lawrence Douglas Wilder, quoted in “Early Hardships Shaped Candidates,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 7, 1991, A2.
3. See Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 288–89.
4. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
5. See George A. Smith, *Deseret News*, Apr. 16, 1856, 44.
6. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church History Library.
7. “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (1876), 206.
8. “School Thy Feelings,” *Hymns*, no. 336.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–38.
10. John 13:35.

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The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, October 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth were the organists. The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this morning to the fourth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction

of Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Sing Praise to Him” and will now favor us with “I Need Thee Every Hour.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy. The choir will then sing “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

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The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

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### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

## President Henry B. Eyring

### **The Savior is our perfect example**

I feel blessed to have the opportunity to speak with you on this Sabbath day. Different as we are in circumstances and experiences, we share a desire to become better than we are. There may be a few who mistakenly feel they are good enough and a few who have given up trying to be better. But, for all, the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can and must expect to become better as long as we live.

Part of that expectation is set for us in a revelation given by God to the Prophet

Joseph Smith. It describes the day when we will meet the Savior, as we all will. It tells us what to do to prepare and what to expect.

It is in the book of Moroni: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>



That ought to help you understand why any believing Latter-day Saint is an optimist about what lies ahead for him or her, however difficult the present may be. We believe that through living the gospel of Jesus Christ we can become like the Savior, who is perfect. Considering the attributes of Jesus Christ should quash the pride of the self-satisfied person who thinks he or she has no need to improve. And even the most humble person can take hope in the invitation to become like the Savior.

### **“I’m trying to be like Jesus”**

How that wonderful transformation will happen is captured for me in a song written for children. I remember watching the faces of a room full of children singing it on a Sunday. Each of the children was leaning forward, almost to the front of the chair. I could see light in their eyes and determination in their faces as they sang with gusto. You may have heard the song too. I hope it will sound forever in our memories. I only hope I can give it the feeling those children had.

I’m trying to be like Jesus; I’m following in his ways.

I’m trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.

At times I am tempted to make a wrong choice,

But I try to listen as the still small voice whispers,

“Love one another as Jesus loves you. Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,

For these are the things Jesus taught.”<sup>2</sup>

It seemed to me that they were not just singing; they were declaring their determination. Jesus Christ was their example. To be like Him was their fixed goal. And their eager looks and their shining eyes convinced me that they had no doubts. They expected to succeed. They believed that

the instruction of the Savior to be perfect was not a hope but a command. And they were sure He had prepared the way.

That determination and confidence can and must be in the heart of every Latter-day Saint. The Savior has prepared the way through His Atonement and His example. And even the children who sang that song knew how.

### **Family as the setting to learn love**

Love is the motivating principle by which the Lord leads us along the way towards becoming like Him, *our perfect example*. Our way of life, hour by hour, must be filled with the love of God and love for others. There is no surprise in that, since the Lord proclaimed those as the first and great commandments. It is love of God that will lead us to keep His commandments. And love of others is at the heart of our capacity to obey Him.

Just as Jesus used a child in His mortal ministry as an example for the people of the pure love they must and could have to be like Him, He has offered us the family as an example of an ideal setting in which we can learn how to love as He loves.

That is because the greatest joys and the greatest sorrows we experience are in family relationships. The joys come from putting the welfare of others above our own. That is what love is. And the sorrow comes primarily from selfishness, which is the absence of love. The ideal God holds for us is to form families in the way most likely to lead to happiness and away from sorrow. A man and a woman are to make sacred covenants that they will put the welfare and happiness of the other at the center of their lives. Children are to be born into a family where the parents hold the needs of children equal to their own in importance. And children are to love parents and each other.

That is the ideal of a loving family. In many of our homes, there are the words “Our Family Can Be Together Forever.”

There is a gravestone near my home of a mother and grandmother. She and her husband were sealed in the temple of God to each other and to their posterity for time and all eternity. The inscription on the gravestone reads, "Please, no empty chairs." She asked for that inscription because she knew that whether the family will be together depends on the choices each family member makes. The word "please" is there because neither God nor she can compel another to choose happiness. And there is Satan, who wants misery, not happiness, in families in this life and in the next.

### **Counsel for families**

My hope today is to suggest some choices which may seem difficult but that would assure you that you have qualified for there to be no empty chairs in your family in the world to come.

#### *To husbands and wives*

First, I give counsel to husbands and wives. Pray for the love which allows you to see the good in your companion. Pray for the love that makes weaknesses and mistakes seem small. Pray for the love to make your companion's joy your own. Pray for the love to want to lessen the load and soften the sorrows of your companion.

I saw this in my parents' marriage. In my mother's final illness, the more uncomfortable she became, the more giving her comfort became the dominant intent of my father's life. He asked that the hospital set up a bed in her room. He was determined to be there to be sure that she wanted for nothing. He walked the miles to work each morning and back to her side at night through those difficult times for her. I believe it was a gift from God to him that his power to love grew when it mattered so much to her. I think he was doing what Jesus would have done out of love.

#### *To parents of a wandering child*

Now I give counsel to the parents of a wandering child. The Savior is the perfect example of persisting in love. You remember His words of comfort to the people among the Nephites who had rejected His earlier invitation to come to Him. He spoke to the survivors of the destruction which came after His Crucifixion: "O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart."<sup>3</sup>

The story of the prodigal son gives us all hope. The prodigal remembered home, as will your children. They will feel your love drawing them back to you. Elder Orson F. Whitney, in a general conference of 1929, gave a remarkable promise, which I know is true, to the faithful parents who honor the temple sealing to their children: "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold."

Then he goes on to say: "Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God."<sup>4</sup> You can pray for your children, love them, and reach out to them with confidence that Jesus reaches for them with you. When you keep trying, you are doing what Jesus does.

#### *To children*

Now, here is my counsel to children. The Lord gave you a commandment with a promise: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."<sup>5</sup> It is the only one of the Ten Commandments with a promise. You may not have parents that are living. In some cases, you may not feel that your parents are worthy of the

honor and respect of their children. You may not even have ever known them. But you owe them life. And in every case, even if your life is not lengthened, its quality will be improved simply by remembering your parents with honor.

### *To family friends*

Now to those who have adopted other people's families as if they were their own: I have friends who remember my children's birthdays better than I do. My wife and I have had friends who seldom failed to visit or to remember a holiday with us. I often am touched when someone begins a conversation, "How is your family?" and then waits to hear the answer with love showing in their face. They seem attentive when I go through a description of the life of each of my children. Their love helps me to feel more keenly the love of the Savior for our children. In their question, I can sense that they are feeling what Jesus feels and asking what He would ask.

### **Childlike obedience brings peace**

For all of us it may be hard to see in our lives an increasing power to love and to see ourselves becoming more like the Savior, *our perfect example*. I wish to encourage you. You have had evidences that you are moving along the road to becoming more like Jesus. It will help to remember how you have felt, at times, like a little child, even in the midst of cares and trials. Think of those children singing the song. Think of the times you felt, perhaps recently, as those little children did singing, "I'm trying to be like Jesus; I'm following in his ways." You will remember that Jesus asked His disciples to bring the children to Him and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, . . . for of such is the kingdom of God."<sup>6</sup> You have felt the peace of a pure little child at times when you have tried to be like Jesus.

It may have come when you were baptized. He did not need baptism, because

He was pure. But when you were baptized, you had the feeling of being washed clean, like a little child. When He was baptized, the heavens were opened, and He heard the voice of His Heavenly Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>7</sup> You heard no voice, but you felt the approval of Heavenly Father for having done what Jesus did.

You have felt it in your family when you asked the pardon of your spouse or forgave a child for some mistake or disobedience. These moments will come more often as you try to do the things you know Jesus would do. Because of His Atonement for you, your childlike obedience will bring a feeling of love of the Savior for you and your love for Him. That is one of the gifts that is promised to His faithful disciples. And this gift can come not only to you alone but also to the loving members of your family. The promise was given in 3 Nephi: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."<sup>8</sup>

I hope you will go out today looking for opportunities to do as He did and to love as He loves. I can promise you the peace that you felt as a child will come to you often and it will linger with you. The promise is true that He made to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."<sup>9</sup>

None of us is perfect yet. But we can have frequent assurance that we are following along the way. He leads us, and He beckons for us to follow Him.

I testify that the way lies in faith in Jesus Christ, in baptism, in receiving the Holy Ghost, and in enduring in love to keep His commandments. I testify that the Father lives and loves us. He loves His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *our perfect example*. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. He saw the Father and the Son. I know that is true. There is in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the priesthood power to



offer the ordinances that allow us to become better and better and more like the Savior and our Heavenly Father. I leave you my blessing that you may feel the assurance and the approval you felt as a little child. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Moroni 7:48.
2. "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79.
3. 3 Nephi 10:6.
4. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
5. Mosiah 13:20.
6. Mark 10:14.
7. Matthew 3:17.
8. 3 Nephi 22:13.
9. John 14:27.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Our pioneer heritage

My wife and I had the privilege of attending the Mormon Miracle Pageant in Manti, Utah, this summer. One night, before the beginning of the pageant, we spoke to the cast members. Because of the large number of cast members, we had to speak to them in two sessions. The pageant had a cast of over 800 individuals, with 570 of them being under the age of 18. One hundred additional cast members participated this year, requiring the sisters in charge of the wardrobe to come up with additional costumes—which they did. It was an inspiration to see how well organized they were in taking care of every detail.

The setting of the pageant is on a beautiful hillside just below the Manti Temple. There were 15,000 people in attendance the night we watched the pageant. It was a thrill to see this army of young men and women catch the vision of the story of the Restoration as they performed their parts with such enthusiasm and spirit.

Something we love to do when we visit Manti is to attend a temple session. There is a special spirit in these older temples, which were constructed at great sacrifice by the early pioneers.

Attending a temple session in the Manti Temple was an emotional experience for me. It brought back great memories of how I remembered the Logan Utah Temple before it was remodeled and modernized. As

we progressed through the temple session, I could hear in every room those early pioneers saying, "Look at what we built with our own hands. We had no power equipment. No contractors or subcontractors were involved in the construction, no fancy cranes to lift up the heavy stones. We performed this labor under our own power."

What a glorious heritage these early Sanpete County pioneers have left to us.

### "The past way of facing the future"

Former United States president Ronald Reagan has been quoted as saying, "I do not want to go back to the past; I want to go back to the past way of facing the future."<sup>1</sup> His counsel still resonates within me. There is something about reviewing the lessons of the past to prepare us to face the challenges of the future. What a glorious legacy of faith, courage, and ingenuity those noble early Mormon pioneers have left for us to build upon. My admiration for them deepens the longer I live.

Embracing the gospel resulted in a complete change of life for them. They left everything behind—their homes, their businesses, their farms, and even their beloved family members—to journey into a wilderness. It must have been a real shock when Brigham Young announced, "This is the . . . place."<sup>2</sup> Before them was a vast desert wasteland, barren of green

hills, trees, and beautiful meadows which most of those early pioneers had known. With firm faith in God and their leaders, the early pioneers went to work to create beautiful communities in the shadows of the mountains.

Many weary pioneers had just started to enjoy some of the modest comforts of life when Brigham Young called them to leave their homes again and journey to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south to colonize the Great Basin. This is how the communities of Sanpete County—Fairview, Ephraim, Manti, Moroni, and Mount Pleasant—were established.

### **Building of the Manti Temple**

Upon my return from my visit to Sanpete County, I felt the desire to learn more about its early pioneers. I decided to spend a few hours in the new Church History Library and read a little about their history.

It was in the year 1849, just two years after they had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, when Brigham Young, the great colonizer of the West, called a group of Saints to journey south and start building their homes and communities all over again in another desert wasteland. A short time after they had settled in Sanpete, President Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to President Brigham Young, visited the Manti community and promised them that on the hill overlooking the valley, a temple would be built using stone from the mountains to the east.

Some years passed after the visit of President Kimball, and the citizens began to be anxious that nothing was being done to construct a temple for their use. “We must have a temple in our community,” declared one of the citizens. “We have waited long enough for this blessing.” Another one said, “If we are going to have a temple, we had better get busy and build it.” And that is just what they did.

The cornerstone was laid on April 14, 1879, some 30 years after they had arrived

in the Sanpete Valley. There are many stories that could be told about the diligence of the workmen, who put their very best into the construction of this beautiful temple. President Gordon B. Hinckley said several years ago at the rededication of the Manti Temple, “I have been in the world’s great buildings, and in none of these have I had the feeling I get in coming to these pioneer houses of God.”<sup>3</sup> The Hinckley family has a very special connection with the Manti Temple. Sister Marjorie Hinckley’s grandfather lost his life from an injury sustained in its construction.

### **Shipbuilding and true principles**

To better understand how the past can provide a better way of facing the future, I would like to share an account from the building of the Manti Temple. Then I want to share what it has taught me about true principles.

Some fine carpenters from Norway who arrived and settled in Manti were given the assignment of building the roof for the temple. They had never built a roof structure before, but they had experience as shipbuilders. They didn’t know how they would design a roof. Then the thought came to them: “Why don’t we just build a ship? Then, because a well-built ship is solid and secure, if we turn the plans upside down, we’ll have a secure roof.” They set about to plan to construct a ship, and when it was completed, they turned the plan upside down and it became the plan for the roof of the Manti Temple.

In this case they used lessons from their past experience—the principles of shipbuilding—to help them meet the challenge. They correctly reasoned that the same principles they had applied to building a seaworthy vessel would also apply to building a solid roof. For example, both structures needed to be waterproof. The basic integrity of the structure wouldn’t be affected by its orientation—whether right side up or upside down. The most important thing was to have a working

knowledge of the basic principles required to erect any structure that was built to last.

Embedded in the gospel of Jesus Christ there are eternal principles and truths that will last far longer than the principles of building ships and roofs. You and I, as members of the Lord's true Church, have special access and insight into these eternal principles and truths, especially when we listen to the Spirit for individual guidance and hear the prophet's voice as he declares the will of God to the members of the Church. You and I both know how important these eternal principles and truths are in our lives. I'm not sure those early pioneers could have faced the perils and uncertainties of the future without them, and neither can we. They are the only true and eternal way to face the future, especially in these increasingly perilous and uncertain times in which we now live.

These Norwegian shipbuilders brought with them the fundamental skills of their trade, which could be turned from building ships to building temples. What caused their dramatic shift in priorities? There is only one answer that explains their willingness to sacrifice everything to become builders of the kingdom of God. They had been taught and accepted the eternal principles and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They realized that their mission was not only to help build edifices but also to contribute to the edification of others by sharing their knowledge of the gospel. As we read in section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants, "He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (verse 22).

### **Sharing the gospel**

When we received the special blessing of knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and took upon ourselves the name of Christ by entering the waters of baptism, we also accepted the obligation to

share the gospel with others. Recently, to accomplish more fully our shared responsibility to proclaim the gospel, the Church has turned the missionary program upside down. Some years ago we eliminated stake missions and shifted the focus of our efforts to the ward mission organization. With a ward mission plan developed by every ward council in the Church, progress is being made at an ever-increasing rate. Much of the success is being achieved by the full-time missionaries working closely with ward councils, ward mission leaders, and the members of the Church.

We have discovered that ward-based missionary work increases member involvement in finding and teaching investigators. Often investigators are invited to receive the missionary lessons in members' homes. Ward members become more excited to share their precious knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ when they directly experience the sweet blessings of missionary service and they receive more regular reminders from their ward leaders. Members become more inclusive as they ponder and pray about sharing the gospel with friends, neighbors, and family members of other faiths.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "So many of us look upon missionary work as simply tracting. Everyone who is familiar with this work knows there is a better way. That way is through the members of the Church. Whenever there is a member who introduces an investigator, there is an immediate support system. The member bears testimony of the truth of the work. He is anxious for the happiness of his investigator friend. He becomes excited as that friend makes progress in learning the gospel."<sup>4</sup>

The full-time missionaries will continue to do most of the actual teaching of investigators, but members will have ample opportunity to answer questions and share their testimonies. We heed the prophet's voice more fully by preparing ourselves to teach basic gospel principles.

Preparation removes fear. It also simplifies and strengthens what the members do in support of the full-time missionaries. There are three basic lessons the full-time missionaries teach: the Restoration, the plan of salvation, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. How prepared are you to give witness and testimony to the truthfulness of these very basic lessons? Use the inspired missionary manual *Preach My Gospel* to study and prepare yourself to play that supporting role to the full-time missionaries as they teach these basic gospel discussions.

### Two important lessons

May we all learn *both* of the important lessons taught by the shipbuilders from Norway who constructed the roof of the Manti Temple. First is the lesson of using the principles and truths of the past to help us face the future. Second, we learn from their desire to share what they knew with others to help build the kingdom of God. This second lesson, if we learn it well, will help many others of our brothers and

sisters, fellow sons and daughters of God, face an uncertain future with the same eternal assurances we have.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. It has been restored to bless our lives in these latter days. It contains all the truths, principles, and ordinances contained in our Father in Heaven's great plan of happiness, which is a plan for us to return and live with Him in the eternal realms beyond. That the gospel of Jesus Christ is His divine way for us to face our glorious future is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Ronald Reagan, quoted in George F. Will, "One Man's America," *Cato Policy Report*, Sept.–Oct. 2008, 11.
2. Brigham Young, quoted in Wilford Woodruff, "Celebration of Pioneers' Day," *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in "Manti Temple Rededicated," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 73.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 105.

## Bishop H. David Burton

Thank you, Elder Pace, for that beautiful invocation, for listeners and speakers particularly.

### Virtues

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45).

As I neared my 12th birthday, there were several requirements to be completed before I could graduate from Primary. One was to recite the thirteen Articles of Faith in the prescribed order. The first twelve articles were relatively easy, but the thirteenth was much more

difficult. It was remembering the order of the virtues that presented the challenge. Thanks to a Primary teacher who was patient and persistent, I finally completed the memorization.

Years later my wife and children and I moved into our first home. We were surprised to learn that my former Primary teacher would be our neighbor. For the 40 years we have lived in the same neighborhood, she has kept our little secret concerning my learning disability.

"We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we

have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Today I wish to speak about personal traits we call virtues. Virtuous traits form the foundation of a Christian life and are the outward manifestation of the inner man. The spelling in English of many individual virtues concludes with the letters *ity*: integrity, humility, charity, spirituality, accountability, civility, fidelity, and the list goes on and on. Relying on literary license, I refer to the virtues ending in *ity* as the “ity” virtues. “Ity” is a suffix that means quality, state, or degree of being.

### **Personal traits of virtue in decline**

We need only look around us to see what is taking place in our communities to realize that personal traits of virtue are in a steep decline. Reflect on the behavior of drivers on crowded highways; road rage happens all too often. Civility is all but absent in our political discourse. As countries around the world face financial and economic challenges, fidelity and honesty seem to have been replaced with greed and graft. A visit to a high school will often subject you to crude language and immodest dress. Some athletes display poor sportsmanship and seldom show humility unless publicly exposed for legal or moral infidelities. A large segment of our population feel little personal responsibility for their own temporal well-being. Some in financial distress blame bankers and lenders for loaning sums to satisfy insatiable wants rather than affordable needs. On occasion our generosity in support of good causes wanes as our appetite to acquire more than we need prevails.

Brothers and sisters, we need not be a part of the virtue malaise that is penetrating and infecting society. If we follow the world in abandoning Christian-centered virtues, the consequences may be disastrous. Individual faith and fidelity, which

have eternal consequences, will diminish. Family solidarity and spirituality will be adversely impacted. Religious influence in society will be lessened, and the rule of law will be challenged and perhaps even set aside. The seedbed for all that plagues the natural man will have been planted, to the sheer delight of Satan.

We need to stand tall and be firmly fixed in perpetuating Christlike virtues, even the “ity” virtues, in our everyday lives. Teaching virtuous traits begins in the home with parents who care and set the example. A good parental example encourages emulation; a poor example gives license to the children to disregard the parents’ teachings and even expand the poor example. A hypocritical example destroys credibility.

### **Valuable lessons learned**

Eight-year-old Megan enjoys playing the piano. Recently her piano teacher offered a reward of a doughnut for faithful daily practice. The teacher said she would be “dialing for doughnuts” and would call Megan sometime during the week. If she had practiced that day, she would earn the reward. When Megan was called, she was not at home to give her report. At her weekly lesson, the teacher asked Megan if she had practiced, to which Megan responded that she thought she had and took the reward. When Megan’s mother saw the doughnut, she questioned Megan and helped her understand that she needed to be honest. An apologetic phone call to her teacher was made with her mom’s encouragement. As teacher and student visited, it was discovered that Megan really had completed her music theory writing; hence, she fully qualified for the reward. Thanks to wise, concerned parents, valuable lessons will be remembered for a long while.

Our 15-year-old grandson, Ben, is a big-time ski enthusiast, having competed in several meets and done very well. Prior to one such competition in Idaho,



his parents reminded him that his grades in school would determine whether or not he would be able to compete. A condominium in Sun Valley, Idaho, was reserved, his grandparents were planning to attend, and Ben was feverishly trying to achieve the lofty academic goals both he and his parents expected. However, at the end of the day, he fell just short of his goal. Ben missed the ski meet and lost points toward qualifying for the Junior Olympics, but Ben gained a valuable appreciation for responsibility and accountability. By remaining steadfast, parents so very often suffer and agonize more than the children they endeavor to teach.

### Integrity

President James E. Faust suggested that integrity is the mother of many virtues. He noted that integrity can be defined “as a firm adherence to a code of moral values.” He also suggested that “integrity is the light that shines from a disciplined conscience. It is the strength of duty within us” (“Integrity, the Mother of Many Virtues,” in *Speaking Out on Moral Issues* [1998], 61, 62). It is difficult for a person to display virtuous traits if he or she lacks integrity. Without integrity, honesty is often forgotten. If integrity is absent, civility is impaired. If integrity is not important, spirituality is difficult to maintain. In Old Testament times, Moses counseled the children of Israel that “if a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth” (Numbers 30:2).

President Thomas S. Monson reminded us a few years ago that “most people will not commit desperate acts if they have been taught that dignity, honesty and integrity are more important than revenge or rage; if they understand that respect and kindness ultimately give one a better chance at success” (quoting from “Family Values in a Violent Society,” *Deseret News*, Jan. 16,

1994, A12; in “Finding Peace,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 4).

### Cultivate virtuous traits

You may have heard about the *Lost Battalion* of World War I, the ten *lost* tribes of Israel, or perhaps the “*lost boys*” in J. M. Barrie’s play *Peter Pan*. You may also be acquainted with the album by Michael McLean entitled *The Forgotten Carols*. Virtuous traits, especially the “*ity*” virtues, must never be forgotten or set aside. If forgotten or set aside, they will inevitably become the “*lost virtues*.” If virtues are lost, families will be measurably weakened, individual faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will soften, and important eternal relationships may be jeopardized.

Traits of virtue broadly practiced can loosen Satan’s firm grip on society and derail his insidious plan to capture the hearts, minds, and spirits of mortal men.

Now is the time for us to join in rescuing and preserving that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.” As we allow virtue to garnish our thoughts unceasingly and we cultivate virtuous traits in our personal lives, our communities and institutions will be improved, our children and families will be strengthened, and faith and integrity will bless individual lives.

I testify and declare that our Heavenly Father expects His children to exercise integrity, civility, fidelity, charity, generosity, morality, and all the “*ity*” virtues. May we have the *humility* to take the *opportunity* to act upon our *responsibility* to demonstrate our *ability* to do so, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” After the singing, Sister Ann M. Dibb, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Love Is Spoken Here.”

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The choir and congregation sang  
“How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Ann M. Dibb

### Clinging to a bridge

A number of years ago, a one-inch article in my local newspaper caught my attention, and I have remembered it ever since: “Four people were killed and seven workers were rescued after clinging for more than an hour to the underside of a 125-foot-high bridge in St. Catharines, Ontario, [Canada,] after the scaffolding they were working on collapsed” (“News Capsules,” *Deseret News*, June 9, 1993, A2).

I was, and I continue to be, fascinated by this brief story. Shortly after reading this account, I called a family friend who lived in St. Catharines. She explained that the workers had been painting the Garden City Skyway bridge for about a year and were two weeks short of completing the project when the accident happened. After the accident, officials were asked why these men did not have any safety equipment. The answer was simple: they had the equipment; they just chose not to wear it. After the scaffolding gave way, the survivors held on to a one-inch lip of steel girder and stood on an eight-inch ledge of steel for over an hour until rescue teams could reach them. One survivor related that as he clung to the bridge, he thought a lot about his family. He said, “I just thank the Lord for me being here today. . . . It was pretty scary, I tell you” (in Rick Bogacz, “Skyway Horror,” *Standard*, June 9, 1993).

### Challenges of mortality

There are many lessons to be learned and comparisons to be made from this incident. While most of us will never face such a dramatic, life-or-death situation,

many of us feel that we are going through a scary time in our personal lives.

We may feel as though we are holding on to what may seem to be a one-inch lip of steel girder. Our mortal probation is not easy, and it is not brief. We are blessed to come to this earth and gain a mortal body. This life is our opportunity to prove ourselves and exercise our agency (see Abraham 3:25). We can choose to follow Heavenly Father’s eternal plan of salvation (see Jarom 1:2; Alma 42:5; Moses 6:62) and redemption (see Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25; 42:11), or we can try to find our own way. We can be obedient and keep His commandments, or we can reject them and face the consequences that will surely follow.

Because of this, we too have a hazardous job description and duty. We must deal with challenges. We may experience loneliness, strained relationships, betrayal of trust, temptations, addictions, limitations of our physical body, or the loss of much-needed employment. We may be challenged with feelings of disappointment because our righteous hopes and dreams have not been met in our personal timetable. We may question our abilities and fear the possibility of failure, even in our Church and family callings. The challenges and the dangers we live with today, including society’s tolerance of sin, have been prophesied by ancient and living prophets. These are just as precarious and real as the threat of falling 125 feet to certain death from a high bridge.

My life is not perfect. I deal with many of the same challenges. We all do. I know that the temptations of the adversary and the difficulties of mortality are

ever present and beset each of us. I concur with the rescued worker's expression of his dangerous experience of holding on to that steel girder: "It [is] pretty scary, I tell you."

### **We have not been left alone**

It is important to note, however, that in the scriptures there are very few stories of individuals who lived in blissful happiness and experienced no opposition. We learn and grow by overcoming challenges with faith, persistence, and personal righteousness. I've been strengthened by President Thomas S. Monson's endless confidence in our Heavenly Father and in us. He has said: "Remember that you are entitled to our [Heavenly] Father's blessings in this work. He did not call you to your privileged post to walk alone, without guidance, trusting to luck. On the contrary, He knows your skill, He realizes your devotion, and He will convert your supposed inadequacies to recognized strengths. He has promised: 'I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up' (D&C 84:88)" ("Sugar Beets and the Worth of a Soul," *Ensign*, July 2009, 5–6).

Heavenly Father has not left us alone during our mortal probation. He has already given us all the "safety equipment" we will need to successfully return to Him. He has given us personal prayer, the scriptures, living prophets, and the Holy Ghost to guide us. At times, using this equipment may seem cumbersome, awkward, and horribly unfashionable. Its proper use requires our diligence, obedience, and persistence. But I, for one, choose to use it. We must all choose to use it.

### **The iron rod**

In the scriptures we learn about another key piece of safety equipment—a "rod of iron." Disciples of our Savior, Jesus Christ, are invited to hold on to this rod in order to

safely find their way to eternal life. I am speaking of Lehi's vision of the tree of life found in the Book of Mormon.

Through divine personal revelation, the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi and his son Nephi were each shown a vision of our mortal probationary state and its accompanying dangers. Lehi says, "And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:23). Yet "he [also] saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to [that] rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree," meaning the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:30).

From Lehi's vision we learn that we must take hold of this safety railing—this iron rod, found alongside our individual straight and narrow path—and hold tight until we reach our ultimate goal of eternal life with our Heavenly Father. Nephi promises that those who hold fast to the iron rod "would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:24).

I invite you to read again the full accounts of this inspired vision. Study them, ponder them, and apply them to your daily life. In modern terms we might say we are invited to "get a grip." We must hold on tight to the iron rod and never let go.

President Harold B. Lee, the prophet when I was a teenager, taught, "If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seeking for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an 'iron rod' as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious roadways that would



eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is ‘virtuous, lovely, or of good report’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 90; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 7).

This quote was relevant when I was a teenager, and it is perhaps even more relevant today. Prophets’ words warn, teach, and encourage truth, whether they’re spoken in 600 B.C., 1971, or 2009. I encourage you to listen to, believe in, and act upon the inspired words of those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

### Hold on

Holding to the iron rod is not always easy. We may let go because of peer pressure or pride, thinking we can find our own way back—later. When we do so, we are leaving our safety equipment behind. In Lehi’s vision he saw many who let go of the iron rod. Nephi says, “And many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Nephi 8:32). In difficult times in our own lives, we may find we are also “wandering in strange roads.” Let me reassure you that it is always possible for us to find our way back. Through repentance, made possible by the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we can regain

and recommit to a strong grip on the iron rod and feel the loving guidance of our Heavenly Father once again. The Savior has extended an open invitation to us: repent, hold on, and don’t let go.

I, like Nephi, exhort you with all the energies of my soul that you will “give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things” (1 Nephi 15:25). Use the safety equipment He has provided for you. Hold fast, and believe that Heavenly Father will bless you for your diligence.

I know the restored gospel is true, and I know we are led by a living prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. It is my great privilege and blessing to be his daughter. I love my parents dearly.

One evening I was feeling a bit discouraged and said, “Oh, Dad, the blessings we experience as members of the Church and the promised blessings of the temple are so good, *if we will only reach out and choose to accept them.*” He responded without hesitation, “Ann, they are everything.”

May we *hold on* to the eternal truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ because they are literally everything is my sincere prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Ask, seek, knock

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am very grateful for each of you. I am thankful too for the miracle of modern communication that allows this conference to reach millions of people throughout the world.

Today’s technology also allows us to use wireless telephones to exchange information rapidly. Recently Wendy and I were on assignment on another continent when we learned that a new baby had arrived in our family. We received the good news minutes after that birth had occurred half a world away.

Even more amazing than modern technology is our opportunity to access information directly from heaven, without hardware, software, or monthly service fees. It is one of the most marvelous gifts the Lord has offered to mortals. It is His generous invitation to “ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”<sup>1</sup>

This timeless offer to provide personal revelation is extended to all of His children. It almost sounds too good to be true. But it is true! I have received and responded to that heavenly help. And I

have learned that I always need to be ready to receive it.

Years ago, while immersed in the task of preparing a talk for general conference, I was aroused from a sound sleep with an idea impressed strongly upon my mind. Immediately I reached for pencil and paper near my bed and wrote as rapidly as I could. I went back to sleep, knowing I had captured that great impression. The next morning I looked at that piece of paper and found, much to my dismay, that my writing was totally illegible! I still keep pencil and paper at my bedside, but I write more carefully now.

### Preparation for receiving revelation

To access information from heaven, one must first have a firm faith and a deep desire. One needs to “ask with a sincere heart [and] real intent, having faith in [Jesus] Christ.”<sup>2</sup> “Real intent” means that one *really intends* to follow the divine direction given.

The next requirement is to study the matter diligently. This concept was taught to leaders of this restored Church when they were first learning how to gain personal revelation. The Lord instructed them, “I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”<sup>3</sup>

Part of being prepared is to know and obey the relevant teachings of the Lord. Some of His timeless truths are applicable generally, such as the commandments not to steal, not to kill, and not to bear false witness. Other teachings or commandments are also general, such as those regarding the Sabbath, the sacrament, baptism, and confirmation.

Some revelations have been given for unique circumstances, such as Noah’s building of the ark or the necessity for prophets like Moses, Lehi, and Brigham to lead their followers in arduous travel. God’s long-established pattern of teaching

His children through prophets assures us that He will bless each prophet and that He will bless those who heed prophetic counsel.

### Putting off the natural man

A desire to follow the prophet requires much effort because the natural man knows very little of God and even less of His prophet. Paul wrote that “the natural man [receives] not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>4</sup> The change from being a natural man to a devoted disciple is a mighty one.<sup>5</sup>

Another prophet taught that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”<sup>6</sup>

Recently I observed such a mighty change in a man whom I first met about 10 years ago. He had come to a stake conference at which his son was sustained as a member of the new stake presidency. This father was not a member of the Church. After his son had been set apart, I put my arms around this father and praised him for having such a wonderful son. Then I boldly declared: “The day will come when you will want to have this son sealed to you and your wife in a holy temple. And when that day comes, I would be honored to perform that sealing for you.”

During the subsequent decade, I did not see this man. Six weeks ago he and his wife came to my office. He greeted me warmly and recounted how startled he was with my earlier invitation. He didn’t do much about it until later, when his hearing began to fail. Then he awakened to

the realization that his body was changing and that his time on earth was indeed limited. In due course he ultimately lost his hearing. At the same time, he became converted and joined the Church.

During our visit he summarized his total transformation: “I had to lose my hearing before I could heed the great importance of your message. Then I realized how much I wanted my loved ones to be sealed to me. I am now worthy and prepared. Will you please perform that sealing?”<sup>7</sup> This I did with a deep sense of gratitude to God.

### The gift of spiritual discernment

After such a conversion takes place, even further spiritual refinement can come. Personal revelation can be honed to become spiritual discernment. To *discern* means to sift, to separate, or to distinguish.<sup>8</sup> The gift of spiritual discernment is a supernal gift.<sup>9</sup> It allows members of the Church to see things not visible and to feel things not tangible.

Bishops are entitled to that gift as they face the task of seeking out the poor and caring for the needy. With that gift, sisters may view trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or even dangerous. Members can discern between schemes that are flashy and fleeting and those refinements that are uplifting and enduring.

Discernment was implicit in important instructions President John Taylor gave long ago.<sup>10</sup> He taught stake presidents, bishops, and others: “It is the right of those holding [these positions] to obtain the word of God with regard to the duties of their presidencies that they may more effectually carry out His holy purposes. None of the callings or positions in the priesthood are intended for the personal benefits, emoluments and fame of those who hold them, but are expressly given to fulfil the purposes of our Heavenly Father and build up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. We . . . seek to understand the

will of God, and then carry it out; and see that it is carried out by those over whom we have the charge.”<sup>11</sup>

### Guidelines for personal revelation

For each of you to receive revelation unique to your own needs and responsibilities, certain guidelines prevail. The Lord asks you to develop “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God.” Then with your firm “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence,” you may *ask*, and you will receive; you may *knock*, and it will be opened unto you.<sup>12</sup>

Revelation from God is always compatible with His eternal law. It never contradicts His doctrine. It is facilitated by proper reverence for Deity. The Master gave this instruction:

“I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

“ . . . To them will I reveal all mysteries [and] my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.”<sup>13</sup>

Revelation need not all come at once. It may be incremental. “Saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more.”<sup>14</sup> Patience and perseverance are part of our eternal progression.

Prophets have described what they felt while receiving revelation. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery reported that “the veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.”<sup>15</sup> President Joseph F. Smith wrote, “As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were

opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me.”<sup>16</sup>

Every Latter-day Saint may merit personal revelation. The invitation to ask, seek, and knock for divine direction exists because God lives and Jesus is the living Christ. It exists because this is His living Church.<sup>17</sup> And we are blessed today because President Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet. That we may hearken to and heed his prophetic counsel is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; italics added; see also 3 Nephi 14:7; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:12, in Bible appendix.
2. Moroni 10:4.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
4. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
5. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Such conversions are complete. John Newton (1725–1807), for example, changed his life from that of a slave trader to a devoted disciple of the Lord, summarizing his conversion when he wrote: “Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!) / That sav’d a wretch like me! / I once was lost, but now am found; / Was blind, but now I see” (“Amazing Grace,” *Olney Hymns* [1779], no. 41).
8. *Discern* comes from the Latin *discernere*, meaning “to separate [or] distinguish between.” The Latin prefix *dis* means “apart,” and the suffix *cernere* means “to sift.” See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “discern.”
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:23, 26–27.
10. After the death of President Brigham Young in 1877, the affairs of the Church were directed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The apostolic interregnum continued until 1880, when the First Presidency was reorganized. John Taylor was President of the Quorum of the Twelve when this counsel was given on February 23, 1878.
11. John Taylor, in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 2:307.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5–6; see also verse 7.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–7.
14. 2 Nephi 28:30.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 110:1.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 138:11. Then followed the revelation about the preaching of the gospel to those who had died without an opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality (see verses 29–37).
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.

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The choir sang “Love Is Spoken Here.”

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#### President Monson

It will now be my privilege to address you. Following my remarks, these services will conclude with the choir singing “Have I Done Any Good?” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Enrique R. Falabella of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, I greet you this morning with love in my heart for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for each of you. I am grateful for the privilege to

stand before you, and I pray that I might effectively communicate to you that which I have felt prompted to say.

### “What did you do for someone today?”

A few years ago I read an article written by Jack McConnell, MD. He grew up in the hills of southwest Virginia in the United States as one of seven children of a Methodist minister and a stay-at-home mother. Their circumstances were very humble. He recounted that during his childhood, every day as the family sat around the dinner table, his father would ask each one in turn, “And what did you do for someone today?”<sup>1</sup> The children were determined to do a good turn every day so they could report to their father that they had helped someone. Dr. McConnell calls this exercise his father’s most valuable legacy, for *that* expectation and *those* words inspired him and his siblings to help others throughout their lives. As they grew and matured, their motivation for providing service changed to an inner desire to help others.

Besides Dr. McConnell’s distinguished medical career—where he directed the development of the tuberculosis tine test, participated in the early development of the polio vaccine, supervised the development of Tylenol, and was instrumental in developing the magnetic resonance imaging procedure, or MRI—he created an organization he calls Volunteers in Medicine, which gives retired medical personnel a chance to volunteer at free clinics serving the working uninsured. Dr. McConnell said his leisure time since he retired has “evaporated into 60-hour weeks of unpaid work, but [his] energy level has increased and there is a satisfaction in [his] life that wasn’t there before.” He made this statement: “In one of those paradoxes of life, I have benefited more from Volunteers in Medicine than my patients have.”<sup>2</sup> There are now over 70 such clinics across the United States.

Of course, we can’t all be Dr. McConnells, establishing medical clinics to help the poor; however, the needs of others are ever present, and each of us can do something to help someone.

### Losing ourselves in service

The Apostle Paul admonished, “By love serve one another.”<sup>3</sup> Recall with me the familiar words of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”<sup>4</sup>

The Savior taught His disciples, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”<sup>5</sup>

I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.

In the October 1963 general conference—the conference at which I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—President David O. McKay made this statement: “Man’s greatest happiness comes from losing himself for the good of others.”<sup>6</sup>

### The Lord depends on us

Often we live side by side but do not communicate heart to heart. There are those within the sphere of our own influence who, with outstretched hands, cry out, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”<sup>7</sup>

I am confident it is the *intention* of each member of the Church to serve and to help those in need. At baptism we covenanted to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light.”<sup>8</sup> How many times has your heart been touched as you have witnessed the need of another? How often have you *intended* to be the one to help? And yet how often has day-to-day living interfered and you’ve left it for others to help, feeling that “oh, surely someone will take care of that need”?

We become so caught up in the busyness of our lives. Were we to step back, however, and take a good look at what



we're doing, we may find that we have immersed ourselves in the "thick of thin things." In other words, too often we spend most of our time taking care of the things which do not really matter much at all in the grand scheme of things, neglecting those more important causes.

Many years ago I heard a poem which has stayed with me, by which I have tried to guide my life. It's one of my favorites:

I have wept in the night  
For the shortness of sight  
That to somebody's need made me  
blind;  
But I never have yet  
Felt a tinge of regret  
For being a little too kind.<sup>9</sup>

My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.

You may lament: I can barely make it through each day, doing all that I need to do. How can I provide service for others? What can I possibly do?

### **The ideal birthday gift**

Just over a year ago, I was interviewed by the *Church News* prior to my birthday. At the conclusion of the interview, the reporter asked what I would consider the ideal gift that members worldwide could give to me. I replied, "Find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely, and do something for him or her."<sup>10</sup>

I was overwhelmed when this year for my birthday I received hundreds of cards and letters from members of the Church around the world telling me how they had fulfilled that birthday wish. The acts of service ranged from assembling humanitarian kits to doing yard work.

Dozens and dozens of Primaries challenged the children to provide service, and then those acts of service were recorded and sent to me. I must say that the methods for recording them were creative. Many came in the form of pages put together into various shapes and sizes of books. Some contained cards or pictures drawn or colored by the children. One very creative Primary sent a large jar containing hundreds of what they called "warm fuzzies," each one representing an act of service performed during the year by one of the children in the Primary. I can only imagine the happiness these children experienced as they told of their service and then placed a "warm fuzzy" in the jar.

I share with you just a few of the countless notes contained in the many gifts I received. One small child wrote, "My grandpa had a stroke, and I held his hand." From an 8-year-old girl: "My sister and I served my mom and family by organizing and cleaning the toy closet. It took us a few hours and we had fun. The best part was that we surprised my mom and made her happy because she didn't even ask us to do it." An 11-year-old girl wrote: "There was a family in my ward that did not have a lot of money. They have three little girls. The mom and dad had to go somewhere, so I offered to watch the three girls. The dad was just about to hand me a \$5 bill. I said, 'I can't take [it].' My service was that I watched the girls for free." A Primary child in Mongolia wrote that he had brought in water from the well so his mother would not have to do so. From a 4-year-old boy, no doubt written by a Primary teacher: "My dad is gone for army training for a few weeks. My special job is to give my mom hugs and kisses." Wrote a 9-year-old girl: "I picked strawberries for my great-grandma. I felt good inside!" And another: "I played with a lonely kid."

From an 11-year-old boy: "I went to a lady's house and asked her questions and sang her a song. It felt good to visit

her. She was happy because she never gets visitors.” Reading this particular note reminded me of words penned long ago by Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve. Said he: “It is difficult for those who are young to understand the loneliness that comes when life changes from a time of preparation and performance to a time of putting things away. . . . To be so long the center of a home, so much sought after, and then, almost suddenly to be on the sidelines watching the procession pass by—this is living into loneliness. . . . We have to live a long time to learn how empty a room can be that is filled only with furniture. It takes someone . . . beyond mere hired service, beyond institutional care or professional duty, to thaw out the memories of the past and keep them warmly living in the present. . . . We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness . . . and unfeigned love.”<sup>11</sup>

My birthday cards and notes came also from teenagers in Young Men and Young Women classes who made blankets for hospitals, served in food pantries, were baptized for the dead, and performed numerous other acts of service.

Relief Societies, where help can always be found, provided service above and beyond that which they would normally have given. Priesthood groups did the same.

My brothers and sisters, my heart has seldom been as touched and grateful as it was when Sister Monson and I literally spent hours reading of these gifts. My heart is full now as I speak of the experience and contemplate the lives which have been blessed as a result, for both the giver and the receiver.

### **“Ye have done it unto me”**

The words from the 25th chapter of Matthew come to mind:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The service of the Lord**

My brothers and sisters, may we ask ourselves the question which greeted Dr. Jack McConnell and his brothers and sisters each evening at dinnertime: “What have I done for someone today?” May the words of a familiar hymn penetrate our very souls and find lodgment in our hearts:

Have I done any good in the world today?

Have I helped anyone in need?

Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad?

If not, I have failed indeed.

Has anyone’s burden been lighter today?

Because I was willing to share?

Have the sick and the weary been helped on their way?

When they needed my help was I there?<sup>13</sup>

That service to which all of us have been called is the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As He enlists us to His cause, He invites us to draw close to Him. He speaks to you and to me:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>14</sup>

If we truly listen, we may hear that voice from far away say to us, as it spoke to another, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”<sup>15</sup> That each may qualify for this blessing from our Lord is my prayer, and I offer it in His name, even Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Jack McConnell, “And What Did You Do for Someone Today?” *Newsweek*, June 18, 2001, 13.
2. McConnell, “And What Did You Do for Someone Today?” 13.
3. Galatians 5:13.

4. Mosiah 2:17.

5. Luke 9:24.

6. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 8.

7. Jeremiah 8:22.

8. Mosiah 18:8.

9. Anonymous, quoted in Richard L. Evans, “The Quality of Kindness,” *Improvement Era*, May 1960, 340.

10. See Gerry Avant, “Prophet’s Birthday,” *Church News*, Aug. 23, 2008, 4.

11. Richard L. Evans, “Living into Loneliness,” *Improvement Era*, July 1948, 445.

12. Matthew 25:34–40.

13. “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.

14. Matthew 11:28–30.

15. Matthew 25:21.

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The choir sang “Have I Done Any Good?”

Elder Enrique R. Falabella offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 4, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists. President Uchtdorf made the following remarks as the meeting began.

#### President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 179th Semiannual

General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “In Hymns of Praise.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy. The choir will then sing “O Divine Redeemer.”



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The choir sang “In Hymns of Praise.”  
Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the  
invocation.

The choir sang “O Divine Redeemer.”

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### President Uchtdorf

Thank you, Tabernacle Choir.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following Elder Cook’s remarks, we will hear from Elder Brent H. Nielson of the Seventy.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Troubles of the heart and soul

Prophecies regarding the last days often refer to large-scale calamities such as earthquakes or famines or floods. These in turn may be linked to widespread economic or political upheavals of one kind or another.

But there is one kind of latter-day destruction that has always sounded to me more personal than public, more individual than collective—a warning, perhaps more applicable inside the Church than outside it. The Savior warned that in the last days even those of the covenant, the very elect, could be deceived by the enemy of truth.<sup>1</sup> If we think of this as a form of spiritual destruction, it may cast light on another latter-day prophecy. Think of the heart as the figurative center of our faith, the poetic location of our loyalties and our values; then consider Jesus’s declaration that in the last days “men’s hearts [shall fail] them.”<sup>2</sup>

The encouraging thing, of course, is that our Father in Heaven knows all of these latter-day dangers, these troubles of the heart and soul, and has given counsel and protections regarding them.

### Lehi’s dream

In light of that, it has always been significant to me that the Book of Mormon, one of the Lord’s powerful keystones<sup>3</sup> in

this counteroffensive against latter-day ills, begins with a great parable of life, an extended allegory of hope versus fear, of light versus darkness, of salvation versus destruction—an allegory of which Sister Ann M. Dibb spoke so movingly this morning.

In Lehi’s dream an already difficult journey gets more difficult when a mist of darkness arises, obscuring any view of the safe but narrow path his family and others are to follow. It is imperative to note that this mist of darkness descends on *all* the travelers—the faithful and the determined ones (the elect, we might even say) as well as the weaker and ungrounded ones. The principal point of the story is that the successful travelers resist all distractions, including the lure of forbidden paths and jeering taunts from the vain and proud who have taken those paths. The record says that the protected “did press their way forward, continually [and, I might add, tenaciously] holding fast” to a rod of iron that runs unfailingly along the course of the true path.<sup>4</sup> However dark the night *or* the day, the rod marks the way of that solitary, redeeming trail.

“I beheld,” Nephi says later, “that the rod of iron . . . was the word of God, [leading] . . . to the tree of life; . . . a representation of the love of God.” Viewing this manifestation of God’s love, Nephi goes on to say:

"I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, . . . [who] went forth ministering unto the people. . . .

"... And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; . . . and they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out."<sup>5</sup>

Love. Healing. Help. Hope. The power of Christ to counter all troubles in all times—including the end of times. That is the safe harbor God wants for us in personal or public days of despair. That is the message with which the Book of Mormon begins, and that is the message with which it ends, calling all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him."<sup>6</sup> That phrase—taken from Moroni's final lines of testimony, written 1,000 years after Lehi's vision—is a dying man's testimony of the only true way.

### Testimony of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

May I refer to a modern "last days" testimony? When Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum started for Carthage to face what they knew would be an imminent martyrdom, Hyrum read these words to comfort the heart of his brother:

"Thou hast been faithful; wherefore, . . . thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

"And now I, Moroni, bid farewell . . . until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

A few short verses from the 12th chapter of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Before closing the book, Hyrum turned down the corner of the page from which he had read, marking it as part of the everlasting testimony for which these two brothers were about to die. I hold in my hand that book, the very copy from which Hyrum read, the same corner of the page turned down, still visible. Later, when actually incarcerated in the jail, Joseph the Prophet

turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter pistol and ball would take the lives of these two testators.

As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest—and last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth?

Never mind that their wives are about to be widows and their children fatherless. Never mind that their little band of followers will yet be "houseless, friendless, and homeless" and that their children will leave footprints of blood across frozen rivers and an untamed prairie floor.<sup>9</sup> Never mind that legions will die and other legions live declaring in the four quarters of this earth that they know the Book of Mormon and the Church which espouses it to be true. Disregard all of that, and tell me whether in this hour of death these two men would enter the presence of their Eternal Judge quoting from and finding solace in a book which, if *not* the very word of God, would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time? *They would not do that!* They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

### Divinity of the Book of Mormon

For 179 years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history—perhaps like no other book in *any* religious history. And still it stands. Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died—from Ethan Smith to Solomon Spaulding to deranged

paranoid to cunning genius. None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because *there is no other answer* than the one Joseph gave as its young, unlearned translator. In this I stand with my own great-grandfather, who said simply enough, “No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.”<sup>10</sup>

I testify that one cannot come to full faith in this latter-day work—and thereby find the fullest measure of peace and comfort in these, our times—until he or she embraces the divinity of the Book of Mormon and the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it testifies. If *anyone* is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages—especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers—if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived; and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit. In that sense the book is what Christ Himself was said to be: “a stone of stumbling, . . . a rock of offence,”<sup>11</sup> a barrier in the path of one who wishes not to believe in this work. Witnesses, even witnesses who were for a time hostile to Joseph, testified to their death that they had seen an angel and had handled the plates. “They have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man,” they declared. “Wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.”<sup>12</sup>

### A witness of the Book of Mormon

Now, I did not sail with the brother of Jared in crossing an ocean, settling in a new world. I did not hear King Benjamin

speak his angelically delivered sermon. I did not proselyte with Alma and Amulek nor witness the fiery death of innocent believers. I was not among the Nephite crowd who touched the wounds of the resurrected Lord, nor did I weep with Mormon and Moroni over the destruction of an entire civilization. But my testimony of this record and the peace it brings to the human heart is as binding and unequivocal as was theirs. Like them, “[I] give [my name] unto the world, to witness unto the world that which [I] *have seen*.” And like them, “[I] lie not, God bearing witness of it.”<sup>13</sup>

I ask that my testimony of the Book of Mormon and all that it implies, given today under my own oath and office, be recorded by men on earth and angels in heaven. I hope I have a few years left in my “last days,” but whether I do or do not, I want it absolutely clear when I stand before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world, in the most straightforward language I could summon, that the Book of Mormon is true, that it came forth the way Joseph said it came forth and was given to bring happiness and hope to the faithful in the travail of the latter days.

My witness echoes that of Nephi, who wrote part of the book in *his* “last days”:

“Hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. *And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, . . . and they teach all men that they should do good.*

“And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, *at the last day.*”<sup>14</sup>

Brothers and sisters, God always provides safety for the soul, and with the Book of Mormon, He has again done that in our time. Remember this declaration by Jesus Himself: “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived”<sup>15</sup>—and in the last days neither your heart nor your faith

will fail you. Of this I earnestly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 24:24; see also Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
2. Luke 21:26.
3. See *History of the Church*, 4:461.
4. 1 Nephi 8:30.
5. 1 Nephi 11:25, 27–28, 31.
6. Moroni 10:32.
7. Ether 12:37–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 135:5.

8. See *History of the Church*, 6:600.
9. See Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:539.
10. George Cannon, quoted in “The Twelve Apostles,” in Andrew Jenson, ed., *The Historical Record*, 6:175.
11. 1 Peter 2:8.
12. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
13. “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses,” Book of Mormon; italics added.
14. 2 Nephi 33:10–11; italics added.
15. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.

## Elder Quentin L. Cook

### Accountability and stewardship

We live in perilous times when many believe we are not accountable to God and that we do not have personal responsibility or stewardship for ourselves or others. Many in the world are focused on self-gratification, put themselves first, and love pleasure more than they love righteousness. They do not believe they are their brother’s keeper. In the Church, however, we believe that these stewardships are a sacred trust.

Recently a group of highly respected Jewish leaders and rabbis visited Church facilities in the Salt Lake Valley, including Welfare Square, the Humanitarian Center, the Family History Library, and the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple open house. At the conclusion of their visit, one of the most eminent rabbis in America expressed his feelings about what he had seen and felt.<sup>1</sup>

He cited concepts from Jewish thinkers rooted in the Talmud<sup>2</sup> and pointed out that there are two very different reasons people engage in acts of kindness and generosity. Some people visit the sick, assist the poor, and serve their fellowmen because they believe it is the right thing to do and others will reciprocate and do the same for them when they are in need. He explained that while this is good, builds caring

communities, and should be considered a noble reason, a higher motive is when we serve our fellowmen because that is what we believe God wants us to do.

He stated that as a result of his visit, he believed the Latter-day Saints undertake welfare and humanitarian efforts and the work of salvation in our temples in order to do what we believe God wants us to do.

This feeling of accountability, which is encompassed by the first great commandment to love God, has been described by some as “obedience to the unenforceable.”<sup>3</sup> We try to do what is right because we love and want to please our Father in Heaven, not because someone is forcing us to obey.

The War in Heaven was fought after Satan said that he would force everyone to obey his ideas. That was rejected. As a result, we have our moral agency and the freedom to choose our course in this life. But we also are accountable for that agency. The Lord has said we will be “accountable for [our] own sins in the day of judgment.”<sup>4</sup> The principles of accountability and stewardship have great significance in our doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

In the Church, stewardship is *not* limited to a *temporal* trust or responsibility. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “We

are stewards over our bodies, minds, families, and properties. . . . A faithful steward is one who exercises righteous dominion, cares for his own, and looks to the poor and needy.”<sup>6</sup>

While there are many areas of stewardship, I have chosen to address two. The first is stewardship of ourselves and our families. The second is stewardship for the poor and needy.

### **A spring of water**

The Lord often used parables relating to the land in teaching accountability and stewardship. When I was a small boy, I would visit my grandparents at their ranch during the summer. There was no electrical power, running water, or indoor plumbing. There was, however, a spring of water next to their small ranch house. The spring created a little pond of clear, pure water, where several times a day I would help my grandmother carry water to the house for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing clothes. My grandparents loved this life-giving spring and took special precautions to protect it.

Many years later my grandfather was in his early 90s and did not live on the property; he was unable to maintain or oversee it. I drove him to see the ranch which he loved. His high expectations at seeing the ranch turned to disappointment when he realized the fences that protected the spring had fallen into disrepair and cows had damaged the spring and the precious, pure springwater had been significantly polluted. He was upset with the damage and the pollution. To him, it was a violation of a trust he had observed all his working life. He felt somehow he had not protected that life-sustaining spring which had meant so much to him.

Just as the pure spring was polluted when not protected, we live in a time when virtue and chastity are not safeguarded.<sup>7</sup> The eternal significance of personal morality is not respected. A loving Father in Heaven has provided us with the means to

bring His spirit children into this world to fulfill the full measure of their creation. He has instructed us that the wellsprings of life are to be kept pure, just as the beautiful spring on the ranch required protection in order to sustain life. This is one of the reasons why virtue and chastity are so important in our Father in Heaven’s plan.

Because of my grandfather’s reaction to the polluted spring, improvements and protections were undertaken which returned the spring to its original beauty and purity.

### **The Lord’s standard of morality**

As servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our sacred responsibility to teach His standard of morality, which is the same for all of His children. When our thoughts or our actions are impure, we violate His standard. The Lord has said, “I . . . cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”<sup>8</sup> Some attempt to rationalize away their conduct.

In a poem by John Holmes titled “Talk,” an old, deaf New England shipbuilder teaches a young man about rationalization. In describing one of the lessons he learned, the youth explains, “I wouldn’t have known that however you build it, the ship must sail; you can’t explain to the ocean.”<sup>9</sup>

It has been suggested that what happens in a certain city stays in a certain city. I like the sign posted in Sevier County, Utah, which states, “What happens in Sevier County . . . you can share with your friends!!!” When we realize that we are accountable to God, we see how foolish rationalizations can be. Those who rationalize remind us of little children who cover their eyes, convinced that if they can’t see us, we can’t see them. I would suggest that if we think about giving an accounting of our actions to the Savior, our rationalizations will be seen in their true light.

We are aware that there are those who have already engaged in conduct



inconsistent with this sacred standard of morality. Please understand that through the Savior's Atonement, all can repent and return, like the spring of water, to a clean and pure state. It is difficult to repent; it requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit.<sup>10</sup> But when the steps to repentance are righteously followed, the words spoken by the prophet Alma to his son Corianton, who had been involved in moral transgressions, are applicable: "And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance."<sup>11</sup> The Savior has said, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>12</sup>

### Family responsibilities

With respect to our stewardship for our families, some have taught that when we report to the Savior and He asks us to give an account of our earthly responsibilities, two important inquiries will relate to our families. The first will be our relationship with our spouse, and the second will be about each of our children.<sup>13</sup>

It is easy to confuse our priorities. We have a duty to secure the physical safety and well-being of our children. However, some parents place undue priority on temporal and material possessions. Some are far less diligent in their efforts to immerse their children in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> Remember that having religious observance in the home is as important as providing food, clothing, and shelter. Parents can also help children discover and develop their talents. We are responsible for the talents we have received. Children who are not taught that they are accountable for their time and talents are increasingly subject to the foolishness and unrighteousness that are so pervasive in the world.<sup>15</sup> The family proclamation warns that individuals "who fail to fulfill

family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."<sup>16</sup>

### Caring for the poor and needy

The second stewardship is caring for the poor and those in need, which applies to virtually all of us at one time or another. The Lord's admonition that we are stewards for those in need contains some of the strongest language in all of scripture: "If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion . . . unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."<sup>17</sup> We are accountable as stewards over earthly blessings, which the Lord has provided.

The Jewish leaders I mentioned earlier were particularly impressed with the principle of fasting and then paying a generous fast offering. They thought it was remarkable that Church members across the world would fast monthly and then make a freewill offering for the benefit of those who are in need.

When the rabbis visited Welfare Square, they were touched to learn that even in difficult economic times, our members, concerned about the challenges experienced by many, continue to donate generously to help the poor and needy.

I can remember when I was called as a bishop, my predecessor, Bishop Russell Johnson, warned me that I would have to be careful what I asked the members to do. He said, "Some will respond to every suggestion, even at great sacrifice." He mentioned one widow in her 80s who had cared for both a husband and a son through long illnesses before they passed away. Bishop Johnson said that despite having small resources, she would always try to respond. I found this to be true. Every time I mentioned the need for contributions or service to bless others, Sarah was often the first to respond.

One Saturday another sister called me and said, "Bishop, come quick! Save

Sarah!” This sister reported that 80-year-old Sarah was on top of a ladder cleaning out this neighbor’s rain gutters. This sister was terrified that Sarah would fall and wanted the bishop to intervene.

I am not suggesting that everyone can or should imitate Sarah. Some feel guilty because they cannot meet every need immediately. I love the quote Elder Neal A. Maxwell often used from Anne Morrow Lindbergh: “My life cannot implement in action the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.”<sup>18</sup> King Benjamin taught, “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.” But he added that we should be diligent.<sup>19</sup>

### Providing Christlike service

My heart rejoices as I observe the Saints all over the Church doing everything they can to provide Christlike service wherever there is a need. Because of member contributions, the Church can quietly and quickly, without fanfare, respond to needs all over the world.<sup>20</sup> The Church is already responding to the natural disasters in the Philippines, the Pacific Islands, and Indonesia.

Last year our members responded to Hurricane Gustav. The Church worked closely with a humanitarian organization led by Martin Luther King III. Mr. King subsequently visited Salt Lake City and said: “I originally came to express my appreciation to the Church for their humanitarian support, but I quickly learned that the essence of who you are is so much deeper and profound. Between the Humanitarian Center, Welfare Square, and the temple open house, I now have a greater appreciation for why you do what you do.”

In all of our stewardship efforts, we follow Jesus Christ. We try to emulate what He has asked us to do, both by His teachings and His example. With all our hearts we express our appreciation to the

membership of the Church for their generous contributions and Christlike service.

### Blessings of faithful stewardship

Isaiah, speaking of the fast and feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, in touching language promised, “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer.”<sup>21</sup> Isaiah continues: “And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; . . . the Lord shall guide thee continually, . . . and thou shalt be like . . . a spring of water, whose waters fail not. . . . [And] thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations.”<sup>22</sup>

My hope is that each of us will review individually and as families the stewardships for which we have responsibility and accountability. I pray that we will do so knowing we are ultimately accountable to God and that in this life we will be adhering to the unenforceable.

I am grateful for the counsel of a loving, faithful prophet to serve and rescue those in need. As we follow his counsel, I know we will qualify for the Lord’s promise: “And whoso is found a faithful, a just, and a wise steward shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall inherit eternal life.”<sup>23</sup>

I bear my witness of this sacred truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, former president of the New York Board of Rabbis, president of the Synagogue Council of America, and chairman of the National Rabbinic Cabinet of UJA.
2. “The Talmud is the repository of thousands of years of Jewish wisdom, and the oral law . . . finds expression therein” (Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* [2006], 4).
3. John Fletcher Moulton, quoted in Clayton M. Christensen, “The Importance of Asking the Right Questions” (speech given at Southern New Hampshire University commencement, May 16, 2009), 3; see also Deuteronomy 6:4–7.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:71. All who are accountable should repent and be baptized (see D&C 18:42). Those who die before the age of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:10; see also D&C 29:46–47, 50).
6. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 124–25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78.
7. See Gregory Katz, “U.K. Health Booklet’s Message: Teen Sex Can Be Fun,” *Deseret News*, July 15, 2009, A9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
9. “Talk,” in Collected Poems of John Holmes, <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/14894>.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; 2 Nephi 2:7; Alma 39; 3 Nephi 9:20. President Ezra Taft Benson defined a broken heart and a contrite spirit this way: “Godly sorrow . . . is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that . . . our sins caused Him [the Savior] to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having a ‘broken heart and a contrite spirit’” (“A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 4).
11. Alma 42:29.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
13. See Robert D. Hales, “Understandings of the Heart,” in *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (1988), 129; see also 2 Nephi 9:41.
14. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Take Heed to Yourselves!* comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. (1971), 221.
15. See Mark 7:20–23.
16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; see also Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 83–87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 69–71.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
18. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, “Wisdom and Order,” *Ensign*, June 1994, 41.
19. See Mosiah 4:27.
20. Over the last 10 years, the Church has provided over U.S. \$900 million in donations and material assistance for humanitarian aid and countless man- and woman-hours of service. For example, with respect to Hurricane Katrina, over 330,000 hours of hard, dedicated service were provided (report of Elder John S. Anderson, Area Seventy, who supervised the relief effort).
21. Isaiah 58:9.
22. Isaiah 58:10–12.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 51:19; see also Matthew 25:34–46.

## Elder Brent H. Nielson

### “Teach all nations”

As the Savior’s earthly ministry drew to a close, He appeared as a resurrected being to His Apostles. His charge to them is the same call He extends to you of the rising generation today: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

On April 6, 1974, the Church sustained a new prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball. That same day I received

my call to serve as a full-time missionary in Finland. I wasn’t aware at the time that President Kimball had just delivered a landmark address that week to the General Authorities and regional representatives of the Church. Later I learned that in that address President Kimball prophetically outlined his vision as to how we as a church would accomplish the Savior’s charge to “teach all nations.” In his address, President Kimball invited the members of the Church to lengthen their stride and enlarge their vision. He asked



that every worthy young man prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission. He encouraged the members in each country to prepare to supply their own missionaries, and he called upon “able men to assist the Twelve [Apostles] to move out into the world and to open the doors of every nation” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 10).

President Kimball also said in his 1974 address that there were 3.3 million members of the Church, 18,600 full-time missionaries, and 633 stakes. He challenged us to do better and asked us to change our sights and raise our vision (see “When the World Will Be Converted,” 7–8).

In response, we as members of the Church began to pray regularly in our families, in our sacrament meetings, and in our stake conferences that the hearts of the leaders of nations would be softened and the doors opened to our missionaries. The members began to see more clearly their responsibility to share the gospel. Our young men stepped up, and a great army of missionaries was gathered. We witnessed President Kimball’s vision begin to unfold.

### **Prayer for borders to open**

While serving in Finland, I learned that my mission president’s wife, Sister Lea Mahoney, was a native of Finland. As a young girl she had grown up in the eastern portion of Finland in a city named Viipuri. As the ravages of war engulfed Finland and other countries during World War II, she and her family left their home, and Viipuri became part of the Soviet Union and was renamed Vyborg. In our zone conferences, Sister Mahoney would tell us of those left behind in Viipuri and of her desire that the gospel be taken to them. Following President Kimball’s challenge, we unitedly prayed that the hearts of the leaders of that nation would be softened so that the gospel could be taken by our missionaries into the Soviet Union.

We would go to the border between Finland and the Soviet Union and see the guard towers and the fences, and we would wonder who those brave young men and young women would be and when they would cross that border to take the gospel to the people there. I must admit, at that time it seemed like an impossible task.

Three years ago, our son Eric received a mission call to serve in the Russia St. Petersburg Mission. In his first letter home, he wrote something like this: “Dear Mom and Dad, I have been assigned to my first city in Russia. Dad, you may have heard of it before. It is called Vyborg, but it was previously a Finnish city named Viipuri.”

Tears came to my eyes as I understood that Eric was in the very city we had prayed about 32 years earlier. Eric found a chapel there and a branch of faithful Saints. He was living and serving in a place that to me as a young man had seemed impossible to enter.

I did not realize those many years ago, as we prayed for the borders to open and the missionaries to go in, that I was praying for our son. Most importantly for you of the rising generation, our son Eric did not realize that he and his companions were the answer to the prayers that had been offered by thousands of faithful Saints so many years ago. You of the rising generation are the fulfillment of prophecy that in our day “the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:540).

### **Call to the rising generation**

Since President Kimball’s prophetic instruction 35 years ago, Church membership has grown to 13.5 million members. There are now 52,000 missionaries and over 2,800 stakes of Zion. Who are

the laborers in the vineyard who have assisted in bringing to pass this marvelous work and a wonder? They are certainly the prophets and apostles seated before us today. They are also the wonderful stake presidents and bishops who have served so faithfully. But they are also your parents—the mothers and fathers—aunts and uncles, and brothers and sisters who sit beside you, the rising generation today. Most critical, however, is the fact that as we strive to take the gospel to all nations, we have just begun to scratch the surface.

And so the torch is passed to a new generation. The Savior, through His prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson, has renewed the call as he declared:

“Our keynote was sounded by our Lord and our Savior, who stands at the head of the great army of missionaries worldwide. After His Resurrection, He appeared to His 11 disciples. He could have given them any counsel, any expression, any warning that He chose to give. But what did He say? It’s recorded in Matthew 28:18–20. He said as follows: . . .

“‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“‘Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’”

President Monson continued:

“What a promise! If we respond affirmatively to that sacred call, that binding authority, ‘I will be with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ I can’t think of a greater promise” (“The Five M’s of Missionary Work,” *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 42).

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob, quoting Zenos, spoke of our task today in the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees:

“Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare

the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit.

“Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard” (Jacob 5:61–62).

The Savior’s call is to you of the rising generation. He is asking for worthy, prepared, faithful young men and young women who will heed the prophet’s voice, who will step up and say, as the Savior Himself said, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). The need has never been greater. The field has never been whiter. You are called to go “this last time” (Jacob 5:62). There is no greater work; there is no greater call than teaching “all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

I solemnly proclaim and testify that the heavens are open, that not only has God spoken but that He speaks today. His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and is inviting you, as He invited His Apostles of old, Peter and Andrew: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). May you respond as they did, by leaving your nets straightway and following Him.

I pray that you of this rising generation will stand up for truth and righteousness and understand your sacred call to go and teach all nations, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Uchtdorf

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Hope of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Dale G. Renlund and Michael T. Ringwood of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Joseph W. Sitati of the Seventy. Following Elder Sitati’s remarks, we will hear from Elder D. Todd

Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Hope of Israel.”

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## Elder Dale G. Renlund

### “The ultimate operation”

In December 1967 the first successful heart transplant was performed in Cape Town, South Africa. The dying man’s diseased heart was removed, and a healthy heart from a deceased donor was sewn in its place. Since then, over 75,000 heart transplants have been performed worldwide.

In each heart transplant recipient, the patient’s own body recognizes the new, lifesaving heart as “foreign” and begins to attack it. Left unchecked, the body’s natural response will reject the new heart, and the recipient will die. Medicines can suppress this natural response, but the medications must be taken daily and with exactness. Furthermore, the condition of the new heart must be monitored. Occasional heart biopsies are performed wherein small pieces of heart tissue are removed and then examined under a microscope. When signs of rejection are found, medications are adjusted. If the rejection process is detected early enough, death can be averted.

Surprisingly, some patients become casual with their transplanted hearts. They skip their medicines here and there and obtain the needed follow-up less frequently than they should. They think that because they feel good, all is well. Too often this shortsighted attitude puts the patients at risk and shortens their lives.

A heart transplant can prolong life for years for people who would otherwise die from heart failure. But it is not “the ultimate operation,” as *Time* magazine called it in 1967.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate operation is not a physical but a spiritual “mighty change” of heart.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Atonement of Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, we undergo this ultimate operation, this spiritual change of heart. As a result of our transgressions, our spiritual hearts have become diseased and hardened, making us subject to spiritual death and separation from our Heavenly Father. The Lord explained the operation that we all need: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as with heart transplant patients, however, this mighty change of our spiritual hearts is just the beginning. Repentance, baptism, and confirmation are necessary but not sufficient. Indeed, equal, if not greater, care must be taken with a spiritually changed heart than with a physically transplanted heart if we are to endure to the end. Only by doing so can we be held guiltless at the time of judgment.<sup>4</sup>

### Learning to endure to the end

Enduring to the end can be challenging because the tendency of the natural man is to reject the spiritually changed heart and allow it to harden. No wonder the Lord cautioned to “even let those who are sanctified take heed.”<sup>5</sup>

We all know of individuals who had this mighty change of heart but subsequently yielded to the natural man. They became casual in their worship and devotion to God, their hearts became hardened, and they thereby jeopardized their eternal salvation.

The lives of the people who were converted by the preaching of the sons of Mosiah offer some insights as to how one avoids rejecting the mightily changed spiritual heart. Of them, we read that “as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, . . . and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.”<sup>6</sup>

How did they successfully endure to the end? We know that they were “distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.”<sup>7</sup>

Their zeal towards God likely reflects an eagerness to please God and worship Him with fervor and passion. Their zeal towards men suggests an ardent interest in helping and serving others. Being perfectly upright and honest in all things suggests that they held their covenants firmly and did not rationalize their commitments to God or man. We further know that they taught their children the gospel in their homes. We know that they buried their weapons of war, distancing themselves from temptations.

They must have frequently assessed the condition of their spiritually changed hearts. They did not simply assume that all was well. By figuratively examining their changed hearts, they could identify any early hardening or rejection and treat it.

Alma the Younger poses a series of questions to contemporaries of the people of Ammon that figuratively biopsy spiritually changed hearts. Alma asks, “If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”<sup>8</sup> He further asks if they have been sufficiently humble, free of pride and envy, and kind toward their fellowman.<sup>9</sup> By honestly answering questions like these, we can correct early deviations from the strait and narrow path and keep our covenants with exactness.

## The importance of small actions

In 1980 we moved as a family across the street from the hospital where I trained and worked. I worked every day, including Sundays. If I finished my Sunday work by 2:00 p.m., I could join my wife and daughter and drive to church for meetings that began at 2:30.

One Sunday late in my first year of training, I knew that I would likely finish by 2:00. I realized, however, that if I stayed in the hospital just a little longer, my wife and daughter would depart without me. I could then walk home and take a needed nap. I regret to say that I did just that. I waited until 2:15, walked home slowly, and lay down on the couch, hoping to nap. But I could not fall asleep. I was disturbed and concerned. I had always loved going to church. I wondered why on this day the fire of testimony and the zeal that I had previously felt were missing.

I did not have to think long. Because of my schedule, I had become casual with my prayers and scripture study. I would get up one morning, say my prayers, and go to work. Often day blended into night and into day again before I would return home late the following evening. I would then be so tired that I would fall asleep before saying a prayer or reading the scriptures. The next morning the process began again. The problem was that I was not doing the basic things I needed to do to keep my mightily changed heart from turning to stone.

I got off the couch, got on my knees, and pleaded with God for forgiveness. I promised my Heavenly Father that I would change. The next day I brought a Book of Mormon to the hospital. On my to-do list that day, and every day since, were two items: praying at least morning and evening and reading in the scriptures. Sometimes midnight would come, and I would have to quickly find a private place to pray. Some days my scripture study was brief. I also promised Heavenly Father that I would always try to get to church, even

if I missed part of the meeting. Over the course of a few weeks, the zeal returned and the fire of testimony burned fiercely again. I promised to never again fall into the spiritual death trap of being casual about these seemingly small actions and thereby jeopardizing things of an eternal nature, regardless of circumstances.

### Eager to please God

To endure to the end, we need to be eager to please God and worship Him with fervor and passion. This means that we maintain faith in Jesus Christ by praying, studying the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament each week, and having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. We need to actively help and serve others and share the gospel with them. We need to be perfectly upright and honest in all things, never compromising our covenants with God or our commitments to men, regardless of circumstances. In our homes we need to talk of, rejoice in, and preach of Christ so that our children—and we ourselves—will desire to apply the Atonement in our lives.<sup>10</sup> We must identify temptations that easily beset us and put them out of reach—way out of reach. Finally, we need to frequently biopsy our

mightily changed hearts and reverse any signs of early rejection.

Please consider the state of your changed heart. Do you detect any rejection setting in as a result of the tendency of the natural man to become casual? If so, find a place where you too can kneel. Remember, more than mortal years on this earth are at stake. Do not risk forfeiting the fruits of the ultimate operation: eternal salvation and exaltation.

I pray that we may press forward with steadfast faith in Christ and endure joyfully to the end,<sup>11</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “Surgery: The Ultimate Operation,” *Time*, Dec. 15, 1967, 64.
2. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
3. Ezekiel 36:26.
4. See 3 Nephi 27:16.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:34.
6. Alma 23:6.
7. Alma 27:27.
8. Alma 5:26.
9. See Alma 5:27–30.
10. See 2 Nephi 25:26.
11. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 16–19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 18–21.

## Elder Michael T. Ringwood

### An easiness and willingness to believe

Over the past several months I have been drawn repeatedly to a passage of scripture recorded in Helaman, chapter 6: “And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words” (verse 36).

As I read this scripture during my personal study, it touched my heart deeply and caused me to reflect upon it for several weeks. I began to question if I found it easy to believe the word of God. And why

was it easy for these Lamanite converts to believe? What happened to cause a people full of hatred and disbelief to have an easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God? (see 4 Nephi 1:39).

We learn about the cause of this change during a most remarkable year. During the 62nd year of the reign of the judges, 8,000 Lamanites in Zarahemla were converted as Nephi and Lehi taught with power and authority and had what they should teach given unto them (see Helaman 5:18–19). Three hundred others were converted through a miraculous



experience in which they heard a voice that did pierce them to the very soul (see Helaman 5:30). These 300 had gone forth to kill Nephi and Lehi as they sat in prison, but the 300 found themselves calling upon God when Aminadab, who was a former Nephite and dissenter from the Church, remembered and knew they should pray till they had faith in Christ (see Helaman 5:35–41). Many more Lamanites were converted through the testimony of the 300 as they ministered unto the people, declaring what they had seen and heard (see Helaman 5:49–50).

The account of the 62nd year ends with this statement: “All these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people” (Helaman 6:1).

The quality of their conversion led these Lamanites to lay down their hatred for the Nephites and their weapons of war (see Helaman 5:51); they were firm and steadfast in their faith (see Helaman 6:1); they kept the commandments and walked in truth and uprightness (see Helaman 6:34); and they grew in their knowledge of God (see Helaman 6:34).

Yet most impressive to me was their easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God. This easiness and willingness to believe brought them the Spirit in great abundance and aided them to endure in faith to the end (see Helaman 15:5–9).

Sadly, during this same period of time, the more part of the Nephites became “hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked” (Helaman 6:2; see also verses 31–34). The opposite of what the Lamanites were experiencing was happening to the Nephites. The hardness of their hearts led to a withdrawal of the Spirit (see Helaman 6:35), while the softness of the hearts of the Lamanites led to an outpouring of the Spirit.

### **Softness of heart**

As I pondered what caused this mighty change in the hearts of these Lamanites, I

came to realize this easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God comes from a softness of heart. It comes from having a heart that is sensitive to the Holy Ghost. It comes from having a heart that can love. It comes from having a heart that will make and keep sacred covenants. It comes from a soft heart that can feel the power of the Atonement of Christ.

This easiness to believe comes from the example of others who have soft hearts and who model this easiness to believe, such as Nephi and Lehi. Their father, Helaman, named them Nephi and Lehi to remind them of the faith of their fathers (see Helaman 5:6). Likewise, many of us have embedded in our names a legacy of faith from ancestors who had soft hearts and found it easy to believe the word of God. Some of these were like my great-great-grandfather Ephraim K. Hanks, who, when he found out his older brother had “gone off with the Mormons,” was determined to bring him back home. Not surprisingly, Ephraim moved to Nauvoo and was baptized soon after he heard his brother bear testimony of Joseph Smith and the restored gospel (see Richard K. Hanks, “Eph Hanks, Pioneer Scout” [master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973], 18–21).

We are blessed with others in the scriptures who teach us how we can obtain an easiness and willingness to believe. Nephi, son of Lehi, is one example. His first act when he heard his father teach about the destruction of Jerusalem was to cry unto the Lord till his heart was soft and he believed all the words spoken by his father (see 1 Nephi 2:16). The Lord spoke directly to Nephi, saying, “Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart” (1 Nephi 2:19). Nephi teaches the importance of desire and diligence in keeping commandments and calling upon God in order to have the ability to say with ease, “I will go and do” (1 Nephi 3:7).

From Enos we learn the importance of allowing the words of God to sink deep into our hearts till we hunger for truth (see Enos 1:3–4). An easiness to believe will come when the word of God is etched into our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3).

From the example of Lamoni's father, we learn the importance of a soft heart that is willing to change. Lamoni's father was willing to give up half of his kingdom to Ammon in exchange for his life (see Alma 20:21–23). After Ammon simply requested that the king allow Lamoni to worship as he desired in his own kingdom, the generosity and greatness of Ammon's words caused the king to be troubled in mind and heart (see Alma 20:24; 22:3). When Aaron arrived to teach the king, his heart had changed and he had an easiness to believe, as he said to Aaron, "Behold I will believe" (Alma 22:7). He then expressed a willingness to give up all he possessed, even to forsake his kingdom, to have the joy of the Lord (see Alma 22:15). When he first prayed, he offered that which Heavenly Father wanted when he said, "I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). An easiness and willingness to believe the word of God will come from repentance and obedience.

### **Periods of easiness to believe**

An examination of our lives will reveal periods when we found it easier to believe the word of God. Periods of significant change, such as marriage or the birth of a child; periods of intense service from a new calling or a mission; periods in our youth with a wonderful bishop, youth leaders, and seminary teachers; periods of trials; and periods of growth from learning for the first time about the gospel are all periods of an easiness to believe. Perhaps the most significant period is childhood. As a child, I found it easy to believe the word of God taught to me by valiant parents and grandparents. No wonder we are

admonished to become as little children to inherit eternal life (see 3 Nephi 11:38). No wonder we are taught to "bring up [our] children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40).

If you are like me, you will find what really brought an easiness and willingness to believe were not the circumstances but the commitment to live the gospel during these periods of life. You were found more often on your knees and immersed in the scriptures during these periods. You found it easier to gather for family home evening and family prayer. You found it easy to be in church and to worship in the temple. You found it easy to pay tithes and offerings. Indeed, the daily living of the gospel brings a softness of heart needed to have an easiness and willingness to believe the word of God.

### **The role of obedience**

My testimony is that the teachings from our prophet and apostles in this conference, if followed, will lead to an easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God. We have been counseled to worship in the temple; to strengthen families through consistent family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening; to serve diligently in priesthood and Church callings; to pay tithes and offerings; to have faith and to pray for guidance; and to live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Often we are like Naaman, the Syrian leper who was sent to the prophet in Israel to be cleansed. When Elisha simply sent a messenger with instructions to dip seven times in the Jordan River, Naaman went away angry. Thankfully, he had a servant who said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13).

I witness that this easiness and willingness to believe will come from doing those

seemingly insignificant things taught to us repeatedly since our youth. Obedience will bring soft hearts and an easiness to believe in the word of God. I bear witness that an easiness to believe will bring an outpouring of the Spirit.

A test to measure our easiness and willingness to believe can occur each week as we attend sacrament meeting. In this meeting we renew covenants by expressing our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments (see D&C 20:77). As we sit in sacrament meeting, we should find it easy to make these covenants and easy to listen and learn through the Holy Ghost.

I long to have the Spirit of the Lord poured out upon me because of my “easiness and willingness to believe in his words.” I have felt that this scripture has awakened me to a sense of my “duty to God”—that I should “be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience; . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; . . . always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things [I] receive” (Alma 7:22–23).

May we always find it easy to believe His word. May you with easiness declare, as do I, that Jesus is the Son of God. He is our Shepherd, and those with an easiness and willingness to believe will know His voice. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Joseph W. Sitati

### A global faith

A few weeks ago Elder Melvin R. Perkins, who is an Area Seventy serving in Alaska, and I stood at the pulpit in front of the congregation of the Vancouver British Columbia Stake in Canada. In a moving voice he invited the Saints to consider the image before them: a descendant of Mormon handcart pioneers and a pioneer convert of the Church from a faraway African nation serving the Lord side by side.

From humble beginnings in Fayette, New York, nearly 180 years ago, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has become a global faith. I stand here as a witness of this marvelous work. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with you and with me as I share some thoughts this afternoon.

I am grateful for the keys of revelation in this last dispensation. Through the exercise of those keys by living prophets since the Restoration, God’s children on the earth today have the opportunity to

understand His plan of happiness for them more fully than at any other time.

The love of our Father in Heaven has been evident as the way has been opened for all living and dead of every nation, now and in the future, to receive exaltation in His presence, according to the exercise of their agency. The standard is the same, and the blessing is the same for all. God has reaffirmed that He is no respecter of persons.

### The pattern of gospel dispensations

The gospel has gone forth on the earth in a pattern that ensures that God’s purposes to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man are fulfilled.

After the Fall our first parents, Adam and Eve, made an eternal covenant with God for their salvation.<sup>1</sup> As Adam’s children multiplied, two groups emerged.

One group, led by Enoch, kept the covenant so well that they could no longer be retained on the earth. So the Lord gathered them unto Himself.<sup>2</sup>



The second group was overcome in wickedness so great that they suffered the judgments of God. The Flood swallowed them up, leaving only the family of Noah,<sup>3</sup> a righteous descendant of Enoch.<sup>4</sup>

God put Noah under covenant, with the additional promise that life on earth would no longer be destroyed by floods.<sup>5</sup>

As Noah's family multiplied once more, many were taken up in wickedness. Driven by pride, they built the Tower of Babel. God allowed the judgments of heaven to fall upon them. Their language was confounded, and they were scattered abroad. Only a few who were obedient were preserved.<sup>6</sup>

Among those preserved was the brother of Jared, a man of great faith, who pleaded with the Lord on behalf of the righteous Jaredites. The Lord led them to the American continent, with the promise that if they served Him, they would "be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven."<sup>7</sup> The Nephites were also led to the same continent later. In the end both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations were destroyed, as they did not prove faithful.

Another preserved man of great faith was Abraham, a descendant of Noah, who was led to Canaan. God put Abraham under covenant, with additional promises that his posterity would increase as the stars in the heavens<sup>8</sup> and that in his seed "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."<sup>9</sup> The nations in the promise were descendants of Noah scattered from the Tower of Babel, known as Gentiles in a general sense.

God renewed the covenant with Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob, who became Israel.

Because the descendants of Israel could not endure the conditions of the covenant, it was changed during the dispensation of Moses. A lesser covenant was introduced and continued among the children of Israel until Christ restored the fulness of the gospel during His mortal ministry.<sup>10</sup>

## Ministry to the Gentiles

After His Resurrection the Savior signaled that the time for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles had come.<sup>11</sup> Earlier, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, He had revealed that the gentile nations would be visited and invited one after the other. However, the blessings would be the same irrespective of the order of invitation.<sup>12</sup>

After the Savior's Ascension, the presiding Apostle, Peter, a descendant of Israel, held the keys of the priesthood, by which he gave direction to the Church. It is significant that although the Savior had already given permission, Peter baptized the first Gentile, Cornelius, only after receiving specific revelation to do so.<sup>13</sup>

The ministry to the Gentiles was interrupted by the martyrdom of Peter<sup>14</sup> and the deaths of the other Apostles, after which the keys of the priesthood were taken from the earth. The long period of apostasy followed.

The keys were restored by the ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John in 1829 upon Joseph Smith just before the Church was organized. The gospel in its fulness was again coming to the earth and started to go forth among the nations of the Gentiles as the new and everlasting covenant.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that the determining criteria for the order in which the gentile nations are invited include the capacity to spiritually and temporally nourish the kingdom of God as it is established on the earth for the last time.<sup>15</sup>

We see that as the restored Church began to be established on the earth, the living prophets sought and followed the will of God about how the gospel should go forth among the nations.

I have lived to see the time foreseen by the prophet Zenos in the allegory of the olive tree, when the righteous from all nations of the earth would become partakers of the covenant of God with Israel.<sup>16</sup>

## Fruit of the gospel in Africa

I have seen the good fruit of the gospel blossom in my home continent of Africa. After just 30 years, there are 300,000 Saints. In the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel, many are finding a sure anchor for their faith. Families uprooted from their rural communities in search of a better future in the towns and cities have found a new way to hold on to the strong family traditions which have come progressively under attack in this era of globalization. The Spirit of the Lord is moving powerfully among the people.

A new celestial culture is developing in homes, nurtured by the ready hearkening to the counsel of the living prophet to have daily prayer and scripture study and to meet once a week as a family in home evening. As a result, many are able to break free from the shackles of traditions that restrict the exercise of their agency.

As an illustration from personal experience, three of our children were recently married in the temple without the encumbrance of dowry, a traditional practice that drives many young men and women to live together without any legal commitment to each other. The opportunity for a temple marriage in the three temples now established in Accra, Ghana; Aba, Nigeria;

and Johannesburg, South Africa, is helping to instill a fresh hope in the sanctity of marriage.

I testify of the Savior Jesus Christ, by whom we have the gospel and promise of exaltation. I testify of our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, through whom we have the assurance of the Savior's direction for continuing to extend salvation to all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Moses 6:52, 57, 59.
2. See Moses 7:19–21.
3. See Genesis 6:17–22; see also Moses 7–8.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–15.
5. See Genesis 8:11–21; 9:8–11.
6. See Genesis 11:1–8.
7. See Ether 2:8–12; see also Ether 1:33–43; 4–6.
8. See Genesis 12–17; 22; see also Abraham 1–2.
9. Genesis 22:18.
10. See Hebrews 7:11–12, 19–22; Doctrine and Covenants 84:24–25.
11. See Matthew 28:18–20.
12. See Matthew 20:1–16.
13. See Acts 10.
14. See Bible Dictionary, “Peter,” 749.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:1–12.
16. See Jacob 5:57–68.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### Interview for officer candidate school

During World War II, President James E. Faust, then a young enlisted man in the United States Army, applied for officer candidate school. He appeared before a board of inquiry composed of what he described as “hard-bitten career soldier[s].” After a while their questions turned to matters of religion. The final questions were these:

“In times of war should not the moral code be relaxed? Does not the stress of battle justify men in doing things that they would not do when at home under normal situations?”

President Faust relates:

“I recognized that here was a chance perhaps to make some points and look broad-minded. I knew perfectly well that the men who were asking me this question did not live by the standards that I had been taught. The thought flashed through

my mind that perhaps I could say that I had my own beliefs but did not wish to impose them on others. But there seemed to flash before my mind the faces of the many people to whom I had taught the law of chastity as a missionary. In the end I simply said, ‘I do not believe there is a double standard of morality.’

“I left the hearing resigned to the fact that [they] would not like the answers I had given . . . and would surely score me very low. A few days later when the scores were posted, to my astonishment I had passed. I was in the first group taken for officer’s candidate school! . . .

“This was one of the critical crossroads of my life.”<sup>1</sup>

President Faust recognized that we all possess the God-given gift of moral agency—the right to make choices and the obligation to account for those choices (see D&C 101:78). He also understood and demonstrated that, for positive outcomes, moral agency must be accompanied by moral discipline.

### **Moral discipline**

By “moral discipline,” I mean self-discipline based on moral standards. Moral discipline is the consistent exercise of agency to choose the right because it is right, even when it is hard. It rejects the self-absorbed life in favor of developing character worthy of respect and true greatness through Christlike service (see Mark 10:42–45). The root of the word *discipline* is shared by the word *disciple*, suggesting to the mind the fact that conformity to the example and teachings of Jesus Christ is the ideal discipline that, coupled with His grace, forms a virtuous and morally excellent person.

Jesus’s own moral discipline was rooted in His discipleship to the Father. To His disciples He explained, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). By this same pattern, our moral discipline is rooted in

loyalty and devotion to the Father and the Son. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides the moral certainty upon which moral discipline rests.

The societies in which many of us live have for more than a generation failed to foster moral discipline. They have taught that truth is relative and that everyone decides for himself or herself what is right. Concepts such as sin and wrong have been condemned as “value judgments.” As the Lord describes it, “Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god” (D&C 1:16).

As a consequence, self-discipline has eroded and societies are left to try to maintain order and civility by compulsion. The lack of internal control by individuals breeds external control by governments. One columnist observed that “gentlemanly behavior,” for example, once “protected women from coarse behavior. Today, we expect sexual harassment laws to restrain coarse behavior. . . .

“Policemen and laws can never replace customs, traditions and moral values as a means for regulating human behavior. At best, the police and criminal justice system are the last desperate line of defense for a civilized society. Our increased reliance on laws to regulate behavior is a measure of how uncivilized we’ve become.”<sup>2</sup>

In most of the world, we have been experiencing an extended and devastating economic recession. It was brought on by multiple causes, but one of the major causes was widespread dishonest and unethical conduct, particularly in the U.S. housing and financial markets. Reactions have focused on enacting more and stronger regulation. Perhaps that may dissuade some from unprincipled conduct, but others will simply get more creative in their circumvention.<sup>3</sup> There could never be enough rules so finely crafted as to anticipate and cover every situation, and even if there were, enforcement would be impossibly expensive and burdensome. This approach leads to diminished freedom

for everyone. In the memorable phrase of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, “We would not accept the yoke of Christ; so now we must tremble at the yoke of Caesar.”<sup>4</sup>

In the end, it is only an internal moral compass in each individual that can effectively deal with the root causes as well as the symptoms of societal decay. Societies will struggle in vain to establish the common good until sin is denounced as sin and moral discipline takes its place in the pantheon of civic virtues.<sup>5</sup>

### Teaching in the home

Moral discipline is learned at home. While we cannot control what others may or may not do, the Latter-day Saints can certainly stand with those who demonstrate virtue in their own lives and inculcate virtue in the rising generation. Remember from Book of Mormon history the young men who were key to the Nephite victory in the long war of 66 to 60 B.C.—the sons of the people of Ammon. Their character and discipline were described in these words:

“They were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

“Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:47).

“Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually” (Alma 57:27).

Here we find a standard for what should happen in our homes and in the Church. Our teaching should draw upon our own faith and focus first and foremost on instilling faith in God in the rising generation.

We must declare the essential need to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before Him in soberness, or in other words, with reverence. Each must be persuaded that service and sacrifice for the well-being and happiness of others are far superior to making one’s own comfort and possessions the highest priority.

This requires more than an occasional reference to one or another gospel principle. There must be *constant* teaching, mostly by example. President Henry B. Eyring expressed the vision we strive to attain:

“The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of [our children] by the power of the Holy Ghost. It will not be enough for them to have had a spiritual witness of the truth and to want good things later. It will not be enough for them to hope for some future cleansing and strengthening. Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us. . . .

“Then they will have gained a strength from what they are, not only from what they know. They will become disciples of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

### Fallacy of parents being neutral

I have heard a few parents state that they don’t want to impose the gospel on their children but want them to make up their own minds about what they will believe and follow. They think that in this way they are allowing children to exercise their agency. What they forget is that the intelligent use of agency requires knowledge of the truth, of things as they really are (see D&C 93:24). Without that, young people can hardly be expected to understand and evaluate the alternatives that come before them. Parents should consider how the adversary approaches their children. He and his followers are not promoting objectivity but are vigorous, multimedia advocates of sin and selfishness.

Seeking to be neutral about the gospel is, in reality, to reject the existence of God and His authority. We must, rather, acknowledge Him and His omniscience if we want our children to see life's choices clearly and be able to think for themselves. They should not have to learn by sad experience that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

I can share with you a simple example from my own life of what parents can do. When I was about five or six years old, I lived across the street from a small grocery store. One day two other boys invited me to go with them to the store. As we stood coveting the candy for sale there, the older boy grabbed a candy bar and slipped it into his pocket. He urged the other boy and me to do the same, and after some hesitation we did. Then we quickly left the store and ran off in separate directions. I found a hiding place at home and tore off the candy wrapper. My mother discovered me with the chocolate evidence smeared on my face and escorted me back to the grocery store. As we crossed the street, I was sure I was facing life imprisonment. With sobs and tears, I apologized to the owner and paid him for the candy bar with a dime that my mother had loaned me (which I had to earn later). My mother's love and discipline put an abrupt and early end to my life of crime.

### **Dealing with temptations**

All of us experience temptations. So did the Savior, but He "gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22). Similarly, we do not have to yield simply because a temptation surfaces. We may want to, but we don't have to. An incredulous female friend asked a young adult woman, committed to living the law of chastity, how it was possible that she had never "slept with anybody." "Don't you *want* to?" the friend asked. The young woman thought: "The question intrigued me, because it was so utterly beside the point. . . . Mere want-

ing is hardly a proper guide for moral conduct."<sup>7</sup>

In some cases, temptation may have the added force of potential or actual addiction. I am grateful that for an increasing number of people the Church can provide therapeutic help of various kinds to aid them in avoiding or coping with addictions. Even so, while therapy can support a person's will, it cannot substitute for it. Always and ever, there must be an exercise of discipline—moral discipline founded on faith in God the Father and the Son and what They can achieve with us through the atoning grace of Jesus Christ. In Peter's words, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Peter 2:9).

### **Blessings of moral discipline**

We cannot presume that the future will resemble the past—that things and patterns we have relied upon economically, politically, socially will remain as they have been. Perhaps our moral discipline, if we will cultivate it, will have an influence for good and inspire others to pursue the same course. We may thereby have an impact on future trends and events. At a minimum, moral discipline will be of immense help to us as we deal with whatever stresses and challenges may come in a disintegrating society.

We have heard thoughtful and inspired messages during this conference, and in a moment President Thomas S. Monson will provide concluding words of counsel. As we prayerfully consider what we have learned and relearned, I believe that the Spirit will shed further light on those things that have particular application for each of us individually. We will be fortified in the moral discipline needed to walk uprightly before the Lord and be at one with Him and the Father.

I stand with my brethren and with you, my brothers and sisters, as a witness that God is our Father and that His Son, Jesus, is our Redeemer. Their law is immutable,



Their truth is everlasting, and Their love is infinite. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. James E. Faust, *Stories from My Life* (2001), 2–3.
2. Walter Williams, “Laws Are a Poor Substitute for Common Decency, Moral Values,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 29, 2009, A15.
3. Speaking some years ago to members of the legal profession, President James E. Faust cautioned: “There is a great risk in justifying what we do individually and professionally on the basis of what is ‘legal’ rather than what is ‘right.’ In so doing, we put our very souls at risk. The philosophy that what is legal is also right will rob us of what is highest and best in our nature. What conduct is actually legal is, in many instances, way below the standards of a civilized society and light years below the teachings of the Christ. If you accept what is legal as your standard of personal or professional conduct, you will deny yourself of that which is truly noble in your personal dignity and worth” (“Be Healers,” *Clark Memorandum*, spring 2003, 3).
4. “Bishop Fulton John Sheen Makes a Wartime Plea,” in William Safire, sel., *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History*, rev. ed. (1997), 478.
5. Editorial writers at the *Wall Street Journal* once observed:

“Sin isn’t something that many people, including most churches, have spent much time talking about or worrying about through the years of the [sexual] revolution. But we will say this for sin: it at least offered a frame of reference for personal behavior. When the frame was

dismantled, guilt wasn’t the only thing that fell away; we also lost the guidewire of personal responsibility. . . .

- “The United States has a drug problem and a high-school-sex problem and a welfare problem and an AIDS problem and a rape problem. None of this will go away until more people in positions of responsibility are willing to come forward and explain, in frankly moral terms, that some of the things that people do nowadays are wrong” (“The Joy of What?” *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 12, 1991, A14).
6. Henry B. Eyring, in Shaun D. Stahle, “Inspiring Students to Stand Strong amid Torrent of Temptation,” *Church News*, Aug. 18, 2001, 5.
  7. Sarah E. Hinlicky, “Subversive Virginity,” *First Things*, Oct. 1998, 14.

## President Uchtdorf

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation and love to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, and the Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Brothers and sisters, our concluding speaker at this session and this conference will be our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing.” After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder W. Douglas Shumway, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Expressions of gratitude

My heart is full as we come to the close of this conference. We have been richly

taught and spiritually edified as we have listened to the messages which have been presented and the testimonies which have been borne. We express thanks to each

one who has participated, including those brethren offering prayers.

Once again the music has been wonderful. I express my personal gratitude for those willing to share with us their talents, touching and inspiring us in the process. The beautiful music they produce enhances and enriches each session of conference.

We remind you that the messages we have heard during this conference will be printed in the November issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. As we read and study them, we will be additionally taught and inspired. May we incorporate into our daily lives the truths found therein.

We express to those brethren who have been released during this conference our deep appreciation. They have served well and have made significant contributions to the work of the Lord. Their dedication has been complete. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

### **The Lord is mindful of us**

We live at a time when many in the world have slipped from the moorings of safety found in compliance with the commandments. It is a time of permissiveness, with society in general routinely disregarding and breaking the laws of God. We often find ourselves swimming against the current, and sometimes it seems as though the current could carry us away.

I am reminded of the words of the Lord found in the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Said the Lord, "Ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come."<sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, He has prepared us. If we heed His words and live the commandments, we will survive this time of permissiveness and wickedness—a time which can be compared with the waves and the winds and the floods that can destroy. He is ever mindful of

us. He loves us and will bless us as we do what is right.

How grateful we are that the heavens are indeed open, that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and that the Church is founded on the rock of revelation. We are a blessed people, with apostles and prophets upon the earth today.

### **We all have a part to play**

Now, as we leave this conference, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. May all of you return safely to your homes. As you ponder the things you have heard during this conference, may you say, with the people of King Benjamin who all cried with one voice, "We believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us . . . that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually."<sup>2</sup> May every man and woman, boy and girl leave this conference a better person than he or she was when it began two days ago.

I love you, my brothers and sisters. I pray for you. I would ask once again that you would remember me and all the General Authorities in your prayers. We are one with you in moving forward this marvelous work. I testify to you that we are all in this together and that every man, woman, and child has a part to play. May God give us the strength and the ability and the determination to play our part well.

I bear my testimony to you that this work is true, that our Savior lives, and that He guides and directs His Church here upon the earth. I leave with you my witness and my testimony that God our Eternal Father lives and loves us. He is indeed our Father, and He is personal and real.

May God bless you. May His promised peace be with you now and always.

I bid you farewell until we meet again in six months' time, and do so in the name

of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Ether 2:25.
2. Mosiah 5:2.

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The choir sang “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing.”

Elder W. Douglas Shumway offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, provided the music for the priesthood session. Neil Hendriksen directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**Brook P. Hales**

Clerk of the Conference



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THE CHURCH OF  
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